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Reframing Democracy: Governance, Civic Agency, and Politics

Developments in public affairs that stress governance—not simply government—hold possibilities for reframing democracy. Governance intimates a paradigm shift in the meaning of democracy and civic agency—that is, who is to address public problems and promote the general welfare? The shift involves a move from citizens as simply voters, volunteers, and consumers to citizens as problem solvers and cocreators of public goods; from public leaders, such as public affairs professionals and politicians, as providers of services and solutions to partners, educators, and organizers of citizen action; and from democracy as elections to democratic society. Such a shift has the potential to address public problems that cannot be solved without governments, but that governments alone cannot solve, and to cultivate an appreciation for the commonwealth. Effecting this shift requires politicizing governance in nonpartisan, democratizing ways and deepening the civic, horizontal, pluralist, and productive dimensions of politics.

The Worldwide Emergence of Governance

In recent years, public affairs scholars and practitioners across the world have argued for a concept of governance that is broader than government. Governance has become a global discourse with a breadth that suggests its usefulness for exploring the fundamental questions of democracy, civic agency, and politics. The World Bank (2004), for example, views governance as "the process and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised." It conceives governance as including "how governments are selected, held accountable, monitored and replaced," with an emphasis on the capacity of governments to manage resources and respect the rule of law.

More participatory approaches among scholars and democracy promoters in developing nations explicitly shift from a state-centered definition of governance to an emphasis on the interactions among governments, civil society, and business groups that are essential for development. Thus, the United Nations Development Programme stresses a conception of governance that "comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their conflicts" (quoted in Strode and Grant 2004, 1). The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), a large nongovernmental orga-

nization that promotes democracy across the African continent, defines democratic governance as "a set of values, policies, and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political, and social processes at all levels through interaction among government, civil society, and [the] private sector." According to IDASA's perspective, the values that underpin governance include accountability, participation, representation of all sectors of society in decision making, transparency, equality, and respect for human rights (Strode and Grant 2004, 1).

The global emergence of governance discourse has parallels in public affairs theory and practice in the United States. Scholars such as H. George Frederickson (1991, 1999), Donald Kettl (2002), and Lester Salamon (2002) have described a shift from government as a direct provider and deliverer of public programs and services to governance as "indirect government," in which nongovernmental entities, including corporations, nonprofit organizations,

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and public–private partnerships, use tools such as vouchers, loans, loan guarantees, contracts, and other means to implement policy. Lisa Bingham and her colleagues (2004) have detailed quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial governance processes for policy formation as well as implementation. Governance involves collaboration and empowerment more than hierarchy and control, and its theorists often use concepts such as social capital and social networks. It suggests an emphasis on the *people* involved, "the toolmakers and tool users" as well as the tools.

Melissa Stone has asked trenchant questions about the dynamics that root policy in network structures with diffuse authority. She asks, "How must we conceptualize accountability when the actual implementers of public policy are removed from government agencies and have their own notions of to whom and for what they are accountable?" (2004, 1). Put differently, what is to prevent corporations, nonprofits, and others from advancing their own interests at the expense of the public good? If public affairs scholars and practitioners are to realize the possibilities of their leadership in the work of creating flourishing democracies, they need to engage questions about the meaning of democracy, civic agency, and politics directly.

Shifting Paradigms: From Democratic State to Democratic Society

If no easily identifiable group of people is held to singular account for producing outcomes of broad public benefit, then an ethos of public responsibility, accountability, and authority must become diffused as a function of the general civic culture. Governance intimates a paradigm shift in civic agency and in democracy.

The shift can be conceived of as a move from seeing citizens as voters, volunteers, clients, or consumers to viewing citizens as problem solvers and cocreators of public goods. It involves a shift in the role of public professionals such as civil servants, nonprofit managers, and office holders from providers of services and solutions to partners, educators, and organizers of citizen action. Overall, it entails a shift in the meaning of democracy, from elections to democratic society. In the paradigm of democratic society, government is a crucial instrument of the citizenry, providing leadership, resources, tools, and rules. Yet officials are not the center of the civic universe, nor is government the only location for democracy's work.

