

# Survey Article: Recipes for Public Spheres: Eight Institutional Design Choices and Their Consequences\*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

MUCH of the recent conceptual and empirical analysis of the public sphere has focused on large institutions, trends, and potential responses.<sup>1</sup> For example, recent work on civic engagement has tracked the overall decline of associations and the erosion of their articulation to formal politics.<sup>2</sup> The most prescriptive and constructive work in this vein recommends leveraging the substantial organization and capacity of existing secondary associations to improve democratic governance through deliberate and targeted public policies.<sup>3</sup> Those who locate the decline of the public sphere in the structure of mass media or formal electoral arrangements recommend similarly large-scale measures, such as campaign finance reforms, to rectify those arrangements. These ambitious approaches are understandable. They grow out of efforts to comprehend plate-tectonic shifts in political and social organization that affect the quality of the public sphere. From this God's-eye perspective, it is natural to think that improvements require shifting large plates—of associative behavior, the emergence and impact of new social movements, electoral competition, or media ownership—this way or that.

In normal times, however, individuals and organizations seldom have the wherewithal to affect such shifts. Consequently, activists, foundations, and even some scholars interested in improving the quality of the public sphere have pursued an array of more modest projects. These highly artifactual efforts rely on creating instances of more perfect public spheres, often out of whole cloth. They convene citizens, in the dozens or hundreds or thousands, but certainly

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<sup>1</sup>Habermas 1989.

<sup>2</sup>Putnam 1993, 2000; Skocpol 1999.

<sup>3</sup>Cohen and Rogers 1992; Hirst 1994.

not in the millions or tens of millions, in self-consciously organized public deliberations. Following Robert Dahl, I will call these efforts *minipublics*.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes they resemble town meetings, and sometimes they function as purposeful associations. They look like, because they are, exercises in “reformist tinkering” rather than “revolutionary reform.”<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps for these reasons, or because of their modest scale, these efforts have occurred mostly under the radar of democratic and social theorists. Nevertheless, those interested in improving the public sphere should pay more attention to minipublics for at least three reasons. Though small, they are among the most promising actual constructive efforts for civic engagement and public deliberation in contemporary politics. Second, given the fragmentation of cultural and political life, effective large-scale public sphere reforms may consist largely in the proliferation of better minipublics rather than improving the one big public.<sup>6</sup> Finally, even those who subscribe to visions of tectonic, macroscopic improvement will need to know something about the details of institutional design for effective public deliberation. A close examination of minipublics will help generate that knowledge.

This article analyzes several dimensions of these disparate efforts to improve the public sphere. Just as minipublics reside in the middle range of democratic institutions—in the neighborhood of administrative agencies and secondary associations rather than constitutions and basic structures—this investigation is an exercise in mid-level theorizing that brings contemporary practice into contact with considerations of democratic institutional design. As such, the considerations that follow do not settle continuing controversies between liberals, communitarians, critical theorists, feminists, and radical democrats regarding the desirability of deliberative democracy or various accounts of the public sphere. Minipublics, and perhaps the public sphere more broadly, defy generalization precisely because the values they advance and their consequences for democratic governance depend upon the details of their institutional construction. This variegated experience offers two broad lessons. First, the realities of deliberately constructed public spheres are sufficiently varied that particular instances of minipublics can advance the central concerns of contending views by, for example, emphasizing political education, social solidarity, political critique, or popular control. Second, though many theorists have focused upon the relationship between the public sphere, deliberation, and legitimacy,<sup>7</sup> the democratic contributions of actually existing minipublics extend

<sup>4</sup>This terminology follows Robert Dahl's notion of a minipopulus (1989) and Jack Nagel's (1992) notion of Deliberative Assemblies on a Random Basis—DARBs. As explained below, my notion of a minipublic is both more inclusive and more connected to both civil society and the state than either Dahl's or Nagel's proposals.

<sup>5</sup>Unger 1987.

<sup>6</sup>Fraser 1992.

<sup>7</sup>Benhabib 1996; Cohen 1989; Habermas 1989 and 1992.

far beyond legitimacy to include public accountability, social justice, effective governance, and popular mobilization.

The next section makes eight important design choices for minipublics explicit. Section III develops several hypotheses about how institutional design choices render minipublics more or less likely to make certain contributions to democratic governance. Section IV illustrates how design choices relate to these contributions by reviewing the experiences of five contemporary minipublics: Deliberative Polls, Citizen Summits, the Oregon Health Plan, Chicago's community policing program, and Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

## II. INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN CHOICES

Suppose that you want to improve the quality of civic engagement and public deliberation and that you are in a position—through your access to a modicum of financing or state power—to carry out a project toward this end. You decide to create a minipublic that will convene citizens and perhaps officials to deliberate on some important public concern. This minipublic will contribute to the democratic project of reinvigorating the broader public sphere not just by modeling the ideal, but also by improving the quality of participation and deliberation in a significant area of public life. As with any project of political construction, you face many critical questions in the course of planning your minipublic.

### A. VISIONS AND TYPES OF MINIPUBLICS

The first important design choice, informing all of the others that follow, concerns your ideal of the public sphere. Beyond simply convening citizens to deliberate with one another and participate in public life, what should a minipublic do?

In one vision, the minipublic is an *educative forum* that aims to create nearly ideal conditions for citizens to form, articulate, and refine opinions about particular public issues through conversations with one another. The conditions of deliberation in this minipublic would differ from those in the actually existing public sphere in at least three respects. Whereas inclusion in actual public debate reflects many kinds of background inequalities—wealth, gender, education, position, control over the means of communication and production—the minipublic would attempt to fairly include all of these diverse voices. Second, actual public debate frequently falls short of the ideal of deliberation and public reason. Under more ideal conditions, participants would take each others' claims, explanations, reasons, proposals, and arguments seriously. Third, citizens often form ill-considered opinions because information is costly. A minipublic might therefore inform citizens by training them and by making briefing

materials and expertise easily available. In a minipublic that addresses these problems of representation, reasonableness, and information, conversations between citizens would dramatically improve the quality of their public opinion. Of the explicitly “deliberative” programs sponsored by foundations and community organizations, educative forums are the most common.<sup>8</sup> They include the deliberative polls invented by James Fishkin, the National Issues Forums begun by the Kettering Foundation,<sup>9</sup> the study circles initiatives supported by the Topsfield Foundation,<sup>10</sup> and the 1998 Americans Discuss Social Security town-meetings organized by AmericaSpeaks and supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

A second type of minipublic might be called the *participatory advisory panel* because it aims not only to improve the quality of opinion, but also to align public policies with considered preferences. Participatory advisory panels do not stop after creating the ideal deliberative conditions of the first vision. They also develop linkages to economic or state decision-makers to transmit preferences after they have been appropriately articulated and combined into a social choice. Participatory advisory panels have often resulted from partnerships between non-profit organizations devoted to public discourse and government offices seeking to solicit citizen input and enhance their own legitimacy.<sup>11</sup> One example of such a participatory advisory panel, described below, is the Oregon Health Decisions discussion process that convened town meetings all over the state to discuss public medical priorities. Another is the Citizen Summit priority and budget-setting process in Washington, D.C.

