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Constructive Politics as Public Work: Organizing the Literature

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Source: *Political Theory*, Vol. 39, No. 5 (October 2011), pp. 630-660

Published by: Sage Publications, Inc.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23036076>

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# Constructive Politics as Public Work: Organizing the Literature

Political Theory  
39(5) 630–660  
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DOI: 10.1177/0090591711413747  
<http://ptx.sagepub.com>  


Harry C. Boyte<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This essay argues that fulfilling the promise of participatory democratic theory requires ways for citizens to **reconstruct** the world, not simply to improve its governance processes. The concept of public work, expressing civic agency, or the capacity of diverse citizens to build a democratic way of life, embodies this shift. It posits citizens as **co-creators** of the world, not simply deliberators and decision-makers **about** the world. Public work is a normative, democratizing ideal of citizenship generalized from communal labors of creating the commons, with roots in diverse cultures. Shaped through contention with forces which threaten shared ways of life and their commons, grounded in an understanding of human plurality, public work has **political** qualities that unmask sentimentalized civic discourses of modern elites. Public work places citizens, not markets or states, as the foundational agents of democracy. It opens a path beyond the political crisis.

## Keywords

Agency, citizenship, commonwealth, politics, public work

The Dutch have a long history of reclamation of marshes and fenland, resulting in some 3,000 polders nationwide. The first polders were constructed in the 11th century. Due to flooding disasters water boards . . . . . were set up to

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maintain the integrity of the water defences around polders, maintain the waterways inside a polder and control the various water levels. Water bodies hold separate elections, levy taxes and function independently from other government bodies. . . . They are the oldest democratic institution in the country. The necessary co-operation between all ranks in maintaining polder integrity also gave its name to the Dutch version of third way politics—the Polder Model.

“Polder,” *Wikipedia* Entry<sup>1</sup>

It is a fine sight to see a handful of workmen . . . checked by some difficulty, [who] ponder the problem each for himself, make various suggestions for dealing with it, and then apply unanimously the method conceived by one, who may or may not have any official authority . . . at such moments, the image of a free community appears.

Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*<sup>2</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s social movements took up a myriad of causes—civil rights, women’s liberation, independence, ending apartheid, nuclear disarmament, peace in Vietnam, environmentalism, gay rights, neighborhood power, among others. Beyond differences, all challenged modern hierarchies and depersonalizing trends. Alain Touraine’s description of the French student and labor strikes in May 1968 had wider application: “The enemy is no longer a person of a social category, the monarch or the bourgeoisie. He is the totality of the depersonalized, ‘rationalized’, bureaucratized modes of . . . power in modern society.”<sup>3</sup>

Participatory democratic theory can be seen as a conceptual and programmatic response to such democratic aspirations, with wide currency. As Jeffrey Hilmer observes, “during its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, participatory democratic theory . . . was considered a viable alternative to liberal democracy as theorized by American political scientists.”<sup>4</sup> Northerners like Carole Pateman, Jane Mansbridge, and Benjamin Barber joined theorists of the Global South like Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, and Stephen Biko in considering what activist democracy requires.<sup>5</sup> Yet neither movements nor theorists stemmed revolutions from above—corporate-led globalization and marketization,<sup>6</sup> technocratic interventions<sup>7</sup>—that thwarted the “long march through the institutions,” in the phrase of *Il Manifesto*,<sup>8</sup> needed for democratization.

By the 1990s, participatory democratic theory had declined. Hilmer’s survey finds little mention of it in recent literature on democracy. Some propose that deliberative democracy is a new stage of active democracy, even a “revolutionary political ideal,”<sup>9</sup> but I argue that deliberation is a useful but modest

attempt to create an enclave of agency in times of diminished democracy, not sufficient for strong democracy. Jürgen Habermas describes its limits: “We are concerned with finite, embodied actors who are socialized in concrete forms of life, situated in historical time and social space.”<sup>10</sup> Deliberation, he says, “invests the democratic process with normative connotations stronger than those found in the liberal model but weaker than those found in the republican model.” In his view, “The success of deliberative politics depends not on a collectively acting citizenry but on the institutionalization of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication, as well as on the interplay of institutionalized deliberative processes with informally developed public opinions.”<sup>11</sup>

Hilmer also describes stirrings of participatory democracy in the Global South which are producing much more change than is suggested by deliberative democracy.<sup>12</sup> The first section of this essay examines deliberative democracy from the vantage of participatory democracy in order to clarify deliberation’s strengths and limits. I build on the concept of maximum participation of people in governance across diverse settings (not only formal politics but also family, workplace, education, etc). This is Hilmer’s definition, widely shared.<sup>13</sup> I also argue that for participatory democratic theory to realize its promise, citizens need ways to *reconstruct* the world, not simply to improve its decision-making processes. *Civic agency*, people’s capacities to work collectively across differences to build and sustain a democratic life together, addresses this challenge. Civic agency accents the *productive*, not simply distributive, side of politics, including creating the commons, shared resources of a common life. It illuminates immense histories of popular struggle whose memories are threatened with obliteration.<sup>14</sup> Civic agency puts citizens as *co-creators* of the world, not only deliberators or decision-makers *about* the world. The concept of *public work*, taken up in a later section, embodies co-creation. I locate public work in relation to other views of active citizenship, particularly deliberation and associative democracy.

Public work is a normative, democratizing ideal of citizenship generalized from communal labors of making and tending the commons, with roots in diverse cultures. Constituting elements of the ideal are present in “poldering,” from the introductory Dutch case. Public work involves cooperative, egalitarian, practical labors “across ranks” on public projects, with self-organized governance. Such work accents co-creation (“God created the world, the Dutch created Holland” is the quip). Shaped through contention with forces which threaten shared ways of life, from the sea to markets and states, grounded in an understanding of human plurality, public work has *political* qualities which unmask sentimentalized elite discourses of citizenship. Generalizing beyond specific contexts, I define public work as self-organized

efforts by a mix of people who solve common problems and create things, material or symbolic, of lasting civic value.

Public work, expressing civic agency, can be usefully compared and contrasted with *civic capacity*, a concept developed by Xavier de Souza Briggs and others to convey the idea of efficacious collective action on public problems under conditions of great diversity. Civic capacity draws on both the liberal “contest” view of democracy, stressing conflicts of interest, and on the “deliberative” view which asks how decisions can be more attentive to the interplay of different vantages and how people can learn in the process. It also differs from both. Civic capacity stresses flexible, ever-changing learning processes and actions across sectors of government, business, and civil society to increase capacities to effectively address public problems. It goes beyond the governance focus on decision-making, focusing on how publics can best tackle real-world challenges, from education and land use to economic development, in a way that reconciles often competing logics of “empowerment,” changing political and social relationships to enhance access to influence, and “efficiency,” stressing public results. Civic capacity has kinship with public work in its emphasis on changing the “state of the world” itself, but public work has a broader view of politics, making a shared life as the context for problem solving, and of the citizen, as co-creator. Public work’s concepts of politics and the citizen illuminate dysfunctions of consumer culture which civic capacity theorists neglect. Thus the new public management, which Briggs celebrates for its shift from rules compliance to behavior which produces public results, is partly constituted by consumerism, appearing in its metaphor of “citizen as customer.” Similarly, Briggs’ treatment of accountability slights mutual responsibility for the whole, essential to a shared life.<sup>15</sup> Today it is as if people decorate their own apartments and attend to their own issues while the building collapses. Without a civic counterweight to the ravages of privatization, government is the singular bulwark against growing public squalor.