This shift holds the potential to address complex public problems that cannot be solved without governments, but that governments alone can never solve. It also can cultivate a renewed appreciation for public goods, the commonwealth, which are endangered in an increasingly market-oriented and instrumental public discourse. To realize such democratic possibilities requires politicizing governance and retrieving older practices of democratic politics. Governance in these terms is a political but nonpartisan process of negotiating diverse interests and views to solve public problems and create public value. Politics is citizen centered, productive, and pluralist.

Such changes involve the retrieval and translation of once-widespread albeit largely vernacular ideas and practices of democracy and their adaptation to today's governance, a complex, continuing set of interactions among government actors and activity in many other arenas.

The Humphrey Drug Store and Its Civic Politics Tradition

The late Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey traced his famous political career to his father's drug store in Doland, South Dakota, in his autobiography, *The Education of a Public Man* (1976). Though an unlikely work of democratic theory, Humphrey's homey treatment, illuminating an older civic culture, uncovers democratic treasures that are relevant to twenty-first-century governance.

The drug store in Doland functioned as a public space for deliberation, argument, and action. "In his store there was eager talk about politics, town affairs, and religion," (8) Humphrey wrote. "I've listened to some of the great parliamentary debates of our time, but have seldom heard better discussions of basic issues than I did as a boy standing on a wooden platform behind the soda fountain" (8). It created a nonpartisan root system for formal politics, schooling the father—and certainly, it seems plausible to argue, the son—in the skills of political engagement. Humphrey's father was one of a handful of Democrats in a town with hundreds of Republicans. "Dad was a Democrat among friends and neighbors who took their Republicanism—along with their religion—very seriously" (9). His father became the highly regarded mayor of the town.

Activities in the drug store enriched the civic culture of Doland in multiple ways. The store functioned as local lending library and cultural center—music came from the window of the second floor, from his father's rickety phonograph. It embodied a rich conception of civic agency and democracy as a way of life built through citizen labors—what Robert Wiebe (1995) has termed the "portable democracy" of settler experiences. "[As] a druggist in a tiny town in the middle of the continent, American history and world affairs were as real to him as they were in Washington," (9) wrote Humphrey. "Time after time, when he read about some political development … he'd say, 'You should know this, Hubert. It might affect your life someday'" (10).

The store culture catalyzed action. "When most of the town wanted to sell the municipally owned power plant to a private utility, Dad … fought the idea tooth and nail. I was twelve years old … he would take me to the evening

meetings of the council, install me in a chair by a corner window, and then do battle, hour after hour" (8–10).

The drug store was sustained as a public space because his father was a citizen pharmacist and civic businessman of a particular polis, Doland, South Dakota. The chapter title of Humphrey's book makes the point, "Never a Pill without an Idea." His father worked in public ways. He championed public goods. He organized public citizens and learned from them while improving the civic culture. He mentored his son in civic values and skills.

All of these elements were woven throughout the illustrious career of Hubert H. Humphrey. According to those who knew him, Humphrey regularly challenged and educated his audiences in ways that pointed to the complex interactions between government and other actors. "Government isn't supposed to do all of this," Humphrey said on February 22, 1967, in a Phoenix television interview, in response to a caller who had asked him to fix the problems with politics. "If you think politics is corrupt, get your bar of political ivory soap and clean it up. Get out there and get roughed up a little bit in the world of reality. Join the community action groups in the war on poverty, volunteer your services" (Humphrey Institute Video 2004).

Scholars such as Theda Skocpol (2003), who have described the erosion of national associations with local roots that once brought people together across educational and income differences, overlook a key element: civic professional practice. Humphrey's politics emerged from a general civic culture that generated democratic governance by tying citizenship to professional work with public and democratic meaning grounded in local civic culture. Such professional work once flourished in a variety of settings that functioned as what can be called "mediating institutions," which connect people's everyday lives to larger public arenas and function as settings for building the commonwealth through civic labors. They once were abundant—not only drug stores, but also local political parties, unions, ethnic organizations, settlement houses, neighborhood schools, colleges, cooperative extension, and many other settings. Mediating institutions were settings in which people learned the political skills of dealing with different sorts of people—negotiation, discussion, the messy, open-ended ambiguity of public life. They were also environments in which people felt power and generativity in public life, creating a diffuse understanding of democracy as society.