A third type of minipublic might be called *participatory problem-solving collaboration*. This type envisions a continuous and symbiotic relationship between the state and public sphere aimed at solving particular collective problems such as environmental degradation, failing schools, or unsafe streets.<sup>12</sup> Two broad justifications support this intimate relationship between public and state. First, some public problems are so wicked that they defy even the best expert opinion and capacity. For some of these problems, citizens and officials, through participatory deliberation, may invent novel solutions that leverage resources and ingenuity from both the civic and state spheres; the central contribution of this kind of minipublic is creativity. Second, often the state cannot be trusted. Democratic skeptics who locate the central contribution of an improved public sphere in its ability to tether state action and make it publicly accountable will favor arrangements in which members of the public can keep a close eye on their public servants.

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, Button and Mattson 1999.

<sup>9</sup>See Matthews 1999.

<sup>10</sup>See, for example, Gastil 2000: 113–16 and the URL:<http://www.studycircles.org/> (last visited on May 1, 2002).

<sup>11</sup>See Gastil 2000 for a discussion of existing participatory advisory panels, including the citizen’s jury, and his proposal for one kind of powerful minipublic of this type: citizen panels.

<sup>12</sup>Cohen and Sabel 1997; Fung and Wright 2002; Weber 1999.

A fourth vision, call it *participatory democratic governance*, is more ambitious than the other three. This flavor of minipublic seeks to incorporate direct citizen voices into the determination of policy agendas. Proponents of such minipublics often view structures of representative legislation and insular administration as easily captured, or at least biased, toward wealthy and socially advantaged sections of the polity. Injecting direct, mobilized, deliberative citizen participation into democratic governance might favor the voices of the least advantaged and so offer a procedural antidote enhances the equity in legislation and policy making. Two examples are the Peoples' Campaign for Democratic Decentralization in Kerala, India<sup>13</sup> and participatory budgeting programs in various Brazilians municipalities.<sup>14</sup>

## B. WHO? PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

How should individuals come to participate in a minipublic? The most common mechanism is voluntary self-selection. Public meetings and activities are often open to all who wish to attend. Sometimes they are required by law to be open in this way. Those who hear about the opportunity and have the resources, interests, and time participate. The difficulty with voluntarism is those who show up are typically more well-off—wealthy, educated, and professional—than the population from which they come. Nearly all forms of political participation exhibit participation patterns favoring high-status persons, and more demanding forms tend to exacerbate that bias.<sup>15</sup>

One solution is to choose specific participants who demographically mirror the general population. Deliberative polling efforts pursue this tact by selecting participants through opinion polling methods. A second option is affirmative action through recruitment. Selection in the Citizen Summits (discussed in section IV.B) was voluntary, but program organizers achieved demographic representation by publicizing the event in communities that would otherwise be under-represented.

A third option is to create structural incentives for low-status and low-income citizens to participate.<sup>16</sup> Participation patterns are determined not only by the resources constraints on citizens (favoring the better-off), but also by the goods that participatory institutions deliver.<sup>17</sup> In particular, if a minipublic addresses

<sup>13</sup>Thomas Isaac and Franke 1999.

<sup>14</sup>Baiocchi 2001; Santos 1998. For a classic discussion of participatory governance in firms, see Pateman (1970).

<sup>15</sup>Verba and Nie 1972; Nagel 1987.

<sup>16</sup>This mechanism is similar to the notion of selective incentives that help overcome collective action problems. Structural incentives differ from selective incentives in that benefits from the former inhere in the structure of minipublics and in particular in the subjects they address. Benefits for participants come from their potential collective and social effects rather than in ancillary "positive inducements" (Olson 1971: 133).

<sup>17</sup>Cohen and Rogers 1983.

poor peoples' concerns, and if they expect that participation will yield results, then the poor may participate more than the rich. As we shall see below, voluntary selection mechanisms for minipublics that address urban crime and basic urban infrastructure result in disproportionately high participation by poor and less educated citizens.

### C. WHAT? SUBJECT AND SCOPE OF DELIBERATION

Presuming that problems of participant selection and bias can be solved satisfactorily, the next large question concerns the subject of deliberation. What public issue will participants consider? Public deliberation is often considered to be completely general in the sense that its rules, structures, and benefits are not thought to depend upon particular topics. All issues are thought to be fair game for debate in the broad public sphere, not least because excluding some subjects would improperly restrict liberty of expression and political freedom.

At the less abstract level of institutional design, however, the choice of subject importantly shapes the subsequent operation and impact of a minipublic. It determines what, if anything, citizens are likely to contribute in terms of insight, information, or resources in the course of participatory deliberation. Some areas would benefit very little from deliberation because they require highly specialized kinds of knowledge or training or because citizens have no distinctive insight or information.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, many areas of public concern stand to benefit from increased public deliberation. To identify these areas, institutional designers should consider whether citizens possess a comparative advantage over other actors such as politicians, administrators, and organized interests. In some areas, citizens can contribute information about their preferences and values that is unavailable to policymakers. In others, they may be better positioned to assess the impacts of policies and deliver this feedback to officials. In still other contexts, citizens enhance public accountability when civic engagement allows them to monitor potentially corrupt or irresponsible officials.

### D. HOW? DELIBERATIVE MODE

A fourth institutional design choice concerns the organization and style of discussions in a minipublic. In a simple formulation consistent with many of those in recent democratic theory, deliberation is a process of public discussion in which participants offer proposals and justifications to support collective decisions.<sup>19</sup> These proposals are backed by justifications that appeal to other

<sup>18</sup>Perhaps public education in wealthy suburban school districts offers an example of a policy area in which there is sufficient participation and public deliberation.

<sup>19</sup>Cohen 1989; Gutmann and Thompson 1996.

participants and by reasons that others can accept. These reasons, for example, may appeal to some common good (for example, “This is the best way to improve our school because . . .”) or common norms of fairness (for example, “You do for me this time, and I do for you next time around.”). When each participant decides what the social choice should be, she should choose the proposal backed by the most compelling reasons. When it generates social choices, deliberation is distinctive because, as Habermas put it, there is no force “except the force of the better argument.”<sup>20</sup> Other decision methods, by contrast, rely on authority, status, numbers, money, or muscle. Decisions resulting from deliberation may be more *fair* and *legitimate* because they result from reasons rather than arbitrary advantages. They may be *wiser* because they allow a broad range of perspectives and information to be pooled together.<sup>21</sup> Discussion may *help individual participants* to clarify their own views.

At this level of generality, the theory of deliberation offers justifications for the institutional designer of a minipublic, but not much guidance. Any particular deliberative process will have more specific aims and obstacles that it must address through training, facilitation, and the structure of discussion.

One aim of the public sphere, for example, is to provide space in which individuals can reach their own considered views and gain confidence in their own perspectives; it is a space where the weak should be able to find their own voice. Some critics have objected that deliberative processes disadvantage those who speak less well, or who speak in ways that are devalued by the dominant culture.<sup>22</sup> The best response to this important criticism contends that public spheres should be constructed in ways that, first and foremost, allow those without voice and will to find and form it. Processes of reason-giving and taking cannot be fair absent this prior process of will formation and development that moves individuals from silence to self-expression. For example, the most important contribution of the public sphere in a Latin American city may be to allow a favela dweller to realize and effectively assert her rational self-interests in basic sanitation, water, and education. Developing reasonable capacities to limit these demands according to the property rights of the middle and upper classes, needs of other favelas, and limits of state financing comes later. When a minipublic aims centrally to foster the formation of individual will and preference in this way, appropriate interventions include testimony, story-telling, relating needs, principled advocacy, and the airing of conflicts and tensions.<sup>23</sup> Facilitation will seek to assure that the weak, and not necessarily those with the best ideas or arguments, have ample time to speak and express themselves.