I argue that public work is necessary to achieve strong democracy and to reinvigorate the commonwealth. There are large obstacles. The third section details these in societies where “work” is largely an instrumental means to consumerist ends. As daunting as these are, the fourth section points to four resources for making work public: historical traditions, lessons from broad-based organizing, pressures on governments to enlist civic energies, and citizen professionalism. Public work is a politics of productive action by diverse agents to create a democratic way of life. It makes citizens, not markets or states, the agents and architects of democracy, suggesting reintegration of states and markets into civic life. It opens a path beyond the political crisis.

## The Limits of Deliberative Politics

Deliberative democracy has the virtue of conceiving of human actors in an open-ended process of listening, presenting arguments, and exchanging views in ways that can produce better judgments and deepen collective learning. Most accounts also take governance structures, especially the state system, as a given, impervious to deep change. Citizens' deliberative role is to enrich and inform, not to reshape or reconstruct. John Dryzek, who seeks partially to de-link deliberation from the state, nonetheless reproduces a two-tier system in which state actors are the main architects and agents of crucial experiences like ending apartheid.<sup>16</sup> Others in the deliberative camp like John Forester, with a more co-creative view of the citizen, show the insufficiency of deliberative politics when they reach for language to describe what is at work in making substantial change. I argue that deliberation in all these cases is too limited to convey the idea of citizens as co-creators of the world.

Contemporary theory of deliberative politics originated in a distinction Habermas makes between Greek democracy and contemporary conditions. For the Greeks, public judgment was conveyed by the concept of *phronesis*, practical wisdom developed through public action around common issues in the space of the polis. For Habermas, the public sphere in the modern world is qualitatively different. "The theme of the modern (in contrast to the ancient) public sphere shifted from the properly political tasks of a citizenry acting in common . . . to the more properly civic tasks of a society engaged in critical public debate."<sup>17</sup> This distinction signals insights into new spaces of civic freedom as well as his adjustments to modern conditions. Habermas describes civic life in such spaces during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the language of public opinion became connected to a vibrant urban public sphere of debate and discussion rooted in lecture halls, museums, public parks, theaters, meeting houses, opera houses, coffee shops, and more. These were supported by an information infrastructure of the press, publishing houses, lending libraries, and literary societies. In the deliberative public sphere, older hierarchical principles of deference and ascribed social status gave way to principles of rational discourse. Emergent professional and business groups asserted claims to a more general social and political leadership. In public spaces, patterns of communication emerged which were characterized by norms of inclusivity, the give and take of argument, and a relatively horizontal experience of interaction. Arguments were judged by their fit, by pragmatic considerations of anticipated consequences, by excellence of logic and so forth, not mainly by the social status of the speaker.<sup>18</sup>

Habermas develops his theory to dispute schools of thought, from functionalism to structuralism and post-structuralism, which hold citizens to be pawns of forces beyond their control. He charges that in such theories “subjects who constitute their own worlds or, at a higher level, intersubjectively share common lifeworlds, drop out.”<sup>19</sup> Habermas’ effort to maintain a sense of human agency is clear, but its limits are also noteworthy. Critics have pointed out the detachment of citizens from democratic empowerment in Habermasian theory. For Ian Budge, Habermasian deliberative theory is a communicative rationality “free from domination, coercion, manipulation and strategizing.” Such deliberation threatens “to take the politics out of politics.” Budge (tongue-in-cheek?) says that this is a “university seminar” model of deliberation.<sup>20</sup> Aviezer Tucker sees oligarchic tendencies in both the theory and practice descending from Habermas, in which “an educated intellectual *avant-garde* is in charge both of identifying the common will [produced by deliberation] and of homogenizing and re-educating the deliberating public” to conform to principles of rational discourse.<sup>21</sup>

Such limited agency stems from Habermas’ assumption that the state is largely impervious to change. Thus he criticizes Hannah Arendt as unrealistic for imagining that “the political public sphere should be revitalized to the point where a regenerated citizenry can, in the forms of a decentralized self-governance, (once again) appropriate bureaucratically alienated state power.”<sup>22</sup> Habermas sees deliberation as a communicative practice with little involvement of citizens in public problem solving, which occurs through the state. In *Between Facts and Norms*, he argues that the capacity of civil society “to solve problems on its own is limited.” The basic function of the public sphere is to move problems to the formal system. He proposes that “the communicative structures of the public sphere *relieve* the public of the burden of decision-making.” Citizens should be “communicatively-oriented” rather than “success-oriented,” and in deliberation the goal should be “influence,” not “power.” Thus, “political *influence* supported by public opinion is converted into political *power* only when it affects the beliefs and decisions of *authorized* members of the political system (politicians, voters, etc.)” Without translation into formal structures, citizen efforts amount to little. “The public opinion that is worked up via democratic procedures into communicative power cannot ‘rule’ of itself but can only point the use of administration power in specific directions.”<sup>23</sup>

Actual deliberative practices studied and promoted by theorists such as David Mathews, John Dedrick, Laura Grattan, Archon Fung, Matt Leighninger, Lawrence Jacobs and others make few such distinctions. They mix practical problem solving with communicative interests.<sup>24</sup> Drawing on these, Nöelle

McAfee distinguishes practically oriented deliberation in everyday experience and groups like the Kettering Foundation and Everyday Democracy from the “preference-based model” of social scientists, and the “rational proceduralist” model of Rawls and Habermas.<sup>25</sup> Forester is a deliberative theorist in the practice tradition. His book *The Deliberative Practitioner* generates powerful insights about deliberative practices in the messy, real-world political environments in which planners practice their craft. Forester argues that there is a tension in Habermas between “the critical pragmatist” and “the theorist of justice.” While the latter is “ahistorical and overridealized,” Forester sees Habermas’s “sociology of action [as] far more useful than many believe.”<sup>26</sup> Forester calls for “removing the blinkers and emotional tone-deafness of much of conventional social science,” identifying challenges like “traditions of thought that reduce politics to exchange, objectivity to quantification, representation to abstraction, and ethics to mere prescription.”<sup>27</sup> He calls for theory with a “bias toward practice.” Planning should “focus on political agency, staged by political-economic structure and culture” and be understood as “deliberative action that shapes others’ understandings of their cities, their selves, and crucially their possibilities of action, for better or worse.”<sup>28</sup> Grounding deliberative theory in practice stories, Forester contrasts his approach with what he calls the “Deweyan model,” after John Dewey, and “the Freirean model,” after Freire, with whom he associates Habermas’s critical pragmatism. The former is focused “on the ways we learn in dialogical action together by testing our hunches, assumptions, and suggestions of action” in a “trial-and-error reflection in action on practical experience.”<sup>29</sup> The latter, informing critical theory, “focuses on the ways we learn in dialogue by probing our political possibilities. . . . Whose definitions of problems and solutions, of expertise and status, of power and powerlessness perpetuate relations of dependency and hopelessness?”<sup>30</sup>