The concept of democracy as society, an idea that is closely associated with the idiom of the "commonwealth," had broad appeal across ideologies into the 1940s. Alexis de Tocqueville's 1935 classic, *Democracy in America*, used such an expanded definition as the lens through which citizen agency, not government, was the focus. His views had many twentieth-century counterparts. Intellectuals as diverse as Jane Addams, John Dewey, Liberty Hyde Bailey, James Weldon Johnson, and Langston Hughes all saw democracy as far more than elections—more "a way of life," to use Dewey's phrase, built through the productive work of citizens (Caspary 2000).

Women's suffrage organizations, for instance, not only fought for the rights of formal citizenship through the enfranchisement of women voters, but also taught politics as "civic housekeeping" on a range of problems in myriad settings. Thus, the *Woman Citizen's Library,* a 12-volume collection of material on "the larger citizenship" written by leading suffragists, declared in 1913, "The duties of citizenship are as definite as the duties of housekeeping. Only as these self-evident facts are fully appreciated will women be able to share in those many and splendid reforms which must come in our social life." Topics included "the liquor traffic," "child labor," "equal pay for equal work," "schools" and "safeguarding the woman immigrant" (see Boyte 2004b, 171). Similarly, the YMCA's mission in 1940 was "educating young men for democracy" through community problem solving (Peters 1998).

None of this should be romanticized. Such organizations often had parochial elements. Yet they also could form seedbeds for broad efforts at democratization that were vivid examples of democratic and public-spirited governance. Thus, the civic, populist character of New Deal reform grew from the sense that average citizens were helping to advance the democracy, as Lisabeth Cohen details in her book *Making a New Deal* (1992). The transformation in the political culture of the Chicago working class from the early 1920s (when disengagement from federal government was more severe than today) to the late 1930s (when 90 percent of unskilled workers and 81 percent of semiskilled workers favored the New Deal) was tied directly to the sense of popular agency and contribution that was evident in a variety of mediating institutions. Workers believed they had helped to make the New Deal in many ways, from public work programs to union activism and community organizations.

This broader view of democracy was powerfully revived for a time by the American freedom movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which built on the robust, locally rooted civic heritage of black churches, schools, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the NAACP, and many other settings, as Frederick Harris (1999) has described. Martin Luther King's 1963 manifesto, *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, coupled a searing indictment of racial segregation with a declaration that the movement was "bringing America back" to older understandings of democracy. It was a testimony to the civic tradition that had survived and even flourished under the depredations of segregation, as well as a dramatic example of democratic governance, the creation of public value through the interactions across government and civil society.

The idea of democratic society also crossed party lines. For instance, Republican governors in Minnesota such as Elmer Anderson and Al Quie voiced their own versions of democracy as a way of life, appreciation for the commonwealth, and citizen action. All suggested democratic governance.

These civic dimensions of the public culture have sharply eroded in ways that threaten to drain governance processes of their democratic values. Political campaigns, especially on the state and national levels, have become increasingly driven by advertising dynamics. The population is bitterly polarized into "red" and "blue" regions. Citizens are simultaneously pandered to and manipulated as spectators and consumers (National Commission on Civic Renewal 1998). The society is experiencing increasing inequality. A recent American Political Science Association (APSA) task force concluded,

> The United States is vigorously promoting democracy abroad. Yet, what is happening to democracy at home? Our country's ideals of equal citizenship and responsive government may be under growing threat in an era of persistent and rising inequalities. Disparities of income, wealth, and access to opportunity are growing more sharply in the United States than in many other nations, and gaps between races and ethnic groups persist." (Jacobs et al. 2004)

There are resources for challenging such trends and enriching governance with democratic values and public spirit, which will be discussed later. Yet there are also large conceptual obstacles in the way in contemporary democratic theory.

"Seeing Like a State"

In 1902 Jane Addams wrote,

> Would it be dangerous to conclude that the corrupt politician himself, because he is democratic in method, is on a more ethical line of social development than the reformer who believes that the people must be made over by "good citizens" and governed by "experts"? The former at least are engaged in that great moral effort of getting the mass to express itself, and of adding this mass energy and wisdom to the community as a whole. (270)

The narrowing of democracy that Jane Addams lamented, in her contrast of a corrupt politician embedded in the life of her neighborhood with outside experts more than 100 years ago, is widely evident today. Narrow definitions appear in mainstream work in democratic theory and analysis, such as the important report of the APSA Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy.