<sup>20</sup>Habermas 1984, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup>Fearon 1998.

<sup>22</sup>Sanders 1997; Fraser 1992; Mansbridge 1980.

<sup>23</sup>Sanders 1997; Jacobs, Cook, and Carpini 2000.

In contrast with this approach, some kinds of deliberation aim to generate consensus or to solve concrete problems. Such deliberations might follow the rules of proposal, justification, and planning outlined above. Deliberative institutions in this mode should offer training and education to create informed participants. In this mode, a facilitator might level the field to allow participants to engage and guide the conversation toward emergent consensus. Deeply divisive issues and positions are sometimes simply ruled out of order. The premium on reaching a fair and good decision may favor the most articulate or popular (rather than the most needy). Indeed, Mansbridge reports that such “unitary” decision processes work to exclude those who reside on the margins.<sup>24</sup>

#### E. WHEN? RECURRENCE AND ITERATION

A fifth important design characteristic is the frequency with which a minipublic convenes. The participatory democratic impulse is that more is better. But this intuition is incorrect, for the frequency of minipublic meetings should follow from their purpose. If a minipublic is convened to deliberatively form or ascertain public opinion on a nearly static issue, as in some educative forums or participatory advisory panels, then one conclusive round of deliberation may be enough. Further rounds would be justified if new information surfaced or relevant conditions changed. Minipublics devoted to participatory problem solving or democratic governance should be convened more frequently, perhaps many times per year, because their decisions must be frequently updated and because monitoring officials is an ongoing endeavor.

#### F. WHY? STAKES

Since engagement depends upon interest, a designer should have a clear account of the stakes that participants have in a minipublic’s deliberations. Does the discussion concern some issue that affects participants’ welfare or deeply held beliefs? Are participants interested because the issue has become a public controversy? On one view, deliberation should be *cold*. Individuals with low stakes in a discussion will be open-minded, begin without fixed positions, and dispassionate. I tend to the opposite view; *hot* deliberations with participants who have much at stake make for better deliberation. More participants will be drawn to hot deliberations and they will be more sustainable over time. Participants will invest more of their psychic energy and resources into the process and so make it more thorough and creative. The results of deliberation are more likely to be forcefully supported and implemented. So far as I know, we have no empirical evidence regarding the relative merits, and appropriate circumstances, of hot versus cold deliberation.

<sup>24</sup>Mansbridge 1980.



## G. EMPOWERMENT

A minipublic is empowered just in case its deliberative results influence public decisions. In her recognition of this distinction, Nancy Fraser contrasts *strong* publics—those that exercise authority—with *weak* ones.<sup>25</sup> Many minipublics should not be empowered or strong. If the participants lack any claim to exercise voice in a decision, empowerment amounts to private capture or an illegitimate delegation of state power. Even when participants have some legitimate claim, the quality of their deliberations may be so poor, or the issue so important, that empowering them would degrade the wisdom or justice of public decisions. Since empowerment usually increases individual stakes in public deliberations, the reasons to favor cold deliberation also weigh against empowerment, and in favor of weak minipublics.

But there are good reasons to empower some minipublics. When a democratic deficit manifests itself as lack of state accountability or when the minipublic is a component of a governance or problem-solving scheme, then empowerment follows from the purpose of public deliberation. As with hot high-stakes deliberation, an empowered, or strong, minipublic can create powerful incentives by offering influence over a slice of state power in exchange for participation. Individuals may take deliberations in empowered minipublics more seriously than in forums where discussions are severed from tangible consequences.

## H. MONITORING

Most minipublics are front-loaded in the sense that they aim, like an opinion poll or election, to generate public discussion and refine opinion about a candidate, issue, or policy choice. The expectation and hope is that politicians and officials will take these public deliberations into account in their subsequent decisions. Some minipublics, however, also incorporate back-loaded participation and deliberation that reviews the quality of ongoing action and implementation. If a minipublic generates sufficient interest to sustain the ongoing participation necessary for monitoring, important benefits can redound to participants.

Public learning is the first of these. In minipublics that convene frequently to observe and consider the consequences of various policy decisions or problem-solving strategies, participants also acquire experientially based knowledge—learning by doing—about what sorts of decisions are likely to work and which are not in various contexts. Accountability is a second important benefit. In environments where official actions depart from public interests, an important function of a minipublic might be to pressure officials to serve public ends or plans. The transparency made possible by monitoring can enhance legitimacy

<sup>25</sup>Fraser 1992, pp. 132–6.

and good faith. A minipublic that does not monitor official action cannot contribute to public accountability in these ways.

### III. FUNCTIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF MINIPUBLIC DESIGN

A healthy minipublic contributes to the quality of democratic governance in several ways. One cluster of contributions concerns the character of participation in a minipublic: the quantity of participation, its bias, and the quality of deliberation. A second group concerns informing officials, informing citizens, and fostering the dispositions and skills of citizenship. A third cluster connects public deliberation to state action: official accountability, the justice of policy, and its efficacy and wisdom. A final function of public deliberation and participation is explicitly political: popular mobilization. Consider several rough, *ceteris paribus*, working hypotheses about how the design choices described above affect a minipublic's capacity to advance these functions. These hypotheses connect design to democratic consequence and so serve to guide the empirical examination of minipublics.

#### A. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AS QUANTITY OF PARTICIPATION

By definition, all minipublics aim to increase civic engagement by drawing citizens to deliberate. For many of them, the quantity of participation is an important measure of success.

Obvious design features—the capacity of meetings and their frequency (II.E)—set an upper limit on participants. Typically, however, those who organize minipublics do not approach this ceiling. Public apathy and malaise pose more substantial obstacles. Thus, the quantity of participation also depends heavily on the ability of organizers to mobilize individuals. Successful mobilization in turn depends on the presence of supportive community associations and their own recruitment capacity (II.B). Minipublics can also draw participants by creating the structural incentives that make engagement worthwhile. As discussed above, the subject of deliberation (II.C), the stakes that participants have in it (II.F), and the extent to which the minipublic is empowered or strong (II.G) all create incentives for participation.

#### B. PARTICIPATION BIAS

Another important dimension of civic engagement concerns the profile of those who participate. Are they disproportionately wealthy, educated, and professional, as they are in nearly all varieties of political participation? Are they drawn evenly and representatively from all sections of the population? Or, as in two of the minipublics described below, are disadvantaged citizens *over-represented*?

The factors governing the quantity of participation also affect the direction and magnitude of participation bias. One way to mitigate the natural tendencies toward over-representation of the advantaged is for those who operate minipublics to concentrate their outreach and recruitment (II.B.) efforts on disadvantaged communities. A second strategy is to create structural incentives that make a minipublic especially attractive to less well-off citizens because it addresses their particular concerns (II.C, II.F) and empowers them to act (II.G).

### C. QUALITY OF DELIBERATION

Minipublics also aim to foster high-quality deliberation. Good deliberation should be rational in the instrumental sense that individuals advance their own individual and collective ends through discussion, brain-storming, information-pooling, planning, and problem-solving. It should also be reasonable in the sense that participants respect the claims of others and constrain the pursuit of their own self-interest according to the norms of justification. Reasonableness may require participants to restrain themselves when others offer compelling reasons based on common group interests or commonly held norms such as respect, reciprocity, and fairness. For example, reasonableness may require someone to withdraw his support from a proposal that would best advance his own self-interest because others are more needy. Good deliberation is also equal and inclusive. Participants should be roughly equal in their opportunities and capabilities to propose ideas and make claims.<sup>26</sup> When they are highly unequal, discourse aimed mainly toward will-formation, discussed in section II.D above, may be a necessary precursor to a fuller deliberation.