Drawing from both, Forester proposes a third model, a “transformative theory of social learning that explores not only how our arguments change in dialogues and negotiations but how we change as well.” This model “leads us to stand the traditional fact-value hierarchy on its head. If value-free facts would be, by definition, without value . . . we can come to see that a claim about a ‘fact’ is simultaneously a claim that something is important.” Storytelling is thus central to transformative learning. Stories “can produce or reproduce, strengthen or weaken, the public sense of self.” They can help generate “new groups, organizations, or networks, not just arguments.” They can “provide a source of creativity and improvisation . . . engendering new social, cultural and political forms.” And they can transform ends, as well as relationships, identities, and agendas. “Listening together, we recognize as

important not only words but issues, details, relationships, even people we may have ignored or not appreciate.”<sup>31</sup> Forester stresses the importance of inclusion of marginalized voices. He argues that critical pragmatism “leads us directly to questions of power and hegemony, agenda setting, and the contestable reproduction of citizens’ knowledge, consent, and social relationships . . . in which parties not only protect their autonomy but learn with one another, and learn how they can act together as well.”<sup>32</sup> An insight from Forester here is the way planners can give “diplomatic recognition” to others’ efforts. Baruch Hirschberg explained his use of the term. Diplomatic recognition is “making people feel that you take seriously what they have to say to you . . . when you give other people ‘diplomatic recognition,’ even as a tactic, it changes them. [And] *you* end up changing too . . . you, having recognized them, have to take them more seriously.”<sup>33</sup>

Forester’s approach illustrates the “cultural turn” that I detail later, conveying a political understanding of humans as unique meaning-makers and storytellers, each capable of “new beginnings,” and of co-creating a common world. Forester shows the insufficiency of deliberation to convey co-creation when he seeks to describe what is going on in significant change. Thus he warns of the dangers of excessive focus on language: “We always face the danger that we will listen to what is said and hear words, not power; words, not judgment; words, not inclusion and exclusion; ‘mere words’ and not problem-framing and . . . strategies of practice.”<sup>34</sup> He uses the phrase “city building in practice” to describe “the politically astute work of these practitioners and the planners and designers like them.”<sup>35</sup> He employs “participatory action research” to convey the richness of bottom-up stories, describing changes that take place: “Transformation of done-to into doers, spectators and victims into activists, fragmented groups into renewed bodies.” He calls this “the ability to act together,” arguing that “if we overemphasize the talk and the dialogue . . . we risk missing what is truly transformative about such work.”<sup>36</sup> Forester’s analyses clearly show limits of “deliberation” pointing toward the need for a framework that describes how people build a common life through their everyday efforts.

## The Communal Roots of Public Work

A focus on co-creation of a common life draws attention to communal labor practices across the world.<sup>37</sup> Despite immense variety, certain elements recur regularly which allow generalization of a civic ideal beyond particular communities. These include self-organized governance; relatively egalitarian and cooperative effort across divisions; practical concerns for creating shared collective resources; adaptability, entailing a certain political savvy; and incentives based on appeal to immediate interests combined with cultivation

of concern for long-term community well-being. Elements of communal labor practices sometimes combine in languages and frames of larger, cross-community popular movements that seek democratization of power. These elements create foundations for a civic ideal different than either state-centered or market-centered approaches to public questions and democracy itself. I use the concept of public work to describe democratizing practices either within communities or across them, and contrast public work as a democratizing practice with communal labor themes manipulated by elites.

An early collection edited by the Norwegian anthropologist Leif O. Manger, *Communal Labor in the Sudan*, found that despite “many prophecies about expected disintegration and decline” as rural economies become increasingly involved in markets and state structures, communal labor showed signs of “adapting to new circumstances and developing new ways of survival.”<sup>38</sup> Manger defines communal labor as “formal reciprocal groups that are employed to solve tasks that the basic economic units cannot solve alone,” noting that such tasks are common in agricultural production, animal husbandry, or hunting. They include reciprocal efforts to help families such as house-building, and also creation of public goods that contribute to the well-being of the whole community, such as well-digging. They also include supplemental activities surrounding production, such as magical rites and prayers.<sup>39</sup> Communal labor practices like this combine practical calculation and bargaining with attentiveness to the reciprocities of a shared life built over time. Manger details the careful measuring of quantities of food, drink, and other payments in parties after communal labor practices. In *Mayordomo*, Stanley Crawford recounts how he and his wife settled in the 1970s in a Mexican community in New Mexico. He was elected leader (*mayordomo*) of the communal labor crew on his irrigation ditch, *acequia*, one of about 1,000 in the region, the heart of community life. Crawford describes the combination of contentious bargaining with calls for attention to community welfare in a meeting about water rights: “The sky rumbled and growled as we argued with each other into the night and heard accusations of cheating and hogging, waiting for the peacemakers to come forth . . . to remind us again of the one community of which we all formed part, whatever our many differences.”<sup>40</sup> Such practical, gritty, political qualities of communal labors are often absent in today’s sentimentalized, hortatory discourses of “voluntarism” and “service.”<sup>41</sup>

Prophecies of the disappearance of communal labors are paralleled by predictions that the “commons,” symbolic and material foundations for a shared life, are doomed. Commons is defined by Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom as “a resource shared by a group of people that is subject to social dilemmas.”<sup>42</sup> “Social dilemmas” means threats to their survival. Garrett Hardin

shows the fatalistic cast of mind with his 1968 article “The Tragedy of the Commons.” Hardin defines commons as a “free resource” open to all that erodes as each pursues his own interest. “Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons.”<sup>43</sup> Researchers counter Hardin by looking at actual cases of commons. While agreeing that threats to the commons exist—free riding, overuse, competition, and enclosure, among others—they find several of Hardin’s arguments to be simply mistaken: that the commons is by definition open to all, rather than a managed collective resource; that little or no communication exists among users; that users act only in their immediate and narrow self-interests, failing to take into account any long-term collective benefits; and that there are only two outcomes—privatization or government control.<sup>44</sup> Studying forest management, irrigation, inshore fishery, and more recently the Internet, they discover that decentralized governance with higher popular participation has advantages in terms of efficiency, sustainability, and equity. These include incorporation of local knowledge; greater involvement of those who are trustworthy and respect principles of reciprocity; feedback on subtle changes in the resource; better adapted rules; lower enforcement costs; and redundancy, which decreases the likelihood of a system-wide failure. Decentralized systems also have disadvantages, such as uneven involvement by local users; possibilities for “local tyrannies” and discrimination; lack of innovation and access to scientific knowledge; and inability to cope with large common pool resources. Ostrom argues for a mix of decentralized and general governance, what she calls “polycentric governance systems . . . where citizens are able to organize not just one but multiple governing authorities at different scales.” Such mixed systems may be messy, but in studies of local economies, “messy polycentric systems significantly outperformed metropolitan areas served by a limited number of large-scale, unified governments.”<sup>45</sup>

Work on governance highlights elements in *sustaining* the commons. In *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons*, edited by Hess and Ostrom, Peter Levine emphasizes another dimension, the public work involved in *making* it. “Such work,” he argues, “builds social capital, strengthens communities, and gives people the skills they need for collective citizenship.”<sup>46</sup> I argue that public work more broadly shifts the emphasis from *users* to *producers*.

