

Kettering Foundation

CONNECTIONS

Summer/Fall 2005



June Board Summary

At the Kettering Foundation's spring board meeting this past June, trustees and staff explored different options for Kettering's international research, listening to the remarks of three longtime research partners about the challenges of exporting democracy. They were Daniel Yankelovich, founder of Public Agenda and former Kettering board member; Ramon Daubon, Vice President for Programs at the Inter-American Foundation; and Randa Slim, the executive director of the Institute for Sustained Dialogue.

Debate over the current U.S. policy of imposing democratic reform by force in places like Iraq has divided not only politicians and policymakers in Washington, Yankelovich noted in his opening remarks, but also citizens in much of the rest of the country. Elections alone, he cautioned, are not a cure-all for political instability or social injustice. Hitler, he pointed out, was democratically elected in Germany, while more recent elections in the Arab World in places like Algeria and southern Lebanon have brought hard-line fundamentalists to power—hardly the result U.S. or European interests had hoped for.

Current efforts to promote the spread of democracy, however, have created a number of interesting opportunities for both exploring insights from the foundation's past work and focusing the direction of future research: 1) that elections alone do not make a democracy; 2) that true democracy requires the work of both officials and citizens; 3) that public deliberation can help get citizens from *me* to *we*; 4) and finally, that we must find ways to translate citizen deliberation into action.

While Yankelovich's comments focused on the importance of citizen work to creating an effective democracy, Daubon's remarks addressed the link between democratic life and economic growth.

For the past 35 years, the Inter-American Foundation has been working on the issue in Latin America. "What we've come to learn, is that without an undergirth of a democratic way of concertation, of learning to talk and make decisions together, economics doesn't work," Daubon said. Democracy he suggested, is really a capacity to talk, identify what's important, consider alternatives, and make decisions. It is done in many places, he added, but seldom in Latin America where there is both a rigid



class structure and a strong tradition of authoritarian rule.

"The culture cannot be taught. It has to be learned, and it is learned by experiencing it," Daubon explained. Working in small, often poor communities, Daubon's foundation has been in the business of engaging citizens in defining economic goals and projects. The idea has been enthusiastically embraced not only by grass-

roots organizations, but also by an unexpected ally—business interests who see it as a powerful economic tool. To date, some 53 corporate sponsors have been involved. They see the work as not only improving the region's economy, but also its political stability. Kettering's research in civil economics, Daubon pointed out, laid the groundwork for this new approach.

Business interests, interestingly enough, also played a role in Randa Slim's discussion of political reform efforts in the Middle East. Since 9/11, she noted, a host of foundations and government agencies, ranging from USAID to the United Nations, have tried to promote the spread of democracy in the Middle East, but have met with little, if any, success. Most have little, if any, understanding of Islam, she said. As a result they are seen as trying to import something entirely alien to the region. Secondly, their efforts are largely mechanistic: they focus on voting and multiparty elections and the like.

Locals are interested in a far more fundamental conversation. Broad-based coalitions of Islamicists, nationalists, civic activists, and business interests have emerged in places like Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, Slim explained, and they are engaged in a dialogue about both citizenship and public life. Business interests are critical, she added, because they can provide a moderating influence to help resolve conflicts between the old and new. They also have a great deal of credibility—something most governments in the region and outside interests lack.

Kettering Foundation president David Mathews concluded the meeting by noting that the Kettering Foundation's understanding of democracy as a culture rather than a process could be valuable in a wider study of these kinds of problems. At the same time, research with international partners could provide valuable insights into a number of other areas of Kettering's research about the role of both citizens and institutions in a democracy.

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Moscow City Duma

and Democracy in Russia

By Denis V. Makarov

The author expresses his gratitude for the personal help of Evgeniy Bunimovich and his office staff in making this article possible.

Moscow is a huge city. The Russian capital has more than ten million residents, one-fourteenth of the population of the entire federation. Moscow has long been a gateway to Russia, a target for invaders over history and commonly the point of entry for international corporations today, both of whom have shared the conviction that “whoever takes Moscow takes Russia.”

Moscow, like St. Petersburg, is a federal region, with both federal and local political life. However, Muscovites—well placed for comparing federal and local parliamentary practices—strongly believe that the Moscow City Duma is more democratic and intellectual than the Federal Duma, (the lower house of the Russian Federal Parliament). More important, the public sees a closeness and accessibility in the Moscow City Duma’s work with citizens than is evident with the Federal Duma.

The Moscow City Duma has 35 deputies, each representing about 200,000 voters. Although the deputies can belong to different political parties, there are no straight divisions along party lines within the Duma. Compared to the members of the Federal Duma, Moscow deputies are more likely to employ teamwork and to discuss issues on a collective decision-making basis. On the contrary, in the Federal Duma, the work of representatives is frequently divided by party agendas, and, on occasion, hampered by “fist fights.” Thirty-five deputies might not seem sufficient for a city of ten million. However,

Deputy Tatjana Portnova believes that 35 professional public representatives can hear and understand one another’s positions more effectively than can the 450 deputies in the Federal Duma.

When assessing the popularity of the Moscow Duma, Deputy Evgeniy Bunimovich writes: “We are younger and more attractive. All of us can smile glaringly, can propose meaningful arguments, can speak for live broadcasting, and can knock together unsteady parliamentary coalitions. . . . I personally admire the precise

courtesy and correctness fellow deputies have when putting down your amendment.”¹ By comparison, members of the Federal Duma can easily be rude and even start battles when serious disagreements take place.