Whether the aim of deliberation is will-formation or reasoned social choice, several design features are likely to enhance the degree of instrumental rationality in the process. Minipublics will exhibit greater rationality when their topics are ones in which participants have epistemic advantages (II.C). For example, citizens have privileged access to their own preferences and values. They may also possess local knowledge that is difficult for officials or outsiders to acquire. Recurrence (II.E) and monitoring (II.H) also increase the rationality of deliberations by making additional information available and by making experiential learning possible. Finally, hot deliberation—discussions in which participants have high stakes (II.F) and affect the exercise of public power (II.G)—tends to increase the rationality of processes; participants have greater motivations to correctly align their ideas and views with their interests and values.

Some of the same factors that increase rationality may inhibit reasonableness. Discussions aimed at fostering and clarifying individual preferences, for example, by airing conflicts and advocating conflicting principles, may advance individual

<sup>26</sup>This discussion utilizes Rawls's coordinates of rationality, reasonableness, and equality.

rationality while rendering participants less flexible and more self-interested.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, participants may be more inclined to restrain the pursuit of their own self-interests reasonably in cold deliberations—in which there are low stakes (II.F) and few implications for policy change (II.G). On the other hand, hot deliberation may drive participants to be reasonable when collective action depends on agreement and consent.

#### D. INFORMING OFFICIALS

Another important contribution of public deliberation, then, is that politicians, administrators, or other officials gain information from the process. When these officials, from internal motivation or external incentive, aim to act as responsible agents for the public, the information they gain may improve the quality of policy and public action.

Educative forums and participatory advisory panels (II.A) appraise officials of the considered interests, values, and preferences of citizens. Beyond the design considerations favoring good deliberation generally, the subject of deliberation (II.C) largely determines whether officials can learn from discussion in a minipublic. Officials are more likely to reap informational benefits when the subject is one in which citizens possess special knowledge, or in which their views are divided, opaque, or especially likely to change in the course of deliberative consideration.

Problem-solving and participatory governance minipublics have more ambitious informational goals.<sup>28</sup> In these efforts, citizens enter into detailed and sustained deliberations with officials about the content, design, and effects of particular projects, strategies, or programs. Here, officials may hope to learn not only about the preferences and values of citizens, but also about their own operations and strategies: about what is working and what is not in their problem-solving and policy-implementation efforts. The institutional design considerations conducive to generating this higher-resolution information are just those necessary for a minipublic to consider the details of public action as it unfolds over time: recurrence (II.E) and monitoring (II.H).

#### E. INFORMING CITIZENS

Most of those who champion minipublics see citizens, not officials, as their principal beneficiaries. In one survey of organizations that sponsor citizen dialogues, “45% reported that one of their major goals was simply to provide information.”<sup>29</sup> Compared to public professionals, citizens typically have more

<sup>27</sup>Jacobs, Cook, and Carpini 2000.

<sup>28</sup>See section II.A above for a discussion of distinctions between these three varieties of minipublics.

<sup>29</sup>Jacobs, Cook, and Carpini 2000, p. 22.

limited access to information, less time and training, and are asked to spread their attention over a larger range of public issues. Most citizens are likely to clarify their views and preferences and learn about substantive policy issues in any effective minipublic. The factors contributing to good deliberation (III.C) also produce information for citizens. Factors that create participant interest—such as stakes and empowerment—also enhance the incentives for citizens to pay attention and exert the energies necessary to become informed.

## F. DEMOCRATIC SKILLS AND SOCIALIZATION

Beyond learning about policies and public affairs, participatory democrats have long claimed that deliberative arenas function as schools of democracy where individuals acquire the skills of citizenship and come to consider public interests more highly in their own preferences and dispositions.<sup>30</sup> The extent to which participation imbues democratic skills and habits has received far more conceptual attention than empirical scrutiny. Absent the empirical basis from which to formulate firm hypothesis about the institutional design of minipublics, two working hypotheses should be tested.

First, citizens are more likely to gain democratic skills and dispositions where deliberations have tangible consequences for them. In empowered (II.G) minipublics where citizens have high stakes (II.F), they also have incentives to conduct structured and purposeful deliberations. They will, furthermore, be inclined to engage in the give-and-take process of reason-giving and settlement that requires, and so fosters, the skills of proposal formulation, justification, listening, cooperation, and compromise. Minipublics with recurring deliberation (II.E) are more likely to contribute to the development of democratic skills and dispositions than those that convene once or only infrequently. Iterated interaction increases both incentives and opportunities for cooperation.<sup>31</sup>

## G. OFFICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Increasing the accountability of public officials and organizations is another potential contribution of minipublics. Through organized public deliberation, citizens can collectively examine the actions and policies of officials, assess the alignment of this state behavior with their own wishes and values, and attempt to bring the two into conformity. For example, the public generally has an

<sup>30</sup>Pateman 1970; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995.

<sup>31</sup>This line of reasoning suggests that participation in consequential and ongoing minipublics such as school governance committees will have more salutary consequences for citizenship than participation in the juries (few consequences for the deliberators and one-shot) that Tocqueville famously lauded: “Juries are wonderfully effective in shaping a nation’s judgment and increasing its natural lights . . . It should be regarded as a free school which is always open. The main reason for the practical intelligence and the political good sense of the Americans is their long experience with juries” (Tocqueville 1969: 275).

interest in integrity that departs from the corrupt practices found in the governments of many developing, and some developed, countries. Similarly, officials may be accustomed to shirking their jobs or responsibilities in ways that can be corrected through appropriate participatory-democratic supervision.

This function is especially important, and likely to be exercised, where the gap between public interest and state action is large. So, minipublics that focus on subjects (II.C) where there is an accountability deficit or where reflective public opinion differs substantially from official practice will be more likely to contribute to this function. Appropriate focus is a necessary, but not sufficient, design condition for advancing accountability. Citizens participating in a minipublic must also be able to identify accountability gaps and develop solutions to them. Those in a minipublic cannot increase accountability unless they can press for changes in policy or action that tighten the tether between public and state. These capacities depend in turn on the quality of deliberation (III.C), whether the minipublic is empowered (II.G), and its ability to monitor (II.H) official activities.

## H. JUSTICE OF POLICY

Minipublics also contribute to the justice of public policy and action when they allow those who are politically weak or excluded to form, express, and press for their preferences and values. Straightforwardly, minipublics that treat subject (II.C) areas in which there is substantial inequity and that enjoy sufficient scope—for example, authority over allocative decisions—are more likely to advance social justice. Enhancing the voice of the disadvantaged also requires their presence (II.B) and accessible modes of deliberation (II.D). Furthermore, a minipublic cannot advance justice without power (II.G).

## I. EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC ACTION

In addition to accountability and justice, deliberation can contribute to the efficacy of public policy and deliberation in at least three ways. Public deliberation creates opportunities for those who will be subjected to a policy to criticize it, consider its justifications, and perhaps modify it. This discussion may enhance the legitimacy of a policy or agency, and so may make citizens inside and outside a minipublic more disposed to comply and cooperate. Minipublics that have high-quality deliberation (III.C) and affect official action (II.G) are more likely to boost efficacy by generating legitimacy. Second, some minipublics address policy areas (II.C) where citizens possess comparative advantages—in terms of relevant resources or information—over officials. Third, minipublics can help to improve the details of implementation—its strategies and methods—over time by incorporating popular deliberation into the ongoing governance or problem-solving efforts of public bodies (II.D). The activities of these minipublics

may be more likely to be sustained over time (II.E) and devoted in some measure to monitoring and evaluating official action (II.H).