Modern intellectual history includes a narrative of enclosure, the story of “the haves versus the have-nots, the elites versus the masses.”<sup>47</sup> Recent studies of communal labor, replete with examples of collective activities with public and political qualities, add to our understanding of the struggles around the commons by incorporating a politicized *cultural turn* that draws attention

to humans as meaning-makers and storytellers involved in a continuing, power-laden process of contesting, negotiating, and integrating interpretations of experience. People's identity is shaped over a life course by the narrative sense they make of their experiences, individually and collectively, by relationships with core reference groups, and by the public meaning of their stories, the way individual and communal life narratives are infused with evaluative systems. Collective public narratives often sharply clash with those of other groups.<sup>48</sup> The cultural turn includes interrogation of the particular understanding of the self associated with positivist science, connected to the rise of modern states and markets, the drive to make legible societies in pursuit of rationalization and control, and a constellation of mentalities associated with the term "mass," implying a one-directional process of homogenization and deracination.<sup>49</sup>

The cultural turn deepens understanding of the symbolic dimensions of politics. Cultural politics, recognizing science's uses, challenges the claims of those who maintain its sufficiency in grasping the human condition.<sup>50</sup> An awareness of the limits of science has been growing among scientists themselves. Thus John Holland, a leading figure in the science of complex adaptive systems, points out that the scientific aim is to develop a *theory* which can apply across radically different contexts for predictive purposes. As Holland says, "Model-building in science depends upon shearing away detail. . . . Numbers go about as far as we can go in shearing away detail. When we talk of numbers, nothing is left of shape, or color, or mass, or identities of an object, except the very fact of its existence. . . . Three buses, three storks, and three mountains are equivalent 'realizations' of the number three."<sup>51</sup> In contrast, a "poem aims at obliqueness and ambiguity to engage the reader at multiple levels." The result, in Holland's view, is that "the insights of poetry far surpass those of science in these domains . . . characterized by words like 'beauty,' 'justice,' 'purpose,' and 'meaning.'"<sup>52</sup> Politics, like poetry, is partly about complex interpretative acts, concerned with meaning, purpose, justice, and even beauty. In terms suggested by Forester, politics is the way to construct the *meaning* of "facts." Politics adds practical concerns for getting things done in a world of plurality. In the sense of politics dating from the Greeks, it engages the unique stories and interests of every person.<sup>53</sup>

Studies of communal labors attentive to cultural politics detail a wide repertoire of resistances to centralizing authorities. Cultural politics in this vein was pioneered by James C. Scott, whose studies of peasant resistance in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s led him to see parallels between "the struggle of state-making in early modern Europe . . . to create a legible society that could be understood before it was possible to intervene" and "the way

the World Bank is changing the Third World nowadays.”<sup>54</sup> Tad Mutersbaugh employs cultural politics to show the importance of communal labors in an indigenous Oaxacan village in Mexico facing dilemmas of labor migration. He emphasizes power “that is not exercised mechanically but within a political culture that includes negotiation, cooperation, contestation and resistance as multiple modes by which collective tensions may be resolved,” detailing how communal labor practices are associated with wide participation in governance. He also demonstrates how villagers develop communal agency in the face of threats like migration.<sup>55</sup> “Villagers protect local institutional integrity by managing migration timing via sanctions, by producing a sense of community belonging, and by constructing community identification through social practices such as communal labor.”<sup>56</sup>

Communal labors take on added public dimensions when employed by larger social and political movements. Thus, Tanya Korovkin shows how norms of communal labor called *minga* have been used by indigenous Otavalo communities as political resources in struggles against centralizing powers in the Ecuadorian Andes. These communities combined traditional and modern elements in adaptive ways, what she calls “strategic essentialism.”<sup>57</sup> *Minga*, unpaid communal work that effected community-wide improvements like water systems and schools proved central to this process, embodying egalitarian norms of exchange and reciprocity and decentralized governance. Such norms are “evoked repeatedly at communal assemblies and province-wide meetings by the new indigenous leaders as part of their campaign to build a new ethnic identity.”<sup>58</sup> *Minga* is a rallying cry of indigenous communities across the region.<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere, generalized themes of communal labor informed movements for independence, such as the famous use of *harambee* by the anticolonial movement in Kenya. After the genocide in Rwanda, the communal labor concept of *umuganda* has been used in a successful, if still fragile, effort to bridge the divisions between Hutu and Tutsi.<sup>60</sup> Public work themes are also used explicitly to champion “citizen-centered democracy” against statist approaches. In 2006, Omano Edigheji, an African theorist, challenged South African leaders in a high-level presidential seminar to return to a view of democracy in which citizens, not the state, are foundational agents. He drew on “cooperative work and deliberative traditions bringing people together [across differences],” building on a nationwide discussion organized by Idasa in 2004, ten years after the 1994 election, which raised civic agency and public work and resurfaced the immense popular struggle of the 1980s.<sup>61</sup>

In contrast to democratic usages, there are many cases of elites’ appropriating themes of communal labor to serve their own ends. Otavalo communities explicitly contrast *minga* with *faena*, conscripted collective labor on

public projects organized by colonial elites. Jacqueline Nzisabira, a Burundian with Idasa, the African democracy institute, describes how *harambee* radically changed meaning when it became a top-down practice invoked by politicians after independence, often associated with bribery and payoffs. Similarly, in her native Burundi, communal labors, known as *ibikorwa rusangi*, underwent change. "When I was growing up collective work was used to cultivate land in Burundi," Nzisabira describes. "Such labors empowered people and created a stronger sense of community." In recent years, she observes, "There has been a tendency for the government to control the process. The work shifts meaning when it is state directed, rather than coming from the community."<sup>62</sup> There are echoes of such dynamics in societies of the North Atlantic arc, where elites employ sentimental discourses of citizenship to mask other political agendas. The term "voluntarism" acquired general uses associated with budget cutbacks of Richard Nixon.<sup>63</sup> George Bush built his first inaugural address around citizenship, which he equated with service. David Cameron in Britain combines calls for volunteerism with sharp government reductions.<sup>64</sup>

Who owns and controls the symbols and practices of generalized communal labor appears as a central question in such cases. The question highlights the importance of the theory building of the Workshop on Political Theory and Public Policy on polycentric governance which focuses on questions of power, authority, and collective accountability.<sup>65</sup> Its design principles for governing the commons include rules well matched to local needs, capacities of people affected to participate in changing rules, respect by external powers for local community decision making, and locally imposed sanctions for breaking the rules. Such principles are useful in analyzing the obstacles to public work in modern societies.