In the fall of 2002, the APSA Council approved the appointment of the Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy. That task force, chaired by Lawrence Jacobs, includes a stellar group of scholars such as Theda Skocpol, Benjamin Barber, Michael Dawson, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and others. Reviewing a large quantity of research, its report, "American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality," draws stark conclusions about the widening inequality and declining public voice of middle- and low-income citizens. Equally important, the task force issued a call to renew the tradition of engagement practiced by architects of the discipline such as Arthur Bentley, Woodrow Wilson, E. E. Schattschneider, and David Easton. David Easton, for instance, according to the report, introduced the concept of the "political system" into theory and was closely associated with the rise of positivism; he also "was … motivated by a commitment to promote open democratic self-governance and popular sovereignty" (Jacobs et al. 2004, 661). Easton warned about the corrosive impact on democracy of concentrated wealth and economic power.

The problem is that such architects of political science, like those of other disciplines in the twentieth century, although often acutely attuned to concentrated economic power, were much less aware of the elite biases of their own theories. Whatever their differences, mainstream American political scientists agreed that experts, working with political decision makers, were at the center of the political universe.

Daniel Rodgers described the roots of this attitude in *Atlantic Crossings* (1996). A pattern of private alliance between politicians and leading American academics grew from the late nineteenth century, shaped initially by American graduate students studying in Germany. The students were deeply concerned about the dangers posed by unbridled capitalism. Yet their method of redress in Europe was a model of policy making in private consultation with political leadership, far removed from public involvement, which they viewed with skepticism.

"We all have to follow the lead of specialists," wrote Walter Lippmann, who set intellectual fashion in the first decades of the twentieth century. In his view, a growing body of opinion "looks to the infusion of scientific method, the careful application of administrative technique" (quoted in Jordan 1994, 75). Science was the model for political thinking; technocrats were the model actors. As one editorial in *The New Republic* argued, "the business of politics has become too complex to be left to the pretentious misunderstandings of the benevolent amateur" (quoted in Jordan 1994, 76).

These trends became codified in postwar North Atlantic conceptions of democracy, with enormous global consequences for theories and practices of governance. For instance, Seymour Martin Lipset defined democracy as a system of elections in his 1960 work, *Political Man*. "De-

mocracy in a complex society," writes Lipset, "is a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among candidates" (45).

Politics, similarly, came to be located in the state, according to wide intellectual agreement. Lipset and Rokkan's subsequent work, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (1967), crystallized long-developing definitions of politics by tying the concept of politics to what they termed the "cleavages" of modern society, which were based on divisions between classes or church and state and clashes between national state and subordinate group identities based on regions, ethnicities, or language. They argued that these solidified during the late nineteenth century and defined the nature of politics and political struggle, "freezing" political identities. Even those such as John Dewey, who argued for the idea of democracy as a society, not a state, acquiesced in the relocation of politics to the state, thus draining their arguments of civic muscle (Boyte 2003a).

A particular paradigm of "the citizen" undergirds such conceptions: The general population, no longer seen as civic producers, are reconceived primarily as clients and consumers who are serviced by experts. Professional education played a key role in this process. The civic practices and identities of the citizen pharmacist or the citizen businessman that had once lent governance dynamics a larger public, democratic meaning and rooted it in local civic cultures large disappeared. Training in professions such as teaching and ministry lost connections to the real life, history, and cultures of actual places, in ways that paralleled the disappearance of politics from public affairs curricula that Barbara Nelson (2002) has described. The result was a shift from what Thomas Bender (1993) calls "civic professionalism" to "disciplinary professionalism." For instance, according to Mary Fulkerson, a professor at Duke Divinity School who has studied the evolution of theological education, in mainline seminaries and divinity schools, "practice" courses typically pertain to matters that are internal to the life of a congregation, topics such as preaching, counseling, and church organization. The skills, knowledge, and habits of engagement with the places in which congregations are located are missing (Boyte 2004a).