## J. POPULAR MOBILIZATION

Turning from policy to politics, deliberations inside minipublics can contribute to the mobilization of citizens outside them, especially when they are related to the more encompassing agendas of secondary associations or political actors. For example, citizens may come to support the substantive policy findings of a minipublic because that position is the product of reasoned discussion and open participation. These policy positions may also receive heightened media attention as a result of having been considered in a minipublic. In addition to supporting substantive policy positions, citizens may also be drawn to support the institution of a minipublic itself. A novel institution that effectively addresses some urgent public problem or creates channels of voice for those who were excluded may mobilize support for its continued existence. Similarly, political actors who sponsor successful minipublics may thereby attract popular support for themselves or their parties.

Several design factors are likely to contribute to the capacity of a minipublic to mobilize these varieties of popular support. First, a minipublic may mobilize political activity if it addresses a salient problem or need (II.C, II.F). For example, crime and public safety is such an issue in many inner-city neighborhoods, but less so in safe suburban ones. Second, a minipublic is likely to mobilize only if it makes a difference with respect to some salient problem. This, in turn, requires the minipublic to establish a high quality of deliberation (II.D) and that it be empowered to act upon the results of that deliberation (II.G).

## K. SUMMARY

The discussion above has ranged over many dimensions of design choices and their potential effects. Table 1 below summarizes these relationships. The columns list institutional design choices and their functional consequences appear in the rows. The important design features for each function are marked with an “X” and the crucial choices are indicated by “X\*.”

## IV. FIVE APPLICATIONS

This discussion of minipublic institutional designs and their consequences has been thus far necessarily abstract for the sake of generality. To render these concepts and hypotheses more concrete, and perhaps more believable, this section describes the designs and achievements of five actual minipublics. These examples are in no way a representative sample, much less a comprehensive catalog, of contemporary minipublics. Rather, they have been chosen to illustrate

Table 1. Consequences of minipublic design choices

	II.B. Recruitment Selection	II.C. Subject of Deliberation	II.D. Deliberative Mode	II.E. Recurrence	II.F. Stakes	II.G. Empowerment	II.H. Monitoring
<i>Character of Participation and Deliberation</i>							
III.A. Quantity	X*	X*		X	X*	X*	
III.B. Bias	X*	X*			X*	X*	
III.C. Deliberative Quality		X*	X*	X	X*	X*	X
<i>Information Pooling and Individual Transformation</i>							
III.D. Informing Officials		X*		X*			X*
III.E. Informing Citizens		X*	X*	X	X	X	X
III.F. Democratic Skills and Socialization				X*	X*	X*	
<i>Popular Control and State Capacity</i>							
III.G. Official Accountability		X*				X*	X*
III.H. Justice of Policy	X*	X*	X*			X*	
III.I. Efficacy of Policy		X*	X*	X		X*	X*
<i>Political Effects</i>							
III.J. Popular Mobilization		X*	X		X*	X*	

X\* = more important factors



the great variation in the institutional designs of projects that aim to improve the public sphere. They also show how particular design choices inevitably advance some desirable qualities of the public sphere while sacrificing others.

### A. DELIBERATIVE POLLING

The deliberative poll, invented by James Fishkin and his colleagues, attempts to create educative forums that model citizen deliberation under ideal conditions.<sup>32</sup> As Fishkin puts it,

The idea is simple. Take a random sample of the electorate and transport those people from all over the country to a single place. Immerse the sample in the issues, with carefully balanced briefing materials, with intensive discussion in small groups, and with the chance to question competing experts and politicians. At the end of several days of working through the issues face to face, poll the participants in detail. The resulting survey offers a representation of the considered judgments of the public—the views the entire country would come to if it had the same experience.<sup>33</sup>

In each event, organizers select several hundred participants through a random process similar to those used in ordinary opinion polling (II.B). This method overcomes the obstacle of participation bias (III.B) and guarantees that actual participants will mirror the underlying population demographically. Deliberative poll designers have also concentrated on creating highly informed deliberation (II.E) by distributing balanced briefing materials to participants prior to the event, facilitating small group discussions between participants, and making experts available to answer participants' questions. These efforts seem to have fostered open and searching discussions (III.C) in which participants become more informed about policies and consistently alter their views upon fuller reflection.

On other dimensions, however, the design of deliberative polling seems to yield only moderate impacts. Because participants have very low stakes (II.F) in discussions and because they are one-shot affairs (II.E), deliberative polling is unlikely to substantially foster the skills or dispositions of citizenship (III.F) in participants. As described in two of his books, the subjects of deliberative polls have been general public policy questions such as economic policy, criminal justice, the European Union, and energy policy.<sup>34</sup> Citizens enjoy very little comparative advantage compared to experts in answering these complex policy questions. At most, they can appraise politicians and administrators about their values and preferences in general terms, but they are unlikely to provide information that improves policy. We therefore judge that deliberative polls have a relatively low potential to inform officials (III.D).

<sup>32</sup>Fishkin 1991, p. 93.

<sup>33</sup>Fishkin 1995, p. 162.

<sup>34</sup>Fishkin 1991, 1995.

Deliberative polls are not designed to substantially advance popular control over state action or to improve policy. Because they are neither empowered nor well connected to the levers of state power and policy-making, the activities within deliberative polls are unlikely to increase the accountability of public officials (III.G), the justice of policies (III.H), or their efficacy (III.I). These events are typically connected to civil society and the broader public through media broadcasts and other news coverage.<sup>35</sup> In some cases, officials have adopted specific policy recommendations from deliberative polling, but this is not the norm nor is it integral to the design of this minipublic. Deliberative polls thus seem to have weak mobilizing capacities (III.J) and they are not highly empowered (II.G).

## B. AMERICA SPEAKS CITIZEN SUMMIT

Anyone who has been persuaded by the arithmetic case against participatory democracy—that the mode cannot possibly accommodate more than a few dozen participants if each is to be able to speak for more than a minute or two in a meeting of several hours—should attend one of the town halls organized by AmericaSpeaks.<sup>36</sup> On October 6, 2001, for example, some 3,500 residents gathered in the Washington D.C. Convention Center to deliberate about Mayor Anthony Williams' Strategic Plan.<sup>37</sup> The event was called the second Citizen Summit; the first was held in November 1999 and drew almost 3,000 residents.<sup>38</sup> Though both meetings were open to all residents, organizers had targeted their outreach and recruitment (II.B) energies to low-income and minority communities to mitigate natural tendencies toward upper-class participation bias (III.B). These efforts were successful; the demographic profile of participants in both meetings was largely representative of the larger Washington, D.C. population.

The 2001 meeting featured an impressive use of technology to facilitate large group discussion. The group was organized into approximately 350 tables of 10 seats. At each, a trained facilitator led discussions and a volunteer recorded the major points of conversation on a laptop computer. The computers were networked together to instantaneously relay small group discussions to meeting facilitators, who compiled the views from the tables to present them back to the large group. Each participant was also given a polling keypad, resembling a television remote control, that allowed meeting facilitators to conduct straw polls, collect demographic surveys, and solicit quick reactions throughout the

<sup>35</sup>Fishkin 1995, p. 190.