## Contemporary Obstacles to Public Work

Public work as a normative ideal of citizenship, combining self-organized governance and cooperative labors across differences to solve problems and create collective resources, prompts imaginings of democracy in which citizens take centerstage. I propose that by understanding humans as meaning makers and storytellers, public work also suggests pathways toward the reintegration of corporate and governmental institutions into civic life. Bureaucracies of every sort can be reimagined differently than Habermas's system world, structures beyond change. They can be reconceived as complex human communities, products of human labors which can be reconstructed in more democratic ways by public work. Yet daunting obstacles arise from the evisceration of work's public dimensions.

Susan Faludi dramatized work's public decline in *Stiffed*, exploring changing identities of men, from African American shipyard workers to television executives and athletes. Men at century's end were "in an unfamiliar world where male worth is measured only by participation in a celebrity-driven consumer culture." With productive measures of success—supporting a family, contributing to the community, helping to build the nation—in shards, men resembled Betty Friedan's "trapped housewives" of the 1960s, without words to name discontents of a culture "drained of context, saturated with a competitive individualism that has been robbed of craft or utility and ruled by commercial values that revolve around who has the most, the best, the biggest, the fastest."<sup>66</sup>

Arriving at such a condition took decades. Matthew Crawford, in *Shop Class as Soul Craft*, champions "attentiveness," the importance of "seeing oneself in the world" through one's products, and engaging in "work that is genuinely useful."<sup>67</sup> Skilled labor, in his view, cultivates intellectual and manual dexterity, "a systematic encounter with the material world that requires thought."<sup>68</sup> Such qualities—engagement with the world, intellectual and manual capacities developed through self-directed effort, and a sense of the consequentiality of one's effort—all are associated with the ideal of public work, but they have radically eroded.

Using useful, skilled work as his standard, Crawford traces the process through which consequentiality of work became hollowed out as work became increasingly degraded, detaching "manual" from "mental" labor, eroding the agency of workers of all kinds. Scientific management replaced skilled labor with centralized processes. Self-directed activities were "dissolved or abstracted into parts and then reconstituted as a *process*." As Frederick Winslow Taylor, scientific management guru, put it, "All possible brain work should be removed from the shop and centered in the planning or laying out department."<sup>69</sup> Spiced with his own experiences in mind-numbing "intellectual work," Crawford shows how white collar and intellectual labor, celebrated as the "new knowledge economy," has become subjected to the same logic. "The time-and-motion study [of Taylor] has become a time-and-thought study," he writes. "To build an expert system, a living expert is debriefed and then cloned by a knowledge engineer. . . . Eventually hundreds or thousands of rules of thumb are fed into the computer. The result is a program that can 'make decisions' or 'draw conclusions' heuristically."<sup>70</sup> Consumerism formed a key strategy to get workers to go along with the degradation of work. "It was learned that the only way to get [workers] to work harder was to play upon the imagination, stimulating new needs and wants." For this purpose, "consumption, no less than production, needed to be brought under scientific management—the management of desire."<sup>71</sup>

Parallel erosion of self-governance occurred in public institutions, where centralizing dynamics were fed not by profit-seeking but by goals of distributive justice, equity, and protection of rights, implemented through rules which substitute for local discretion. For instance, Sara M. Evans and Barbara Nelson, in *Wage Justice: Comparable Worth and the Paradox of Technocratic Reform*, studied implementation of legislation in Minnesota to redress wage inequities between men and women. They find that equalizing wages was accomplished through centralizing processes which had the unintended effects of making workers increasingly powerless.<sup>72</sup> The endpoint of such processes is a focus on “outcome measures” accompanied by redefining citizens as customers and government agencies as service providers.<sup>73</sup>

Associational life has similarly been subject to instrumentalization in ways which greatly complicate hopes for civil society as “a place for us,” a site of self-directed civic activity.<sup>74</sup> Civic practices and identities of the citizen-doctor or citizen-teacher or citizen-pastor once lent public meanings to community life, rooting professional work in local cultures, creating relatively horizontal relations between professionals and other citizens. These roots radically eroded, as Thomas Bender has detailed, as professional education lost connections to the life, history, and cultures of places.<sup>75</sup> Unions, nonprofits, schools, and congregations turned from civic centers to service providers. As Craig Dykstra observes about congregational life, quoting Eugene Petersen, “[Pastors] are preoccupied with . . . how to keep the customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods.”<sup>76</sup>

Most strands of progressive politics both reflect and exacerbate such dynamics. A century of “mass politics” stressing universal claims, distributive justice, individual rights, and an existentially uprooted view of the citizen has come to shape progressive approaches to change.<sup>77</sup> Mass politics is based on a consumer conception of the person as concerned with individual appetites and needs. As Michael Sandel puts it, “A politics based on consumer identities . . . asks how best—most fully, or fairly, or efficiently to satisfy [needs and wants].”<sup>78</sup> It is closely tied to top-down mobilizing techniques like the door-to-door canvass and internet mobilizations, using a simplified script of good versus evil to rally large numbers of people, in which experts design both message and method.<sup>79</sup> In electoral politics, liberal Democrats, following consultants such as Mark Penn, frame elections as marketing to groups of voters defined by consumer niches.<sup>80</sup>

All these dynamics erode the public dimensions of work—self-organized governance, connections to communities, understandings of persons as co-creators of their environments. More, there is scant theoretical literature with

which to challenge the erosion of work's public dimensions. As Judith Shklar observes, "The philosophers of antiquity regarded productive and commercial work as so deeply degrading that it made a man unfit for citizenship."<sup>81</sup> With exceptions like Dewey, Weil, and Miroslav Volf,<sup>82</sup> most political theorists continue to separate active citizenship from work.

Yet theoretical resources do exist. Here, despite her consignment of labor to realm of necessity, not freedom, Arendt provides the valuable concept of world-building. In particular, as Linda Zerilli emphasizes, "Foregrounded in Arendt's account of action is something less about the *subject* than about the *world*. . . . What Arendt calls the 'world' is not nature or the earth as such but is related to . . . the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together."<sup>83</sup> The challenge, as Zerilli suggests, is to shift the concept of Arendtian world-building from fleeting moments found in revolutionary times to everyday, quotidian labors that build a common world. There are other resources for this task, for all its obstacles.

## Making Work More Public

I emphasize four resources for spreading public work in contemporary society. These include powerful histories of the democratic meanings of work; approaches to organizing which educate for citizenship; growing imperatives in government to produce public results that enlist public energies in new ways; and practice and theory of citizen professionalism that reintegrate experts and expertise with other ways of knowing and with other citizens.