What are the strategic principles of the Moscow City Duma’s operating routine that enable its deputies to work better on solving public issues? The answer is suggested in a comment Deputy Alexander Krutov made when he spoke of the Duma’s early history. Krutov stressed that the Duma’s commissions were initially created not on branch or expert/field principles, but on the “around particular issue” principle.²

The Duma’s democratic traditions were also influenced by the numerous trips deputies made to the United States. As Alexander Krutov stated,

1. E. A. Bunimovich, “One Hundred Days Somewhere around the Power. (Notes by a Sudden Deputy),” *Bulletin of the Moscow City Duma* (special edition, 2003), p. 11.

2. A. N. Krutov, “The Past and the Duma,” *Bulletin of the Moscow City Duma* (special edition, 2003), p. 20.



What was special in 1994 were the seminars for deputies and their office employees . . . conducted by the National Democratic Institute (USA). We saw how authorities like ourselves work in big and middle-sized cities of the United States and Canada; we were told how to organize public meetings, how to cooperate with media, and where to look during a TV interview. All this was interesting and useful as well.

Krutov added that visits sponsored by the Municipal Finance and Governance program of the U.S. State Department Agency for International Development were also important.

During those visits we gained first-hand experience on how municipal budgets are made in cities like Chicago, Atlanta, Indianapolis, and Washington, but we also saw what issues they faced and what methods they used when working on such issues.³

Deputy⁴ Michail Moskvina-Tarhanov offers an example of American collective decision making that may be useful to

1996 were impressed by the atmosphere and collective discussion. Some features (including religious readings) have been implemented in Moscow Duma practices.

The democratic practices of the Moscow Duma have been strengthened by two bodies—the Public Expertise Councils and the Duma commissions. The first is an informal group that contributes to the work of the latter, which aims at solving particular issues. Both use deliberative discussions to weigh alternative strategies. Ordinary citizens can join such discussions. Although Duma deputies do not usually use the term *forum*, the way they structure their discussions around an issue resembles round tables, study circles, and focus groups. When, for example, an education matter is on the agenda, Evgeniy Bunimovich reports, “we might invite either a heterogeneous group of interested citizens or a group of experts—school principals, teachers. The intellectual contributions of both groups are valuable; we forward what we have gained to the next level—to the Duma’s Commission

on Education.” The way this commission works, Bunimovich says, is reminiscent of deliberative forums: “There are no battles, every voice is heard, and the pros and cons of all the possible strategies are considered. Of course, we always examine possible trade-offs or risks, with the understanding that not all

costs are associated with money.”

Valery Sevostyanov, who served as a Moscow City Duma deputy from 1993 to 1997, describes the Public Expertise Councils as a school of democracy for the Duma. He even suggests that “the creation of independent public expertise councils around many parliaments of different levels can serve as one of the measures for public safety.”⁵ The councils’ public-policy tradition, Sevostyanov says, has created a “corporate style” of cooperation between the Moscow Duma and citizens: “The basis of that style is a high intellectual level combined with a democratic form of communication,” which, he adds, allows the Duma to speak confidently with other

branches of power about Moscow city development. It is important, Sevostyanov says, that individual factions not strive for victory: “We should have an arbitrator for all burning issues, and public expertise should be charged with that mission. There is a Chinese proverb that says: ‘The best victory is the victory in which no one is defeated.’”⁶

Yuri Sizov, a member of the Moscow Duma Commission for Budgeting and Finance from 1993 to 1997, shows his support for Sevostyanov’s position in the title he gave to an article written for the Duma’s tenth anniversary in 2003: “Duma—A Unique School of Common Decisions.” That “school,” Sizov wrote, shaped his professional development: “Since then, my every decision goes through an internal expertise process: I automatically weigh financial issues with all others—social, political, and simply human.” Sizov serves now as regional chairman of the Federal Commission on Securities of the Federal Central Region, work which brings him into contact with all 11 federal regions. He says he is faced with the need to find a common ground: “I cannot say it is always an easy job, but if I hadn’t had those four years as a Moscow Duma deputy, it would be much harder.” In the Duma, he added, he learned the “simple truth” that “even those planning to move in different directions can discover a common trajectory if their communications are based on a reasonably practical basis for moving forward.”⁷

In conclusion, I cite Deputy Irina Rukina’s brief explanation for the success of the Moscow City Duma: “We are closer to the public.”

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“Even those planning to move in different directions can discover a common trajectory if their communications are based on a reasonably practical basis for moving forward.”

Moscow Duma—the attendance by U.S. legislators at Christian prayer meetings. Such informal meetings date back to World War II, when Christian legislators gathered for informal talks, discussions, Bible reading, and prayer. At the war’s close, such meetings evolved into a notable event: the first Thursday of February, the President chairs a prayer breakfast at the Washington Hilton attended by thousands of legislators, public association representatives, diplomats, and international guests. For three days, these people discuss different religious, social, and political issues, and establish personal contacts with one another. Deputies from the Moscow City Duma who visited in 1995 and

3. A. N. Krutov, “The Past and the Duma,” *Bulletin of the Moscow City Duma*, (special edition, 2003), p. 21.

4. V. A. Maximov, “Memoirs on the Duma by an ‘Occasional’ Person,” *Bulletin of the Moscow City Duma* (special edition, 2003), p. 29.

5. V. L. Sevostyanov, “Moscow City Duma Initiates Public Expertise on Ecology in Moscow,” *Bulletin of the Moscow City Duma* (special edition, 2003), p. 54.

6. V. L. Sevostyanov, “Moscow City Duma Initiates Public Expertise on Ecology in Moscow,” *Bulletin of the Moscow City Duma* (special edition, 2003), p. 56.

7. Y. S. Sizov, “Duma—A Unique School of Common Decisions,” *Bulletin of the Moscow City Duma* (special edition, 2003), pp. 59–60.

The Kettering Foundation, chartered in 1927, is a research foundation—not a grant-giving 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. Six major Kettering programs are designed to shed light on what is required to strengthen public life.

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