<sup>36</sup>They have also organized discussions on the future of U.S. Social Security, regional planning in Chicago and Cincinnati, and the redevelopment of lower Manhattan after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

<sup>37</sup>Chan 2001.

<sup>38</sup>Cottman 1999.

meeting. These wireless devices allowed organizers to instantaneously aggregate participant responses and display them for everyone to review.

Citizen Summits are participatory advisory panels that construct spaces for residents to reflect upon city priorities and communicate their views to the Mayor. The subjects of deliberation (II.C), then, are citywide issues such as economic development, education, government responsiveness, and the quality of neighborhoods. The discursive mode (II.D) among citizens is preference clarification; by talking with other residents and reflecting on official strategic plans, they clarify their own values and views about what city government should be doing. Citizens are likely to invest themselves in these discussions more than in deliberative polling because they have substantial stakes (II.F) in the disposition of public resources and behavior of city agencies. They need not reach a consensus with one another. Citizens are likely to gain substantial knowledge about city government, its plans, and its objectives through these discussions (III.E). Discussions in the second Citizen Summit, for example, were organized around a detailed draft strategic plan for the city that laid out major goals and action plans for several dozen city agencies and offices. Conversely, the Mayor and his staff evidently analyze this feedback quite closely (III.D). They provide focused, and otherwise unavailable, information about citizen values, preferences, and perspectives on the details of urban policy. Because these deliberations address the goals of city policy rather than details of implementation, officials are unlikely to gain substantial insight into their operational successes and failures. On the goal of fostering the skills and dispositions of citizenship (III.F), the Citizen Summits by themselves are unlikely to have substantial impact because they recur (II.E) infrequently.<sup>39</sup>

In its design, this program empowers (II.G) citizens to steer city government by issuing advice regarding broad objectives. Ideally, they would utilize this feedback to align the city budget with popular priorities, re-task municipal departments, and create new programs or agencies where deliberation has revealed gaps and silences. One of the major findings of the first Citizen Summit was that citizens wanted greater voice in neighborhood-level planning and service decisions. The Mayor responded by creating a Neighborhood Services Initiative that devolved the coordination of agency services to the neighborhood level. More broadly and perhaps extravagantly, the Mayor claimed that, “You helped design the City’s budget. Since the first Citizen Summit, more than \$700 million has been invested to improve the delivery of services that you said were more important.”<sup>40</sup> Skeptics might charge that these investments would have

<sup>39</sup>It should be noted that Citizen Summits are one mechanism among others for popular participation in Washington, D.C. Another major component is the Neighborhood Planning Initiative, which allows residents to participate in strategic planning at the neighborhood level and is better described as a participatory problem-solving minipublic. The further development and integration of participation at these two levels—citywide advice and neighborhood problem-solving—may yield a compelling hybrid.

<sup>40</sup>Government of the District of Columbia 2001.

occurred without the Citizen Summit and that the Summit merely creates support for a pre-set agenda. This dispute between proponents and skeptics concerning the extent of empowerment cannot be settled without a close examination of administrative decisions following each Citizen Summit.

### C. OREGON HEALTH PLAN

In early 1990, Oregon Health Decisions held a series of 46 community meetings throughout the state in which 1,003 residents gathered to “build consensus on the values to be used to guide health service allocation decisions.”<sup>41</sup> This public participation process was one result of the health care reform movement in Oregon that began in the early 1980s. At a time when many other states were retrenching, activists and policymakers sought to expand Medicaid coverage to include all of those in the state whose earnings fell below the poverty line.<sup>42</sup> In order to achieve this expansion but keep it financially feasible, policymakers foresaw difficult and controversial choices regarding the categories of medical conditions and treatments that would be covered by public health insurance. An eleven-member panel of health policy experts called the Health Services Commission was to determine which health conditions would be publicly insured and which excluded. The Oregon Basic Health Care Act required the Commission to make these decisions based upon values established in a participatory community process. The Commission engaged Oregon Health Decisions to organize that process. Oregon Health Decisions, in turn, created a decentralized participatory advisory panel to solicit public input.

Two institutional design features—selection (II.B) and subject (II.C)—of the subsequent assemblies predictably skewed participation toward a narrow band of professionals and citizens of high socioeconomic status. Because meetings were voluntary and little effort seems to have been expended to recruit from disadvantaged communities, participants were typically wealthy and highly educated; 67 per cent were college graduates and 34 per cent had household incomes greater than \$50,000. This minipublic addressed health care, and 70 per cent (!) of participants were healthcare and mental health workers. The medically uninsured composed just 9.4 per cent of participants.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these serious defects in the character of participation, actual deliberations were well structured (II.D). The careful attention to organization, facilitation, and the relatively high stakes of the subject for participants formed the foundation for engaging discussions. Deliberations were designed to elicit the values that participants, upon reflection, felt should guide health care priorities. Meetings typically lasted two hours. Participants received informational materials,

<sup>41</sup>Hasnain and Garland 1990. See also Sirianni and Friedland 2001.

<sup>42</sup>Jacobs, Marmor, Oberlander 1998, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup>Hasnain and Garland 1990; see also Nagel 1992 for criticism and discussion.

watched a slide show to orient them, and received individual questionnaires concerning health care priorities. Participants then discussed their individual rankings of health care priorities with one another and attempted to reach group consensus on the relative importance of various health care values. Oregon Health Decisions staff generated a summary ranking of priorities by aggregating the results of these community meetings. All of the community meetings ranked prevention and quality of life very highly. These priorities were followed by cost-effectiveness, ability to function, and equity. Somewhat lower in importance were mental health and chemical dependency, personal choice, community compassion, impact on society, length of life, and personal responsibility.<sup>44</sup>

It is difficult to evaluate the degree to which participants learned about health care policy (III.D) or gained democratic skills and dispositions (III.F) in the absence of appropriate survey evidence. However, the process was moderately empowered (II.G). Health Services Commissioners attempted to combine their own expertise and judgments with the results of the participatory process. They developed a list of 709 Condition-Treatment pairs and ranked them into seventeen categories that roughly corresponded to values expressed at community meetings. Their eventual rankings reflected the values identified by Oregon Health Decisions as most important—prevention, and quality of life.<sup>45</sup> This outcome is consistent with the interpretation that officials learned and respected (III.D, III.G) concerning what was important to the public as approximated by these highly imperfect community meetings.

According to close observers of Oregon health care reform, however, these details about deliberative quality and technocratic interpretation miss the crucial, and somewhat unanticipated, contribution of the participatory process.<sup>46</sup> By the mid-1990s, Medicaid coverage in Oregon had been successfully extended to cover everyone below the poverty line, and partial coverage—for children and pregnant women—for many above the poverty line. Between 1993 and 1996, the number of uninsured Oregonians fell from 17% to 11%. However, treatment had not been rationed. The funded portion of the condition-treatment pair list provided a substantially *more* generous coverage than the pre-Oregon Health Plan Medicaid package. Political mobilization (III.J) in favor of this more generous and just (III.H) health care policy distinguished Oregon from the many other states where health care reform collapsed over this same period. Jacobs and his colleagues write that the Oregon Health Plan has become the “third rail” of state politics—you touch it and you die. Media coverage and attention, the close connection of this minipublic to health care reform organizations, combined with the legitimacy of a decentralized and open community process likely contributed to the deep public support for the Oregon Health Plan.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Hasnain and Garland 1990, pp. 5–6.

<sup>45</sup>Nagel 1992: 1978.