The technocratic strands of liberalism grew increasingly powerful throughout the twentieth century, above all the preference for what was called "value-free" techniques that hide values, interests, power, and authority relationships under a scientific and neutral pose and undermine the authority of those without credentials. Thus, for instance, the lament often heard in community organizations—that neighbors no longer take action when they see other people's children misbehaving on the street—is inextricably tied to the professionalization of parenting. The movement for domestic science sought to make parenting a profession by applying scientific management techniques adapted from the factory setting to the home environment. "Old functions of child welfare and training have passed over into the hands of sociologists, psychiatrists, physicians, home economists, and other scientists dealing with problems of human welfare," wrote two child guidance experts in 1934. "Through parent education the sum of their experiments and knowledge is given back to parents in response to the demands for help" (Lasch 1977, 18). The knowledge was often the product of rigorous research. But its dissemination, as well as the research questions that animated it, was part of a one-way pattern of intervention that was infused with the image of a remade, rational society monitored by experts. Gunnar Myrdal's image of citizens as "domesticated animals … with no conception of the wild life" is an arresting metaphor (Galper 1975, 113).

A state-centered framework continues to inform today's democratic theory with participatory accents, such as "American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality." The report defines participatory democracy as a regime of state-centered processes. Its list of "political activities" includes "making financial contributions to candidates, working in electoral campaigns, contacting public officials, getting involved in organizations that take political stands, and demonstrating for or against political causes" (Jacobs et al. 2004, 656).

In *Seeing Like a State,* James Scott (1998) traces how a state-centered way of seeing public problem solving—sustained by what he calls "high modernism," or technocratic assumptions that detach expert cultures and devalue the practice wisdom of uncredentialed people—has spread across the world. Scott is neither antigovernment nor an enthusiast for the unbridled marketplace. He shows how markets can have disruptive impacts, such as the modernist state.

Others tap popular sentiments against technocrats, with different effects. Thus, the appeal of a strand of conservatism from George Wallace to George W. Bush has been based on populist grievance against arrogant professionals, especially in government, as Robin Toner (2004) described in the *New York Times* at the beginning of the 2004 election season. Many liberal groups have sought to stem the resulting threat of privatization of the commonwealth by promoting the idea of "government as a nurturing parent" that protects and takes care of the people, in the framework of Berkeley linguist George Lakoff. This approach, culminating a long process that effects a transfer of authority to experts, seems unlikely to succeed (Lakoff 2004; Louv 2004).

The challenge for governance theory, if it is to contribute to civic renewal, is to deepen the democratic and civic content of perspectives such as that of the American Democracy and Inequality Task Force: to democratize contemporary theory of both governance and democracy

Recentering Politics among Citizens

There are important resources for alternatives to state-centered democracy and to the politics of grievance. These create a foundation for democratizing the theory of governance and democracy. After the 1960s, more robust citizen efforts developed beneath the mainstream radar screen. Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland (2001, 2005) have examined civic innovations in community development, health, journalism, civic environmentalism, youth development, and higher education that bring people of diverse views together to solve public problems. Similarly, scholars have described democratic countertrends in professions against the grain of technocratic patterns, such as the restorative justice movement, new models of democratic professions in domestic violence courts, and the deliberative practices growing in the health fields (Braithwaite 2004; Jennings 2004; Mirchandani 2004).

Implicitly or explicitly, such endeavors are reconceptualizing politics—the authoritative language of public affairs—as the interactions among citizens of roughly equal standing but diverse views and interests, in horizontal relationships with each other, not simply in vertical relations with the state, who solve common problems, create public value, and negotiate a common life (Boyte 2003b). Such politics is taught explicitly in what is called "broad-based citizen organizing" in large community groups such as the Industrial Areas Foundation network.

Building substantial power for ordinary people—the core mission of these organizations—involves a molecular organizing process of empowerment that requires people to learn the disciplines and develop the culture of philosophically oriented politics, not ideological politics. Such politics draws from Greek understandings interpreted by theorists such as Bernard Crick (1962) and Hannah Arendt (1958), against the grain of dominant North Atlantic definitions of partisan and ideological politics. Bernard Crick's classic work, *In Defense of Politics*, warned emerging nations against ideas current in the West and sought to rescue the concept of politics in an older, Aristotelian sense from what he called its "enemies"— ideological zealotry, mass democracy, and technocratic thought. Crick's book, along with Hannah Arendt's *Human Condition*, are key texts in broad-based organizing. Politics is seen as what Crick calls "a civilizing activity," the way that people of diverse interests in heterogeneous societies negotiate differences to solve problems and live together without violence.

