WHAT WE HAVE IS A FAILURE TO DELIBERATE: REFRAMING CITY MANAGEMENT AS DELIBERATIVE PRACTICE

Thomas Bryer, Professor, School of Public Administration, University of Central Florida; Martin Carcasson, Professor, Director of CSU Center for Public Deliberation, Colorado State University; Valerie Lemmie, Kettering Foundation, Director of Exploratory Research

October 21, 2019
What We Have is a Failure to Deliberate: Reframing City Management as Deliberative Practice

Overview of the Forum

• I. Introduction to Democratic Practices and Deliberation
• II. Introducing Table Exercises
• III. Table Exercises
• IV. Summary of Lessons
• V. Facilitated Reflection
INTRODUCTION TO DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES AND DELIBERATION
Which statements best describe your view of the current quality of public discussion and debate? (choose up to three)

- 1. High quality, informed
- 2. Mean-spirited
- 3. Polarized
- 4. Involves a broad range of voices
- 5. Simplistic
- 6. Dominated by a few loud voices
- 7. Dominated by experts
- 8. Robust
- 9. Weak/limited, people are apathetic
- 10. (press 0) Productive
Three Key Points

• The wicked problems lens
• A brief primer on social psychology, polarization, and engagement (i.e. why what we are doing isn’t working)
• The value of deliberative practices
Wicked Problems

Wicked problems inherently involve competing underlying values, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that cannot be resolved by science.
Key Deliberative Responses

1. Prioritizing
2. Balancing
3. Transcending
FOOD AS A WICKED PROBLEM

WE WANT OUR FOOD TO BE:

- Inexpensive
- Fresh
- Nutritious
- Safe
- Long lasting
- Delicious

- Convenient
  (Accessible, Easy to prepare)

- Ethically grown
  (labor/animal welfare)

- Supportive of a local economy
- Supportive of a agriculture community
- Grown and delivered in a environmentally responsible manner
- Supportive of efforts to reduce hunger locally and globally

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HEALTH CARE AS A WICKED PROBLEM

High Quality

Accessible

Low cost
Competing Values in Downtown Fort Collins

- Aesthetics/Beauty
- Compassion
- Diversity/Inclusivity
- Economic health/vitality
- Effective use of public resources
- Equality
- Excitement/fun
- Family

- Individual freedom
- Individual responsibility
- Individual rights
- Justice/Fairness
- Public health/environment
- Respect for law
- Respect for others
- Safety
Capitalism or Sustainability as a Wicked Problem

- The “Triple Bottom Line” of
  - Profit (economics, also tied to jobs and taxes)
  - People (social justice, equality, fairness)
  - Planet (environment)
Wicked problems inherently involve competing underlying values, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that cannot be resolved by science.

They call for ongoing high quality communication, creativity, and broad collaborative action to manage well.
Actions to address wicked problems come from multiple levels

- **Public Policy**
  - national, state, local laws

- **Community**
  - relationships among organizations

- **Organizational**
  - organizations, social institutions

- **Interpersonal**
  - family, friends, social networks

- **Individual**
  - knowledge, attitudes, skills

The Wicked Problems Mindset

• Presume wicked problems, not wicked people
• Become more comfortable with uncertainty
• Focus on elevating the conversation not just winning the argument
• Put your energy toward identifying, engaging, and negotiating inherent tensions
• Work toward creating a learning community
Three Key Points

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• The value of deliberative practices
What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

The Problematic

We crave certainty and consistency

We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative
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What We Are Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of motivated reasoning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What and who we expose ourselves to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selective exposure / echo chambers/ filter or media bubbles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we interpret new evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confirmation bias, backfire effect, cognitive dissonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we make attributions and tell stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>egoism, illusory correlation, negativity bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we make decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heuristics, self-serving bias, social proof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we remember</td>
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<tr>
<td>availability bias</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

The Problematic

We crave certainty and consistency
We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative
We strongly prefer to gather with the like minded
We filter & cherry pick evidence to support our views
We avoid values dilemmas, tensions, and tough choices
Consider our Typical Public Processes

- Our two-party system
- Campaigns, referenda, and elections
- “Town halls”
- Interest groups and lobbyists
- Political debates
- Congressional deliberations and legislative debate
- Social media political engagement
- Citizen comment and public hearings
- Expert panels
- Letters to the editors
- Emails and email campaigns to policymakers
Traditional Forms of Public Participation
Key Problems with our Typical Public Processes

• Engage too late in the process when issues are simply framed as “yes” or “no”

• Primarily provide opportunities for individual or group expression

• Caters to entrenched, confident, and organized voices

• Little to no effective interaction or learning/refinement of opinion

“The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people full of doubts.”

Bertrand Russell, Philosopher
The Problem We Face

Most of our processes for public engagement and community problem solving primarily activate the negative aspects of human nature, and rarely tap into or nurture the positive.
What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

The Good

We are inherently social and seek purpose and community

Daniel H. Pink
author of A Whole New Mind

DRiVE
The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us
What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

The Good

We are inherently social and seek purpose and community
We are inherently empathetic
We are inherently pragmatic and creative
What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

The Good

- We are inherently social and seek purpose and community
- We are inherently empathetic
- We are inherently pragmatic and creative
- We have a deep inherent hunger for learning
- We can overcome our bad tendencies and build better habits
What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

Bottom line: The most powerful thing to help people overcome their biases and tackle wicked problems well is genuine conversation with people they respect.
Three Key Points

• The wicked problems lens

• A brief primer on social psychology, polarization, and engagement (i.e. why what we are doing isn’t working)

• The value of deliberative practices
Kettering Foundation’s Six Democratic Practices
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Identify or NAME THE ISSUES facing them in their own terms; that is, in terms of what is most valuable to them.