<sup>46</sup>This account follows Jacobs, Marmor, and Oberlander 1998.

<sup>47</sup>Jacobs, Marmor, and Oberlander 1998, p. 9.

#### D. CHICAGO COMMUNITY POLICING

While these three minipublics use deliberation primarily to clarify and revise the preferences and values of participants and to communicate those preferences to policymakers, the fourth minipublic invites citizens to join police and other public agencies in the workaday activities of problem-solving around public safety issues. In 1994, the Chicago Police Department unveiled its community-policing program. Chicago's program emphasized direct citizen participation much more than analogous programs in other American cities. The Department divides the city into 280 neighborhood-sized beats. Since 1995, open meetings have been held monthly in each beat.<sup>48</sup> In these community beat meetings, police officers and citizens deliberate about how to improve public safety in their neighborhood. They set priority problems (for example, a dangerous park or crack house), develop strategies to address those problems, agree to divisions of labor between police and citizens, review the success of prior strategies, and revise accordingly.

These meetings draw substantial levels of participation. On average, 17 persons attend each meeting, cumulating to a citywide attendance of approximately 5,000 people per month. In surveys, 12 per cent of adults in Chicago report that they have attended at least one community-policing meeting. Though these meetings are completely open and voluntary, there is an obvious structural incentive (II.B) that makes participation particularly attractive to disadvantaged participants: well-off neighborhoods have very little crime, and so there is not much to discuss there. Reversing the ordinary participation bias, residents from poor and less well-educated neighborhoods turn out at much higher rates than those from wealthy ones (III.B) because they have high stakes—increasing their own physical security—in the subject at hand (II.C).<sup>49</sup>

The quality of problem-solving deliberation varies greatly across beats. Community organizations and central-office police personnel support the deliberations of residents and beat officers by providing training, organizing, and facilitation, but the coverage and quality of these services is uneven. Where support is strong, deliberation is frequently quite good (III.C.). Participants (both citizens and police) follow the problem-solving process of identifying problems, prioritizing them, developing strategies, implementing them, assessing outcomes, and revising approaches. Discussions are empowered (II.G) when police heed (as Departmental policy directs them to do) citizens' reflective opinions about which neighborhood problems are most urgent in the neighborhood and how those problems should be addressed. These strategies frequently employ novel methods that lie far outside the repertoire of traditional police methods. For example,

<sup>48</sup>The account in this section is drawn from Fung 2003; see also Skogan and Hartnett 1997.

<sup>49</sup>Within neighborhoods, wealthier residents and homeowners participate at higher rates than poor residents and renters.

citizens form sub-committees that negotiate with problematic private parties such as landlords or business owners and they form court advocacy and watch groups. Some of the most effective strategies focus and coordinate services from a number of different agencies—such as sanitation, buildings inspection, and traffic in addition to police—to tackle persistent problems such as open-air drug markets. When deliberation is effective and creative, both citizens and officials learn (III.D–III.E) in ways that increase the efficacy of their public safety efforts (III.I).

The iterated design of Chicago community policing also distinguishes it from the three minipublics already discussed above. The repeated interactions between police and citizens and the problem-solving focus of their deliberations creates opportunities for citizens to monitor (II.H) the activities of police over time. The poor quality of police performance and their shirking is a frequent topic of beat meeting discussions. This deliberative design thus increases the accountability of street-level police officers (III.G). Because the central goal of these meetings is to develop common agendas and strategies, citizens (and police) are likely to gain deliberative and cooperative skills over the course of community-policing deliberations (III.F).

## E. PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

Nowhere in the United States is there a political entity that possesses both a deep commitment to participatory deliberative democracy and sufficient power to make good on that commitment institutionally. Not so in Latin America. Therefore, our final minipublic examination considers the participatory budgeting system in Porto Alegre, Brazil as an example of participatory democratic governance. Porto Alegre is the capital city of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and home to 1.3 million inhabitants. In 1989, a left-wing party called the Workers' Party (the Partido dos Trabalhadores, or PT) won the Mayoralty on a platform of advancing social justice through participatory democracy. These vague commitments were institutionalized into arrangements under which control over the capital portion of the municipal budget shifted from the city council to a bottom-up decision-making process called the Participatory Budget (Orçamento Participativo, or OP) that combines direct and representative mechanisms.<sup>50</sup>

It works roughly like this. In March of every year, large assemblies are held in each of the city's sixteen districts. Often drawing more than a thousand participants and attended by city hall staff, citizens in each assembly review the extent and quality of implementation of the projects in last year's budget (II.D, II.H). The projects under the OP's scope concern basic urban infrastructure in areas such as sewage, housing, pavement, education, social assistance, health,

<sup>50</sup>This account is drawn from Baiocchi (2001) and Santos (1998).

and transportation (II.C). Participants in these meetings also elect delegates to represent specific neighborhoods in subsequent rounds of the OP process. This formula for representation creates incentives for mobilization; the number of delegates allocated to each district increases as a diminishing marginal function<sup>51</sup> of the total participants in that district's assembly. In subsequent rounds, representatives from each district and neighborhood meet to deliberate about the schedule of priority themes in their areas (for example, 1: street, 2: education, 3: housing) and the priorities within each theme (1: street A, 2: street B). These reflective preferences are aggregated into a single city budget (II.G), detailed with particular works and projects according to a weighted formula that incorporates the schedule of expressed preferences, the population of each district, and the relative deprivation of each district.

Since its inception, the OP has drawn steadily increasing participation as citizens have gained confidence in the institution (III.A). In the 1999 and 2000 cycles, more than 14,000 residents participated in the first round of plenary assemblies. Observers estimate that some 10 per cent of the adult population participates in the process annually, though precise estimates are difficult because much participation occurs in numerous informal neighborhood meetings and committee sessions. As with the Chicago community policing reforms, the design of open meetings combined with strong structural incentives for participation by disadvantaged participants has inverted the ordinary high-SES participation bias observed in most political arenas. Poor people are substantially over-represented in OP meetings (III.B).<sup>52</sup>

This process generates a wealth of detailed knowledge for officials (III.D). Some of this knowledge concerns the values and priorities of residents, such as the difficult trade-offs between issues such as clean water and schools. Officials also gain very specific knowledge about where particular works and projects should be located, and whether they operate successfully or fail. Conversely, residents also gain substantial knowledge (III.E) about where, and whether, public monies are appropriately spent, and about the detailed operations, successes, and failures of city agencies. Through participation in these discussions, citizens likely gain democratic skills of compromise and cooperation (III.F). However, because deliberations focus upon very local goods and needs, the institution has not disposed citizens to think about the greater good of the city, the just trade-offs between jurisdictions, or the good of the city through the long arc of time.

The OP has reduced corruption and eroded traditional patronage relationships between city councilors, legislators, businesses, and local notables by making the

<sup>51</sup>See Baiocchi (2001): The number of delegates for a district is determined as follows: for the first 100 persons, one delegate for every ten persons; for the next 150 persons, one for twenty; for the next 150, one for thirty; for each additional forty persons after that, one delegate. To cite an example, a district that had 520 persons in attendance would have twenty-six delegates.