1. In English history, village collective labors that sustained common lands, footpaths, forests, and fishing areas, as well as maintenance of common buildings like the village church, gave to peasantry a regular daily schooling in rough, grassroots democracy, even under feudalism. Immigrants to America brought such traditions with them, infusing concepts of the commonwealth and collective labors which build it with political vitality.<sup>84</sup> Work generally took on public and civic meanings. As Shklar put it, "a vision of economic independence . . . as the ethical basis of democratic citizenship took the place of an outmoded notion of public virtue."<sup>85</sup> Conceptions of the civic and democratic meanings of work continued well into the twentieth century. Thus the late Vice President Hubert Humphrey, shaped by the populist movements of the 1930s, championed a decentralized economy in a Senate debate in 1952. Humphrey

declared that the purpose of small business was not cheap prices but survival of independent producers who were the foundation of democracy. As he said, "Do we want an America where the economic market place is filled with a few Frankensteins and giants? Or do we want an America where there are thousands upon thousands of small entrepreneurs, independent businesses, and landholders who can stand on their own feet and talk aback to their Government or anyone else?" For Humphrey, this concept of property was tied to citizens as the foundational agents of democracy, embodied in the Preamble to the Constitution with its focus on "we the people."<sup>86</sup> Humphrey's view of a decentralized economy represented the revival, not simply survival, of the civic meanings of work. Studies such as Michael Denning's *Cultural Front* and Lary May's *The Big Tomorrow* have shown how "cultural workers," journalists, screenwriters and artists, scholars, educators, and others, complemented union and community organizing efforts.<sup>87</sup> United by goals including the defeat of fascism, the pursuit of economic and racial justice, and the defense of democracy, they sought with some success to change the symbols and narratives of the American dream from the individualist, WASP-oriented, consumerist ideal of the 1920s to a more cooperative, racially pluralist and egalitarian vision of democracy that emphasized productive work with public meaning. In parallel fashion, the intellectual historian Scott Peters unearthed a "prophetic counter-narrative" in higher education, with roots in land grant colleges and universities, in which faculty, staff and students worked in sustained, egalitarian partnerships with communities, using the language of public work to describe their efforts.<sup>88</sup>

2. Practices and methods of "broad-based organizing" counter mass politics with an understanding that each person is a unique and free political agent. They cultivate a sense of "the public person" akin to what Margaret Canovan has called political sobriety, "an exceptional degree of political realism and common sense, together with a remarkable capacity to exercise self-restraint and put shared long-term interests above private interests and short-term impulses."<sup>89</sup> Broad-based community organizations pursue social, racial, and economic justice in ways highly attentive to political and civic education.<sup>90</sup> Organizers often use the concept of citizens as co-creators and sometimes refer to their efforts across communities as "public work." As Gerald Taylor, an architect of this kind of organizing, put it, "thinking about organizing as public work helps people to understand themselves as builders of cities."<sup>91</sup>

Drawing out the different meanings of “public” in “public work,” one can detail work *of* publics, work *in* public, and work *for* public purposes. I describe broad-based organizing efforts as vivid illustrations of the first two dimensions. It involves work *of* a public, a diverse people who learn to work together. These groups teach members to understand the motivations and stories of others of different income, religious, cultural, or partisan backgrounds through what are called “one-on-ones.” Their efforts also generate work *in* public, making visible different, sometimes conflicting, interests, teaching how to use these conflicts for public purposes. Arendt is widely read in these groups partly because their action is informed by the concept of a public arena based on difference, akin to her public space of plurality. In a public arena, people operate on principles such as respect, recognition, and mutual accountability, not on the basis of “private principles” like loyalty, intimacy, and hope for nurturance. Citizens learn to work together on public issues out of diverse “self-interests” (not narrow selfishness but core passions and relationships). They solve problems, win victories for disadvantaged groups, and create public things with those with whom they may disagree, or whom they may even dislike. Such activity often broaden people’s interests toward “standing for the whole.”<sup>92</sup>

In organizing, people experience power similar to Arendt’s concept, which she contrasts with strength, an individual property; with force, which she saw as a natural phenomenon; and with violence, based on coercion. Power, for Arendt, emerges from humans acting in concert on some political project. It is always “a power potential and not an unchangeable, measurable and reliable entity like force or strength . . . [it] springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse”<sup>93</sup> Arendt’s concept of power also emphasizes its rare performative moments, neglecting everyday politics.<sup>94</sup> As Mary Dietz observes, Arendt’s horror of modern instrumentalization, with its “distortion of all things into means for the pursuit of allegedly higher ends,” led her to weaken the resources of her public realm theory for “carrying out . . . purposes in the very world it strives to vitalize.”<sup>95</sup> In broad-based organizing, participants add purposeful, everyday activity to Arendtian power. They seek to avoid instrumentalization by holding in balance “the world as it is” and “the world as it should be,” combining a focus on political education with efforts to achieve benefits for disadvantaged groups. The agent in organizing combines a strategic assessment of social and political power with attention to building

public relationships across differences.<sup>96</sup> Taylor calls this a shift from “protest to governance.” Governance, in these terms, “means learning how to be accountable,” he says. “It means being able to negotiate and compromise. It means understanding that people are not necessarily evil because they have different interests or ways of looking at the world.”<sup>97</sup> Similarly, Rom Coles, a political theorist long active in such organizations, argues that organizing “inflects [diverse] traditions in light of a radical democratic ethos that accents inclusion, dialogue, receptivity, equality, difference, a taste for ambiguity, patient discernment, and an affirmation that political relationships centrally involve ongoing tension, some compromise, and humility in the face of disagreement.”<sup>98</sup>

Broad-based community groups fit with Piotr Perczynski’s model of “associative democracy.” This “focuses on the *process* of societal change rather than aiming towards a pre-defined goal.” Perczynski calls for active citizenship “realized by actually *practicing* it.”<sup>99</sup> He emphasizes groups with participatory democratic qualities and also with some “social element” that cultivates concern for the welfare of the larger society beyond their ranks. Such groups are “schools for citizenship.”<sup>100</sup> The limit of such groups from the vantage of participatory democracy is that their goals, achieving justice and developing citizens, while important, do not include a general democratization of society. They here reflect the fatalism of the late Saul Alinsky, often seen as the architect of broad-based organizing. Alinsky, part of the populist movement of the 1930s, conveyed its expansive hopes for democratic change in his first book, *Reveille for Radicals*. By the end of his life, he was far more cynical.<sup>101</sup> Organizers saw themselves going far beyond his cynicism about human motivations after his death in 1972, but they accepted his view that the larger society could not be changed.<sup>102</sup> The challenge for broader democratization is to integrate organizing themes of action “by” publics and action “in” public with multiple kinds of work infused with democratic purpose.

