

CONNECTIONS

www.kettering.org

2007

A Year's Review
from the Perspective
of Citizens

WHAT IF?

IMAGINE THIS

COULD IT BE THAT?

MAYBE THE QUESTION WE SHOULD BE ASKING IS...

Introducing the
READERS' FORUM
See page 33

What You Need to Know about *Connections*

With this issue of *Connections*, the Kettering Foundation introduces three significant initiatives for the newsletter.

The first is a decision to change *Connections* from a biannual publication to an annual. This new schedule corresponds with Kettering's review cycle, which goes like this: each year, Kettering focuses its research through a particular point of view, or, as we say at the foundation, lens. The foundation's research has three fundamental foci: citizens, communities, and democratic institutions. This reflects Kettering's hypothesis that democracy requires the following:

- citizens who can make sound decisions about their future;
- communities of citizens acting together to address common problems;
- institutions that are legitimate in the eyes of citizens and that support a democratic society.

By publishing *Connections* once a year, it will serve as a record of the foundation's research focus over the previous 12 months. Therefore, as you'll find throughout the following pages, this issue of *Connections* reflects the foundation's research over the last year—through the lens of citizens.

The second initiative is the addition of a new section, the "Readers' Forum." As its name implies, the new section



features reactions and comments by *Connections* readers, who were invited to review drafts of many of the articles that appear in this newsletter. With the help of our colleagues Connie Crockett and Alice Diebel, we interviewed 13 people from around the country about how their experiences relate to these articles. This feedback is organized into three articles related to the

foundation's hypothesis about democracy, as noted above. The "Forum" is described in more detail on page 33.

To make the new section a true "Readers' Forum," the foundation has devised a new way for readers to react to—and even to read—*Connections*. This is the third initiative: the creation of a new discussion area on the foundation's Web site, www.kettering.org. On the Web site you'll find a new section devoted to this issue of *Connections* and comment areas where readers can participate in a forum around the ideas expressed in the articles published in this issue.

The addition of both the print and online "Readers' Forum" is an attempt to help readers better connect to *Connections*—and the Kettering Foundation. But remember: the online forum will only be as good as you our readers make it.

—Deborah Witte and Bob Mihalek

CONNECTIONS

CONTENTS

4 Politics from the Perspective of Citizens

David Mathews

Citizens and Local Politics: Transforming Community

7 The Paradox of Place in American Federalism

Lara Rusch

10 International Democracy

Kenneth A. Brown

Citizens and Bureaucratic Systems: Gaining Influence

12 Public Administrators and Citizens: Solving Community Problems Together

Alice Diebel

16 Public Agencies and Citizen Engagement: Getting Beyond the Customer-Service Model

Phillip Lurie

18 The Persistence of Power: Changing the System When the System Won't Listen

Kenneth A. Brown

Citizens and Local Boards: Opening Doors

19 Citizen Boards: When Local Isn't Enough

Paloma Dallas

23 Public Engagement in Five Colorado School Communities

Alice Diebel

Citizens and Collective Action: Demonstrating Results

25 Democracy's Challenge: Reclaiming the Public's Role

John Doble with Janay Cody

28 Deliberation and Public Action

*Elena Fagotto, Archon Fung,
and Libby Kingseed*

30 Sources of Deliberation

Edited by Libby Kingseed

What Others Are Saying

31 Who Cares About the State of Democracy ... and What Is It They Care About?

Edith Manosevitch

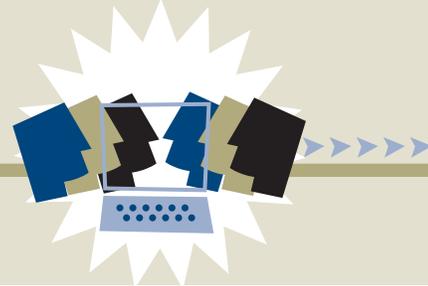
READERS' FORUM

33 Readers' Forum: Your Connection *Bob Mihalek and Deborah Witte*

34 What Citizens Can Do ... and Can't *Deborah Witte*

35 Local Boards and Citizens: A Mixed Relationship *Bob Mihalek*

37 Putting the Public Back into Public Administration *Deborah Witte and Bob Mihalek*



Books Worth Reading

40 The Next Form of Democracy: How Expert Rule Is Giving Way to Shared Governance ... and Why Politics Will Never Be the Same