<sup>52</sup>Baiocchi 2001.



financial decisions of city government more transparent. One result of this increase in official accountability (III.G) is that many fiscal leaks have been plugged and the actual revenues available for public investment have grown. Good government (through participatory democracy) has in turn increased the legitimacy of the municipal state and increased tax compliance. Advancing both justice (III.H) and efficacy (III.I), city agencies charged with building and operating public works have become much more productive and the lion's share of new activity has occurred in poor areas:

Of the hundreds of projects approved, investment in the poorer residential districts of the city has exceeded investment in wealthier areas . . . Each year, the majority of the 20–25 kilometers of new pavement has gone to the city's poorer peripheries. Today, 98 percent of all residences in the city have running water, up from 75 percent in 1988; sewage coverage has risen to 98% from 46%. In the years between 1992–1995, the housing department offered housing assistance to 28,862 families, against 1,714 for the comparable period of 1986–1988; and the number of functioning public municipal schools today is 86 against 29 in 1988.<sup>53</sup>

The above treatment of these complex minipublics has been necessarily quite compressed and omits many important details. Two tables below summarize these variations and comparisons. Table 2 summarizes the institutional design features of the five exemplary minipublics. Table 3 summarizes the practical consequences of these design choices. In each table, the most distinctive design features and those discussed in the text are shown.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The discussion above has focused on the design and operation of a variety of actual minipublics. One aim of this discussion is to enumerate major dimensions of variability—in purpose, participant selection, subject, mode of deliberation, frequency, stakes, empowerment, and monitoring—among minipublics. Another is to develop several working hypotheses regarding the consequences of these design choices for the level, bias, and quality of participation; the capacity of minipublics to inform officials and citizens or to foster civic virtues and political skills; for political accountability; and for efficacy and justice in policy.

In important ways, this discussion lacks a normative foundation that justifies the existence of minipublics by describing their role within the array of contemporary democratic institutions, in particular their place among the other institutions that constitute the public sphere, and the range of political ailments that they might address. The diverse design and experience of actual minipublics, however, informs disputes between those who advance contesting foundations for democratic governance such as liberals, communitarians, critical theorists and radical democrats in two ways. First, the diversity within the experience of

<sup>53</sup>Baiocchi 2001.

Table 2. Institutional design features of five minipublics

	<b>IV.A.</b> <i>Deliberative Polling</i>	<b>IV.B.</b> <i>Citizen Summit</i>	<b>IV.C.</b> <i>Oregon Health Plan</i>	<b>IV.D.</b> <i>Chicago Community Policing</i>	<b>IV.E.</b> <i>Participatory Budgeting</i>
<b>II.A. Purpose and Vision</b>	Simulate ideal deliberative conditions	Align public policy with considered citizen preferences		Improve problem solving through participation	Participatory Democratic Governance

Design Features of the Public Space

<b>II.B. Who? Recruitment and Selection</b>	<i>Representative sample</i>	<i>Voluntary + targeted recruitment</i>	Voluntary	<i>Voluntary + institutional incentive</i>	<i>Voluntary + institutional incentive</i>
<b>II.C. What? Subject of Deliberation</b>	<i>Large-scale public policy questions</i>	<i>Citywide strategic plan</i>	<i>Health care rationing</i>	<i>Neighborhood public safety</i>	<i>Capital infrastructure investments</i>
<b>II.D. How? Deliberative Mode</b>	<i>Clarify Principles and Positions</i>	<i>Clarify priorities / feedback</i>	Assert and clarify priorities	Problem-solving	Assert and reconcile priorities
<b>II.E. When? Recurrence</b>	One-shot, Centralized	Infrequent, Centralized	One-shot, Decentralized	<i>Frequent, Decentralized</i>	<i>Frequent, Decentralized</i>
<b>II.F. Why? Stakes</b>	Low	<i>Moderate</i>	Low-Moderate	<i>Moderate-High</i>	<i>High</i>

Connections from Public Space to State

<b>II.G. Empowerment</b>	Low	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate-High</i>	<i>High</i>
<b>II.H. Monitoring</b>	None	Low	Low	<i>Strong</i>	Moderate

Italics = distinctive design features

Table 3. Outcomes in five minipublics

	<b>IV.A.</b> <i>Deliberative Polling</i>	<b>IV.B.</b> <i>Citizen Summit</i>	<b>IV.C.</b> <i>Oregon Health Plan</i>	<b>IV.D.</b> <i>Chicago Community Policing</i>	<b>IV.E.</b> <i>Participatory Budgeting</i>
Shape of Participation					
<b>III.A. Quantity</b>	Low	<i>Moderate</i>	Moderate	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>
<b>III.B. Bias</b>	<i>Representative</i>	<i>Representative</i>	Positive SES bias	<i>Inverse SES bias</i>	<i>Inverse SES bias</i>
<b>III.C. Deliberative Quality</b>	<i>High</i>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Information Pooling and Individual Transformation					
<b>III.D. Informing Officials</b>	Low	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	High
<b>III.E. Informing Citizens</b>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	Moderate	High	High
<b>III.F. Democratic Skills and Dispositions</b>	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Popular Control and State Capacity					
<b>III.G. Official Accountability</b>	None	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>
<b>III.H. Justice of Policy</b>	Low	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	Low	<i>High</i>
<b>III.I. Efficacy of Policy</b>	Low	Low	Low	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>
Political Effects					
<b>III.J. Popular Mobilization</b>	Low	Low	<i>Moderate</i>	Low	<i>High</i>

Italics = strengths of each design

deliberately convened publics prevents straightforward general defenses or criticisms of minipublics. A liberal egalitarian, for example, might be attracted to the ways in which the Citizen Summit or Deliberative Poll informs citizens and perhaps allows them to develop and practice civic virtues associated with participation, but object to the potential of the Oregon Health Plan, Chicago community policing, or Porto Alegre's Participatory Budgeting structure to generate unjust policies. On the other hand, radical democrats are attracted to the strong public, empowered, features of Chicago community policing and Participatory Budgeting, but may view weak minipublics as irrelevant epiphenomena or instruments of co-optation. In this arena, the proper realm of dispute concerns what kind of minipublic to have, rather than whether minipublics generally advance some particular view of democratic governance. Though the above considerations do not address that dispute directly, they offer some coordinates—on the axes of design and consequence—that may help advance that discussion.

Second, these encounters with actual experiments in the public sphere may broaden the horizons of political and social theorists. On the conceptual side, much contemporary discussion of the public sphere has focused upon weak publics that can criticize, indirectly steer, and legitimate conventional formal democratic arrangements of representative government and bureaucratic administration. This contemporary discussion of the public sphere has parted ways with radical and participatory democratic impulses that favor direct citizen involvement in public decisions. Part of the rationale for this separation stems from concerns about the impracticality of strong democracy in large, complex, modern polities. However, the actual experiences of strong, empowered minipublics indicate that this judgment of unfeasibility may be too quick, and that participatory democratic publics may be workable under some contemporary conditions. While there may be other, normative, grounds for objecting to strong minipublics, experience shows that the frequently encountered ground of impracticality is less persuasive than commonly thought.

These comparisons and conceptual clarifications may also serve those who practice public deliberation. Many of those who currently work in this emerging field of deliberation and public engagement describe their efforts and motivations in strikingly similar terms; they seek at once to enhance participation, create deliberative democracy, improve civic engagement, and make government more accountable. These terms obscure the rich and multidimensional variation evident in their specific endeavors. Illuminating that variation shows how the design characteristics of minipublics, and indeed features of the larger public sphere, should be deliberate choices rather than taken-for-granted habits. Those choices, whether conscious or not, have significant consequences for democratic governance. Understanding these elements of institutional design may in time contribute to the variety, quality, and success of minipublics, and so of public deliberation generally.

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