3. A third resource for public work’s translation across contexts is pressure from the increasing complexity and scale of problems in modern societies to tap new sources of civic energy and talent. Current government initiatives like “empowered participatory government” and “catalytic governance” show countertrends to the customer service paradigm, while differing also from sentimentalized citizenship. They seek to develop more reciprocal, egalitarian,

cooperative partnerships between civil servants and citizens outside of government to accomplish public tasks. Al Dzur observes that these are spurred by the failure of conventional bureaucratic and professional practices. Thus, an administrator for a New England state department of corrections argued that he was “building inefficiency into the system” by involving extensive lay citizen participation. Dzur points to the value of such “inefficiency”: lay citizens, less attentive to rules and procedures, may counter flaws such as “rigidity in the face of rule obsolescence and inattentiveness to individual case complexity.” In the case of juries, citizen “irrationality” may “foster reflexivity that balances courts and judges’ bias toward procedural rationality with a concern for substantive rationality.”<sup>103</sup> Carmen Sirianni details initiatives within government, from local levels to federal agencies, which integrate themes of broad based organizing in order to generate more productive, collaborative work with citizens.<sup>104</sup>

4. Finally, addressing public problems effectively prompts attention to the civic dimensions of professions, where professionals learn to work *with* other citizens, rather *on* them or *for* them. Theoretical foundations of civic professionalism found early expression in the work of Dewey, who stressed the educative dimensions of “all callings [and] occupations.”<sup>105</sup> William Sullivan and Dzur have further developed theory of civic professionalism. Sullivan identifies a central tension in professionalism in the United States since the colonial period, “between a technical emphasis which stresses specialization—broadly linked to a utilitarian conception of society as a project for enhancing efficiency and individual satisfaction—and a sense of professional mission which has insisted upon the prominence of the ethical and civic dimension of the enterprise.”<sup>106</sup> Dzur details ways in which professionals’ work can be catalytic and energizing when they “step back” and practice what Forester called diplomatic recognition. He chronicles democratic trends in the areas of medicine, law, the movement against domestic violence, and elsewhere that enhance the authority and efficacy of lay citizens, adding multiple cases of what I call public work.<sup>107</sup> William Doherty and his colleagues at the Citizen Professional Center have pioneered in the practices and theory of such citizen professionalism. Adapting broad-based organizing practices and public work concepts to family and health professions, their citizen professional model begins with the premise that solving complex problems requires many sources

of knowledge, and “the greatest untapped resource for improving health and social well being is the knowledge, wisdom, and energy of individuals, families, and communities who face challenging issues in their everyday lives.” The Citizen Professional Center has generated multiple partnerships including suburban movements of families working to tame overscheduled, consumerist lives; an African American Citizen Fathers Project seeking to foster positive fathering models and practices; a new project with Hennepin County to change civil service practices into public work; and a pilot with Health Partners Como Clinic, called the Citizen Health Care Home, which stresses personal and family responsibility for one’s own health and opportunities for patient leadership development and co-responsibility for health.<sup>108</sup>

A fledgling higher education movement for engagement with communities and the larger democracy offers an expanding terrain for concepts of public work.<sup>109</sup> The movement draws on organizing experiences like the pioneering efforts at the College of St. Catherine by Nan Kari and her colleagues, who conceived of the college as a community and organized to “make its work more public.” Civic engagement is proving a fertile ground for initiatives based on public work, such as Public Achievement, a young people’s citizenship education effort now in hundreds of communities in more than a dozen countries. Public Achievement is taking root in a number of colleges, universities, and community colleges through a partnership called the American Democracy Project.<sup>110</sup>

### **Conclusion: A Return to “We the People”**

In a time of concern on the left about the public squalor of a marketplace culture and on the right about the overreach of government technocrats, public work holds potential to break the impasse. It returns to “we the people” as co-creators of a democratic society. This is not simply a normative idea; it also is descriptive—civic agency is emerging across the world.<sup>111</sup> But there is nothing simple about this return. The effort contends not only with formidable structural impediments but also intellectual ones.

The question posed in 1906 by the German socialist Werner Sombart, “Why is there no socialism in the United States?” preoccupying scholars and political progressives through the twentieth century, reappeared in mainstream discussion in 2009 when the late Tony Judt used it in a lecture at New York University to launch a discussion about growing inequality and public

squalor.<sup>112</sup> He argued that social democracy is the only alternative to public degradation. From the vantage of public work, focusing on what is “missing” in American politics eclipses the alternative based on citizen agency. This approach has been associated with populist themes now caricatured in the mainstream as a politics of grievance. In populism with a democratic cast, by way of contrast, people care about the commons when they help make and sustain it through their public labors, and the development of popular agency is a constituting theme.<sup>113</sup>

The gap between citizen- and state-centered politics was dramatized by the reception mainstream progressive opinion leaders gave to the populist elements of the Obama campaign, with its civic agency message of “yes we can,” accompanied by the organizing dimensions of the field operation.<sup>114</sup> Progressive opinion either ignored these or decried them as sentimental nonsense. A recent volume of essays coordinated by Theda Skocpol and Lawrence Jacobs on the first two years of the Obama presidency, *Reaching for a New Deal*, illustrates the former. Sophisticated about the policy process, the Washington political environment, challenges of a fragmented, 24/7 news cycle, and daunting opposition, the scholars nonetheless write as if the only significant agents of politics are politicians, media, and government instrumentalities. The extended introduction by Skocpol and Jacobs has no reference to civic agency ideas and practices of the 2008 campaign and dramatically neglects the movements of the 1930s which shaped the New Deal.<sup>115</sup> Writing after the election in *The New Yorker*, George Packer was simply contemptuous. Packer saw “yes we can” as disingenuous. “Throughout the campaign, Obama spoke of change coming from the bottom up rather than from the top down,” said Packer. “But every time I heard him tell a crowd, ‘This has never been about me; it’s about you’ he seemed to be saying just the opposite.” In Packer’s view what people voted for in the election was the “ground on which the majority of Americans—looking to government for solutions—now stand.”<sup>116</sup>

Many progressives caricature conservatives as simply selfish individualists—a “libertarian mob” in the words of Mark Lilla.<sup>117</sup> In fact they hold a more complex set of beliefs, including reaction against technocratic politics, which they see as devaluing diverse kinds of knowledge and suppressing human agency.<sup>118</sup> To counter this, conservative intellectuals have appropriated “work,” once at the center of populist movements, in their assertions that government is undermining people’s self-directed action. Thus Arthur Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute, portrays “not a fight over guns, gays or abortion” but rather “a new struggle between two competing visions of the country’s future. In one, America will continue to be an exceptional nation organized around the principles of free enterprise—limited government, a

reliance on entrepreneurship and rewards determined by market forces.” Brooks argues that this vision is not about getting rich but about what he calls the pursuit of happiness through earned success. “Earned success is the creation of value in our lives or in the lives of others. Earned success is the stuff of entrepreneurs who seek value through innovation, hard work, and passion. Earned success is what parents feel when their children do wonderful things, what social innovators feel when they change lives, what artists feel when they create something of beauty.”<sup>119</sup> The other is state-centered. Such themes translate into Tea Party slogans which depict America in an epic struggle between “makers” and “takers.”