*By Matt Leighninger,
reviewed by Harry C. Boyte*

41 Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi

*By John Dittmer,
reviewed by Caitlin Bortolotto*

42 Profit with Honor: The New Stage of Market Capitalism

*By Daniel Yankelovich,
reviewed by Matthew Johnson*

Deliberation and Public Action

By Elena Fagotto and
Archon Fung

*This article is excerpted and adapted
by Libby Kingseed from Embedded
Deliberation: Entrepreneurs,
Organizations, and Public Action,
for the William and Flora Hewlett
Foundation (April 14, 2006).*

Many deliberative democrats envision a world in which deliberation is a greater part of our everyday political and social lives; they suppose a world in which deliberation is widely, even universally, practiced. While previous research focused on the character of deliberation itself, this article focuses on the impact of intentionally designed and structured public discussions that are initiated and organized largely by civic entrepreneurs who are committed to the notion that public deliberation can improve the quality of public life and public decisions. We suppose that deliberative practices will yield more sustained effects when they are incorporated into—and thus when they transform—the communicative and decision-making routines of organizations, institutions, and the communities of which they are a part. We call this notion of incorporation “embedded deliberation.”

Different types of actions can be prompted by participating in deliberative forums. Deliberation may provide personal enrichment and even transformation. In general, public forums are an occasion to introduce the public to a more deliberative analysis of policy issues, so they can be exposed to a variety of opinions and grasp the complexity of certain topics. Deliberative events should increase participants’ civic-mindedness.

Deliberation may also influence decision makers to change public policies or improve service delivery. Sometimes being exposed to public deliberation can be an eye-opening experience for elected officials or other policymakers. They may

learn that there are needs they have overlooked or get new ideas to solve old problems and improve service delivery. In many cases, elected or other government officials are purposely invited to deliberative forums because they have the authority to address issues discussed at these forums. Therefore, involving them is the first step to promote action and change. In addition, if decision makers are present in public forums, they are more likely to be held accountable by other participants, thus creating additional incentives for following up on possible recommendations.

Those who decide to strategically convene deliberative events are prepared to use forums as an opportunity to gather community input and to generate action and change. They promote deliberation as a process to deal with locally relevant issues where traditional meetings have failed. Public deliberation that addresses topics that are deemed urgent by the community are more likely to draw high participation and engagement. In an era when people have limited time and endless options for how to spend it, deliberation needs to be relevant if citizens are to participate, let alone engage in follow up. In some cases, deliberative forums do generate hunger for more deliberation and follow-up work, but they rarely translate into collective mobilization or organizing unless someone emerges to take charge of organizing.

In those instances when follow-up actions do occur, they are generally taken by civic organizations or public institutions whose members were engaged in the deliberative forums. In Clarksburg, West Virginia, for example (see “Sources of Deliberation,” page 30), there was significant follow-up after a forum on underage drinking because the event had been carefully planned to include all the actors who were already working on the problem. The forum was an opportunity to bring these actors together and form a coalition to address underage drinking in a more systematic way. In this case, public deliberation enabled *coordination*, which led to planning follow-up actions.

Another significant effort based on deliberative practices are the Connecticut Community Conversations (see “Sources of Deliberation”), which are designed to promote coordination of action even prior

Citizens and Collective Action

to deliberation. According to their bylaws, the Conversations must be organized by a group of at least 6 organizations, which in turn need to assemble an even larger planning committee (of around 20) to ensure broad outreach and diversity of opinions. The planning phase requires such a significant investment of time and energy that convenors have an interest in maximizing the outcomes of the Conversations. Therefore, organizers use the Conversations' feedback to further their objectives. Given the number of participants (around 100) and the focus on diversity, the Conversations are an important tool to provide *community input* that can be used to create momentum and promote action and policy change.