In contrast to the mobilizing politics that are common on the issue-organizing Left and Right, in which professionals define the issues and script the action, broad-based groups reclaim politics as the free, deprofessionalized activity of ordinary citizens. The issues that such groups address and the way the issues are defined and developed are the product of extensive discussion and debate within their ranks. A key to this deprofessionalization of politics is attention to organizing itself as a democratic profession. In such organizing, organizers are coaches, whereas citizen leaders take center stage. Citizen ownership of politics is constantly stressed, based on an unromantic respect for the potential of ordinary people. Of key importance is the "iron rule," which counters the service-delivery paradigm: "[N]ever do things for others that they can do for themselves." Such groups give intense attention to the development of public skills, such as understanding the interests and viewpoints of others who are different (Warren 2001; Wood 2002). According to Mike Gecan, organizing director of the Metro Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in the New York City region, "These are normal and commonsensical people … not activists, for the most part, not ideologues" (2003, 5). "They spend untold hours mastering and using the full range of public arts and skills. They learn how to argue, act, negotiate, and compromise"— all of which he calls "the phonics of the larger language of politics" (ix).

The scale, effectiveness, and accumulated learning of citizen networks (such as the IAF, Gameliel Foundation, and others) have sparked increasing attention from scholars such as Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland (2001), Mark Warren (2001), Richard Wood (2002), and Paul Osterman (2003). In the United States, these networks include 133 local organizations made up of approximately 4,000 member institutions, with more than two million families involved, as well as affiliates in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and elsewhere. They address issues that concern low-income and working-class populations, such as schools, policing, wages, housing, and medical coverage. Scholars have shown how this process is full of tensions, but also development. Citizen groups think beyond their own memberships, politicians partly abandon their penchant for posturing as saviors, and both collaborate on public value-adding projects that address education, housing, economic development, and other issues. The pattern reframes the debate between participatory and representative democracy by highlighting the importance of both. It points toward democracy as an ongoing work in which different actors play different roles in civic ways—toward a civic, democratic conception of governance.

Yet for all of their local and even statewide successes on issues, such organizations have had little impact on the larger political culture. It is easy to dismiss them as inspir-

ing but marginal oases of public life, to recall the language of Hannah Arendt (1963), in a desert of technocratic manipulation. To energize a larger democracy project requires asking how such politics might be translated elsewhere.

Spreading Everyday Politics

In recent years, the idea of democracy as a society has surfaced in a mix of venues, including the writings of David Mathews (1999) and the *Nation of Spectators* report of the National Commission on Civic Renewal (1998). Moreover, public affairs leaders have called recently for the retrieval of Aristotelian politics in the curriculum, pointing to the politicization of governance. In her 2002 address to the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, Barbara Nelson, dean of the School of Public Policy and Social Research at the University of California–Los Angeles, described the trends that have displaced politics in public affairs education in the twentieth century. But she argued that in complex environments, where the conceptions and practices of "the public interest" can never be taken as a given—indeed, must always be negotiated among divergent interests—these trends make for dysfunctional practice. Students come into public affairs with a passion to create a more just world, "but they have little knowledge of how to get things done" because they lack political skills. The twenty-first-century public affairs curriculum needs "to educate students to work successfully at the seams of institutions, sectors, and jurisdictions as well as within them." This means teaching politics. "Perhaps the greatest lack in our curricula has been attention to politics in the Aristotelian sense of the public mediation of conflicts with public consequences" (Nelson 2002).

For 16 years, the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, Center for Democracy and Citizenship and its colleagues have developed initiatives that show the possibilities for spreading such everyday, nonpartisan politics in varied settings, with large implications for democratic governance. In the grounded theory of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship and its colleagues, democratic governance involves at least three elements: (1) translation of methods of citizen organizing elsewhere by naming its practices and ideas as a politics that can be practiced generally; (2) the democratization of professional practices; and (3) a renewal of the concept of democracy as a society, centered on shared civic responsibility for the creation and sustenance of public goods.