FRAME ISSUES so that a range of actions are considered and the trade-offs required are evident.
Kettering Foundation’s Six Democratic Practices

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- **Identify or Name the Issues**: Facing them in their own terms; that is, in terms of what is most valuable to them.
- **Frame Issues**: So that a range of actions are considered and the trade-offs required are evident.
- **Identify Resources**: That are available—even intangible ones like enthusiasm and commitment.
- **Make Decisions Deliberatively**: Which means weighing the trade-offs, to turn hasty reactions into sound judgment.
Kettering Foundation’s Six Democratic Practices

1. **Identify or Name the Issues**
   - Facing them in their own terms; that is, in terms of what is most valuable to them.

2. **Frame Issues**
   - So that a range of actions are considered and the trade-offs required are evident.

3. **Make Decisions Deliberatively**,
   - Which means weighing the trade-offs, to turn hasty reactions into sound judgment.

4. **Organize Actions**
   - In a complementary fashion.

5. **Identify Resources**
   - That are available—even intangible ones like enthusiasm and commitment.
Kettering Foundation’s Six Democratic Practices

- **Encourage constant COLLECTIVE LEARNING**
  to keep the actions going

- **Identify or NAME THE ISSUES**
  facing them in their own terms; that is, in terms of what is most valuable to them

- **ORGANIZE ACTIONS**
  in a complementary fashion

- **FRAME ISSUES**
  so that a range of actions are considered and the trade-offs required are evident

- **IDENTIFY RESOURCES**
  that are available—even intangible ones like enthusiasm and commitment

- **MAKE DECISIONS DELIBERATIVELY,**
  which means weighing the trade-offs, to turn hasty reactions into sound judgment

https://www.kettering.org/core-insights/democratic-practices
Key Components of Deliberative Engagement

• Overall deliberative framing
  ➤ Wicked problem, multiple approaches, broad range of actors, starting discussion “upstream” (before polarization)

• Discussion guides/backgrounder
  ➤ Base of information, something to react to, framed for deliberation, not persuasion

• Small, diverse, representative groups

• Deliberative facilitators

• Processes designed for interaction and learning
Traditional Forms of Public Participation

Citizens -> Government -> Citizens

Citizens

Citizens

Citizens
Deliberative Engagement

- Government
- Private Sector
- Non-profit Sector
- Citizens
# Engagement Streams

**A Matrix of Proven Practices.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Purpose</th>
<th>Name of Engagement Stream</th>
<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Important When...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To encourage people and groups to learn more about themselves, their community, or an issue, and possibly discover innovative solutions</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Suspending assumptions, creating a space that encourages a different kind of conversation, using ritual and symbolism to encourage openness, emphasis on listening</td>
<td>A group or community seems stuck or muddled and needs to reflect on their circumstance in depth and gain collective insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To resolve conflicts, to foster personal healing and growth, and to improve relations among groups</td>
<td>Conflict Transformation</td>
<td>Creating a safe space, hearing from everyone, building trust, sharing personal stories and views</td>
<td>Relationships among participants are poor or not yet established yet need to be. Issue can only be resolved when people change their behavior or attitude, expand their perspective, or take time to reflect and heal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To influence public decisions and public policy and improve public knowledge</td>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Naming and framing the issue fairly, weighing all options, considering different positions (i.e. deliberation), revealing public values, brainstorming solutions</td>
<td>The issue is within government’s (or any single entity’s) sphere of influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To empower people and groups to solve complicated problems and take responsibility for the solution</td>
<td>Collaborative Action</td>
<td>Using dialogue and deliberation to generate ideas for community action, developing and implementing action plans collaboratively</td>
<td>The issue/dispute requires intervention across multiple public and private entities, and anytime community action is important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# IAP2’s Public Participation Spectrum

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public’s role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

## Increasing Impact on the Decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Participation Goal</th>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Empower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promising to the Public</strong></td>
<td>We will keep you informed.</td>
<td>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</td>
<td>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</td>
<td>We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.</td>
<td>To place final decision making in the hands of the public.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Four Key Shifts of Deliberative Engagement

• From wicked people → to wicked problems
• From adversaries → to collaborators
• From inciting the worst of human nature → to bringing out the best of human nature
• From facts as cherry picked ammunition or “fake news” → to facts as tools for addressing problems together
In the End, We Must Elevate the Conversations in our Communities

• Build capacity for **collaborative action** and co-creation
• Spark **collaborative learning** and the refinement (not just expression) of opinion
• Help **differentiate** good and weak arguments
• Positively **manage conflict**, build mutual **understanding**, and develop **respect**
• Support **listening** and genuine **interaction**
• Provide opportunities for **voice** and public input
INTRODUCING TABLE EXERCISES
SUMMARY OF LESSONS
FACILITATED REFLECTION
THANK YOU

Questions?

ICMA conference