For those alarmed about the prospect of dismantling government in a time of growing inequalities and selling-off of the commonwealth, Brooks’ arguments, like anti-government frenzy generally, threaten to make things worse. But progressive politics which accuses citizens of being fearful, prejudiced, and myopic and demands in ever more strident terms social democratic-style state intervention offers no effective alternative. The times call for a politics which takes back “work” from those who would dismantle government and privatize the commonwealth. This is a politics which democratizes governance while it recognizes the essential and vital roles of government, values the public conditions and purposes of work, and develops civic agency. It is the constructive politics of public work.

### **Acknowledgment**

I thank Mary Dietz and Marie Ström for splendid editorial help, and the comments of two anonymous reviewers. I am also grateful for discussions of civic agency, public work, and citizens as co-creators in the “Civic Driven Change” initiative of the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague in 2008 and 2010; and feedback on my presentations of these themes at the 2010 conference of the American Democracy Project; the 2010 Idasa annual retreat in South Africa; and the Kettering Foundation 2010 workshop on “democratizing deliberation.” I want to thank especially Elinor Ostrom, William Schambra, Gerald Taylor, Albert Dzur, Peter Vale, Paul Graham, Derek Barker, Rom Coles, Peter Levine, Brian Murphy, David Thelen, Maria Avila, Matthew Leighninger, Roudy Hildreth, and Michael Lansing for their feedback. Finally, I appreciate support from the Kettering Foundation for ongoing research support on these topics.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Notes

1. "Polder," *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polder> (accessed June 28, 2010). Jos Leenhouts, a Dutch educational leader, uses "poldering" to counter marketizing trends. Boyte interview with Leenhouts, May 16, 2010, Amsterdam.
2. Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1973), 101.
3. Alain Touraine in Eric Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries* (London: Abacus, 2007 edition), 316.
4. Jeffrey D. Hilmer, "The State of *Participatory* Democratic Theory," *New Political Science* 32 (March 2010): 43-63, at 43.
5. Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980); Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1961); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1977); Stephen Biko, *I Write What I Like* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986).
6. Benjamin Barber, *Jihad versus McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (New York: Random House, 1995).
7. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
8. The II Manifesto included the need to democratize the left as well as the society. See Douglas Johnson, "Althusser's Fate," *London Review of Books* 3, no. 7 (1981):13-15.
9. Archon Fung, "Deliberation before the Revolution: Toward an Ethics of Deliberative Democracy in an Unjust World," *Political Theory*, 33, no. 3 (2005): 397-419.
10. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 324.
11. *Ibid.*, 298.
12. Hilmer, "State of *Participatory* Democratic Theory," 55-63. On civic agency, see Harry C. Boyte, *Civic Agency and the Cult of the Expert* (Dayton: Kettering Foundation Press, 2009).
13. See John Keane, *The Life and Death of Democracy* (London: Simon & Schuster UK, 2009).

14. On agency, see Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, "What Is Agency," *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 4 (1998): 962-1023. Theoretical neglect of agency, described in their essay, finds counterparts in amnesia about popular agency in crucial histories. For a kindred politics of agency, see Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) See footnotes 16, 61, 77, 115.
15. Xavier de Sousa Briggs, *Democracy as Problem Solving: Civic Capacity in Communities around the World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009); on new public management, 36-37; on accountability, 306-7.
16. John S. Dryzek, "Deliberative Democracy in Divided Societies: Alternatives to Agonism and Analgesia," *Political Theory* 33, no. 2 (2005): 218-42.
17. Habermas, *Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 52.
18. *Ibid.*, 25-26.
19. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 47.
20. Ian Budge, "Deliberative democracy versus direct democracy—plus political parties!," in *Democratic Innovation: Deliberation, representation and association*, ed. Michael Saward (London: Routledge, 2000), 200.
21. Aviezer Tucker, "Pre-emptive Democracy: Oligarchic Tendencies in Deliberative Democracy," *Political Studies* 56 (2008): 127-47, at 127.
22. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 297.
23. *Ibid.*, 359, 362, 363, 371, 300.
24. David Mathews, *Politics for People: Finding a Responsible Public Voice* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999); John Dedrick, Laura Grattan, and Harold Dientsfrey, *Deliberation and the Work of Higher Education: Innovations for the Classroom, the Campus, and the Community* (Dayton: Kettering Foundation Press, 2008).
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26. John Forester, *Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 203-4.
27. John Forester, "Exploring Urban Practice in a Democratising Society: Opportunities, Techniques, and Challenges," *Development Southern Africa* 23, no. 5 (2006): 569-86, at 572.
28. Forester, *Deliberative Practitioner*, 6.
29. *Ibid.*, 129-30.
30. *Ibid.*, 130.
31. *Ibid.*, 130, 133, 137, 138, 139, 143.
32. *Ibid.*, 207.
33. *Ibid.*, 108-9.

34. *Ibid.*, 37.
35. *Ibid.*, 111.
36. *Ibid.*, 115, 116, 123.
37. Here are several communal labor terms: in South Africa in Sesotho, *letsema*; in isiZulu, *ilimo*; in Afrikaans, *gemeenskapswerk*; in Xhosa, *dibanisani*; in the Sudan, *naffir*; along the East African coast, in Swahili, *kidole kimoja chawa*; in Europe, *meitheal* (Ireland), *dugnad* (Norway), *talkoot* (Finland); in Asia, *huan gong* (China), *ture* (Korea), *gotong-royoung* (Indonesia and Malaysia); in North America *ga-du-gi* (Cherokee); barn-raising (English); Stephanie Conduff, policy advisor to Chief Smith of the Cherokee, argued that Ga-du-gi has been a powerful symbol of pride and self-sufficiency, email correspondence, July 16, 2010; Peter Vale argues that communal labors may be the experiential ground of the widely used African term *ubuntu*, meaning common humanity. Boyte interview with Vale, Grahamstown, S.A., July 19, 2010.
38. Leif O. Manger, ed., *Communal Labor in the Sudan* (Bergen: University of Bergen, 1987), 1.
39. *Ibid.*, 2- 3.
40. Stanley Crawford, *Mayordomo: Chronicle of an Acequia in Northern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 168.
41. Paul Dekker and Loek Halman, eds., *The Values of Volunteering: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (New York: Springer, 2003), illustrate depoliticized citizenship; for a critique, see Harry C. Boyte, "Civic Populism," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 4 (2003): 737-42. "Voluntarism" substitutes for what once was "work." Thus Francis Willard, leader of the largest nineteenth-century U.S. association of women, subtitled her book *Woman and Temperance, The Work and Workers of the Women's Christian Temperance Union* (Hartford, CT: Park Publishing, 1883) to convey unpaid civic labours and to challenge their devaluation.
42. Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom, *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice* (Boston: MIT Press, 2006), 3.
43. Garret Hardin, "Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968): 1243-48, at 1244.
44. Hess and Ostrom, *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons*, 10-11; also Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
45. Elinor Ostrom, "Polycentricity, Complexity, and the Commons," *The Good Society* 9, no. 2 (1999): 37-41, at 39, 40.
46. Peter Levine, "Collective Action, Civic Engagement, and the Knowledge Commons," in Hess and Ostrom, *Knowledge as a Commons*, 247.
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