Spreading Everyday Politics. In Public Achievement, a youth civic-engagement initiative developed by the Center for Democracy and Citizenship, teams of young people, ranging from elementary through high school students, work over months on a public issue of their choice. They are coached by adults who help them to develop achievable goals and learn political skills and political concepts. Teams address a large range of issues, including teen pregnancy, racism, violence, and school curricula. A variety of studies show often remarkable accomplishments. In 2003–04, about 3,000 young people were involved in Public Achievement at more than 80 sites in a number of American communities (including the Twin Cities, its suburbs, and Mankato, Minnesota; Kansas City, Missouri; Kansas City, Kansas; northwest Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Denver, Boulder, and Fort Collins, Colorado; Manchester, New Hampshire; Broward County, Florida; and new sites in San Francisco). Public Achievement has also spread to Northern Ireland, Turkey, Palestine, Israel, Poland, Scotland, and South Africa (Public Achievement 2004).

Public Achievement has also been translated into other settings. For example, Minneapolis Community and Technical College's Urban Teacher Program integrates everyday politics and public work into its core curriculum. Emphasizing organizing skills such as naming and using power, clarifying and acting on self-interests, and understanding urban environments, the program prepares students from urban communities to become democratic change agents in those communities. Colgate University, a liberal arts school in Hamilton, New York, has integrated the everyday politics of public work into student affairs and student life programming at Colgate. Conversations with students have made it clear that students care about community life. The lapse was in student skills: "Our students lacked the basic skills needed to do the work of democracy," writes Adam Weinberg (2004, 4), dean of the college. These skills include public speaking, active listening, conflict resolution, negotiation, and organizing. To teach such skills, students also need a much more robust definition of democracy, citizenship, and politics. Student discourse reflects contemporary wisdom: Democracy is either formal structures or apolitical acts of charity. Colgate developed a comprehensive democracy education effort, which has required a self-conscious challenge to the service paradigm that has taken hold in students affairs work since the 1970s. Colgate changed the role of the residential advisor from someone who delivers programs and adjudicates conflicts and complaints to that of democracy "coach," working with students to address the everyday problems that erupt all the time in increasingly diverse residential halls. Colgate is now training residential advisors as community organizers (Weinberg 2004, 2, 7, 4).

Such experiences suggest possibilities for higher education as a medium of robust democracy education. They also point toward a second key element in democratic governance: democratizing professions.

Professionals as Public Workers. Recently, theorists have begun to move beyond the important but one-sided

critiques of the antidemocratic nature of professional practices to observe the civic roles that professionals can play. For instance, a recent symposium of the journal *The Good Society*, edited by Albert Dzur (2004a, 2004b), shows democratic currents at work in medicine, law, the movement against domestic violence, and elsewhere that enhance citizen authority and efficacy.

Since its beginning, the Center for Democracy and Citizenship and its colleagues have sought to develop a theory and practice of democratic professionalism to translate lessons from broad-based citizen organizing. Democratic professional practice has developed in work with new immigrants, nursing homes, family medical practices, schools, and institutions of higher education (Boyte 2004b).

The Jane Adams School for Democracy, a St. Paul, Minnesota–based learning and public works partnership of Hmong, Latino, and East African communities with area colleges and universities, stresses for student participants that all participants are "members," not students doing "service." It creates a different experience of colearning and cocreation with regular reflection on the implications for future student careers. It also has generated different thinking about professional practice generally. The Jane Addams School has spawned a neighborhoodwide initiative in which the whole community and its institutions—from parents to libraries, businesses, community organizations, and nonprofits—have claimed authority for the education of children. Many new forms of collaboration have emerged. For instance, in the summer of 2004, 17 youth and community organizations collaborated to design, fund and, coordinate a nine-week summer day camp. The camp had a stress on community locations, topics, and resources. The West Sider Educators' Institute helps teachers discover learning resources in community life (Skelton 2004; see also www.publicwork.org/JAS).

Other partnerships suggest possibilities for developing democratic professional practice on a large scale. For instance, the efforts of William Doherty, a professor of family social science, and his colleagues, who have learned to function as democratic organizers with families on issues such as overscheduling, media violence, the pressures of consumerism, and other destructive cultural trends, show how professionals can make contributions to citizens' reclamation of civic authority (Doherty 2002).

Creating the Commonwealth. A third element of democratic governance is to conceive of democracy's public wealth as goods that all share responsibility for sustaining. This means seeing citizens as democracy's cocreators and democracy as a commonwealth, abundant in public goods. This is simple in rhetoric but difficult in practice. The idea that democracy is a cornucopia of benefit packages—coupled with the view of politics as distributive activity, "who gets what, when, and how"—is entrenched in the famous formulation of Harold Laswell (1936). Politics as it is conventionally understood neglects where public wealth comes from.