Clearly, when groups or organizations embed public deliberation, action is more likely to occur for several reasons. First,

their investment of time and organizational resources and their understanding of deliberation as an actionable tool will lead convenors to maximize the outcome of deliberations. Convenors will be ready to capture the benefits of public deliberation, for example, by being prepared to act on inputs gained from the deliberation, bringing together the "right" players to promote change, or using deliberation to promote civic engagement. Second, when deliberation is used over time, convenors become more sophisticated and improve their abilities to

reach out to broader coalitions or involve key partners. Presenting deliberation as a relevant process that organizations should use to achieve their objectives, not as

In an era in which people have limited time and endless options for how to spend it, deliberation needs to be relevant if citizens are to participate, let alone engage in follow up.

an abstract concept, is fundamental to deliberation's continued practice.

Since public deliberation requires substantial commitments of time, resources, and energy from local partners, it creates what we define as "ownership." Therefore, when intentional deliberation results in public action it is usually undertaken not by the participants in public deliberation directly, but rather by institutions and organizations that have ownership of the practice and are prepared to act on its outcomes. It is only when organizations have ownership of the deliberative process that they intentionally embed it in their decision making and are prepared to act on deliberations' outcomes. Convenors need to be prepared to capture the ideas and momentum generated by public deliberation; otherwise, interest for action will rapidly vanish.

Practitioners and scholars alike should together develop a more complete and coherent understanding of these and other crucial elements that connect the very underexplored connections between deliberative forums and public action.

Elena Fagotto is senior research associate with the KSG Taubman Center at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She can be reached at elena_fagotto@ksg.harvard.edu.

Archon Fung is associate professor of public policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He can be reached at archon_fung@harvard.edu.

Libby Kingseed is an archivist and researcher at the Kettering Foundation. She can be reached at kingseed@kettering.org.



The Kettering Foundation, chartered in 1927, is a research foundation rooted in the American tradition of inventive research. Its founder, Charles F. Kettering, holder of more than 200 patents, is best known for his invention of the automobile self-starter. He was interested, above all, in seeking practical answers to "the problems behind the problems."

The foundation today continues in that tradition. The objective of the research now is to study what helps democracy work as it should. Seven major Kettering programs are designed to shed light on what is required to strengthen public life.

Kettering is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) research organization supported by an endowment. For more information about KF research and publications, see the Kettering Foundation's Web site at www.kettering.org.

Connections is published by the Kettering Foundation, 200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799. The articles in *Connections* reflect the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the foundation, its trustees, or its officers.

Editors

David S. Frech
Bob Mihalek
Deborah Witte

Copy Editor

Lisa Boone-Berry

Design and Production

Long's Graphic Design, Inc.

Illustrations

Long's Graphic Design, Inc.

Acknowledgments

Boyle, Phillip. "Do School Boards Matter?" *PRISM*, Spring 2004, pp. 19, 21.
©2004 Colorado School Board Association. Reprinted with permission of the Colorado School Board Association.

Cook, Brian J. *Bureaucracy and Self-Government: Reconsidering the Role of Public Administration in American Politics*, pp. 134-135.
©1996 The Johns Hopkins University Press. Reprinted with permission of The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Derthick, Martha. *Keeping the Compound Republic: Essays on American Federalism*, p. 152. ©2001 Brookings Institution Press. Reprinted with permission of the Brookings Institution Press.

Frederickson, H. George. *The Spirit of Public Administration*, pp. 231-232.
©1997 Jossey-Bass. Reprinted with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Wolfe, Alan. *Does American Democracy Still Work?* pp. 15-16, 47-48.
©1997 Yale University Press. Reprinted with permission of the Yale University Press.

Urschel, Jane W. "Fed Up! Can School Boards Reconnect with Communities in Order to Govern Education and Learning?" *PRISM*, Spring 2004, pp. 16-17.
©2004 Colorado School Board Association. Reprinted with permission of the Colorado School Board Association.



© Copyright 2007 by the Kettering Foundation

200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799; (937) 434-7300

444 North Capitol Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001; (202) 393-4478

6 East 39th Street, New York, New York 10016 (212); 686-7016

www.kettering.org

Kettering Foundation
200 Commons Road
Dayton, OH 45459-2799

Nonprofit Organization U.S. Postage PAID Dayton, OH Permit No. 638