The American commonwealth was neither handed down from antiquity nor defined by authoritative religion, neither a gift bestowed by an aristocracy, as in France, nor by a paternalistic state, as in Prussia. In practice, it was largely the work of citizens. But in recent decades, the commons, however defined, has been eroding—and with it the sense that democracy is a broad social undertaking, not simply a set of formal structures.

In an article that defined intellectual discourse on the topic for a generation, "The Tragedy of the Commons," Garrett Hardin (1968) argued that the commons is a "free resource" that always erodes as increasing numbers of people take advantage of it. Hardin's analysis depends on a consumer model. "As a rational being, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain … he asks, 'what is the utility to me of adding one more animal to my herd?'" In Hardin's view, this means that "Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit in a world that is limited. 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" (1244).

As Peter Levine, building on public works theory, has observed, Hardin's paradigm has "led most theorists to believe that we must either divide any un-owned resource among private property-holders or else ask the government to manage it" (2003, 4).

In her pioneering work, Elinor Ostrom (1999) has examined the question of governance, what she terms "the search for rules to improve the efficiency, sustainability, and equity of outcomes," in common pool settings. She looks at cases of forest management, irrigation, inshore fishery, and the Internet. In each case, she agrees with Hardin that the problem is "excluding free riders," or those who use a common resource with no regard for its sustainability. Ostrom finds that decentralized governance with higher popular participation has key advantages in terms of efficiency, sustainability, and equity. These include the 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 systemwide failure. Decentralized systems also have disadvantages, such as the uneven involvement by local users; the possibility for "local tyrannies" and discrimination; lack of innovation and access to scientific knowledge; and the inability to cope with large common pool resources. Ostrom and others argue persuasively 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" (Ostrom 1999, 37–40).

A public work perspective adds to governance theory on public goods. It emphasizes the civic learning and sense of ownership that develop through commons-building labors by groups of people. Perhaps most dramatically in a political culture that takes public wealth for granted even as it privatizes such wealth, public work draws attention to the *creation* of public goods, the "what" as well as the "how" of politics.

A contemporary example of commons creation is internet technology that is grounded in local commons created and sustained by citizens and civic associations. The new "information commons" idea has spawned a fledgling movement that claims the heritage of what political theorist Peter Levine calls "associational commons," or commons managed and sustained by groups of citizens (2001, 206). An associational, community-based, public work approach has several advantages over anarchist notions of the Internet as a commons that no one owns. These include the potential political clout, civic learning, and stakeholding that a sense of ownership through shared work can bring. Such an approach also draws specific attention to how public goods come into existence. From the anarchist perspective, the Internet simply appeared as the result of millions of anonymous users. A public work lens illuminates the complex, detailed labors on the part of the government and higher education, researchers, entrepreneurs, and designers who were responsible for the creation of this commons.

An ethos of accountability, authority, and responsibility can be seen in broad-based citizen organizing, as well as democratic professional practice. The Industrial Areas Foundation calls this "care for the whole," a palpable concern about the well-being of the whole community, in this case, on the part of some of its poorest citizens. A consumer, distributive, rights-based politics that demands "more," on the Left and the Right, has no such effects. As Lawrence Summers once quipped, no one in history has ever washed their rented car (quoted in Friedman 2002; see also Crosby and Bryson 2005; Light 1998;).

Politicizing Governance, Creating a New Politics

Bringing nonpartisan democratic politics back into public affairs can improve the practice of public affairs professionals in governance. It also has broader potentials. Elections, especially at the state and national levels, have largely become advertising contests dominated by consultants and advertising agencies, posing a choice of which superhero will solve the nation's problems. Yet for all their flaws, elections are the only way societies debate their future. Indirectly, they are powerfully affected by the theory and practice of governance. The idea of democracy as a work in progress, with governance as its everyday politics, can rework political discourse generally.

Democratic society makes the elemental point that elections are about the agency of the citizenry as a whole, not mainly about candidates. It recalls Jimmy Carter's argument in his 1981 farewell address that the only office in a democracy greater than that of president is that of citizen. In a theory of governance as democratic society, government is the resource of free, self-reliant citizens, neither our enemy nor our savior.

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