



Citizen Engagement: Why and How

Sustainable Calgary- Citizens' Agenda Workshop

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Mary Pat MacKinnon

Director, Public Involvement Network



Outline

- CPRN and citizen engagement
- What is citizen engagement and why it's important now
- When should citizens be engaged?
- How to engage citizens: deliberative methodologies and tools
- Conditions / requirements for successful citizen engagement
- Challenges and opportunities

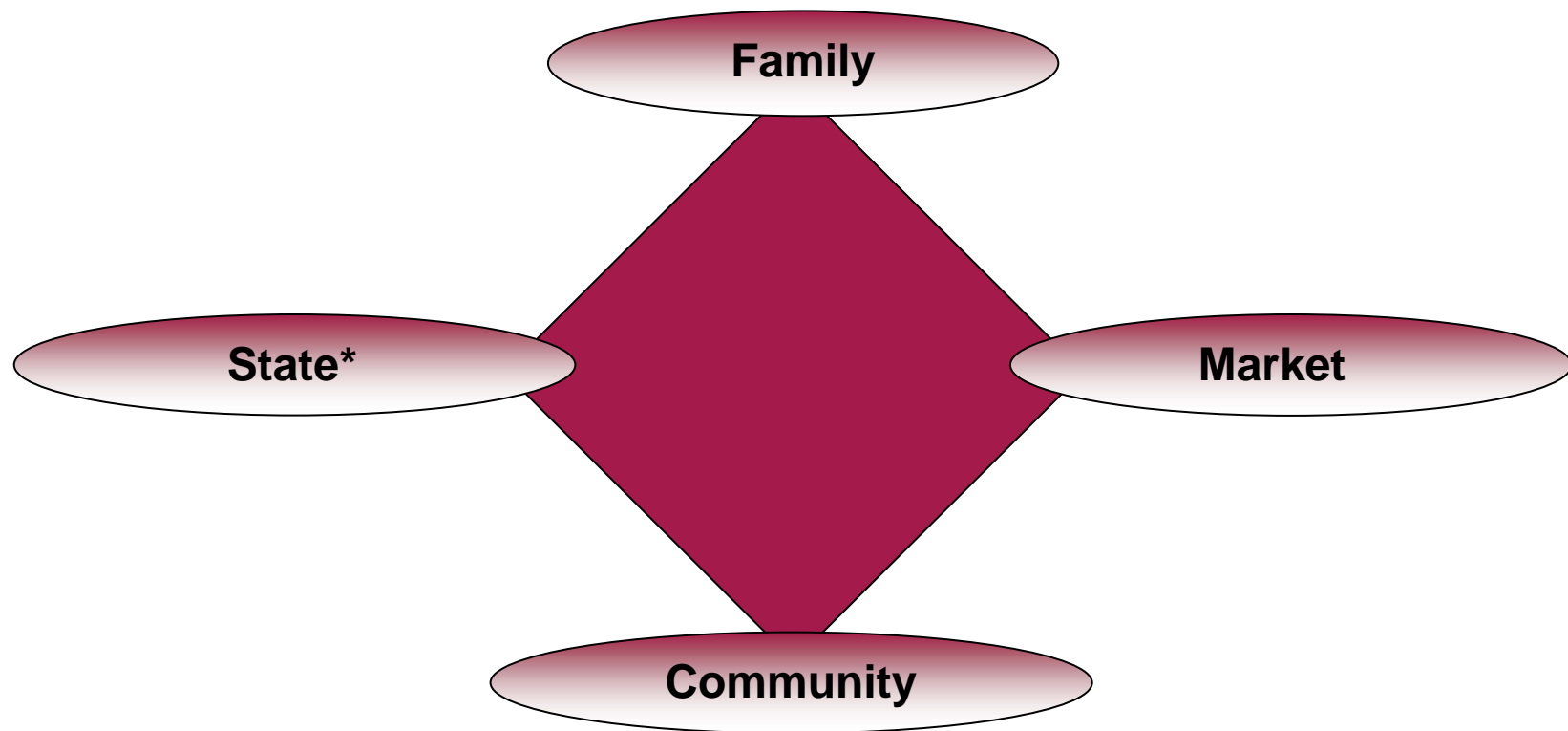


CPRN and citizen engagement

- CPRN mission: create knowledge and lead dialogue and debate on social and economic issues important to Canadians
 - Research founded on public values as articulated by representative groups of citizens
- 4 Networks: Family, Health, Work and Public Involvement
- PIN 3 pronged agenda
 - Citizen dialogues
 - Research to strengthen the theory and practice of public involvement
 - Build capacity for PI within governments, communities and citizens



The Well-Being Diamond



*State includes governments (federal, provincial, territorial and municipal) and core public services such as education and health care.



Citizens' agenda– challenge of an old idea

First Democracy (Woodruff, 2004)

- 7 Ideas for Moderns
 - Freedom from Tyranny
 - Harmony
 - Rule of Law
 - Natural Equality
 - Citizen Wisdom
 - Reasoning Without Knowledge
 - Education



Citizen wisdom

- Key idea is that ordinary people have the wisdom they need to govern themselves
 - “most important and the most controversial idea behind democracy: it is a natural part of being human to know enough to help govern your community” (Woodruff)
- Reflects a belief in common human abilities to perceive, reason and judge
 - Also requires strong traditions and education for all



What is citizen engagement?

- OECD definition

“Active participation recognizes the capacity of citizens to discuss and generate policy options independently. It requires governments to share in agenda-setting and to ensure that policy proposals generated jointly will be taken into account in reaching a final decision”. (2001)

- Phillips and Orsini

“interactive and iterative processes of deliberation among citizens (and sometimes organizations) and between citizens and government officials with the purpose of contributing meaningfully to specific policy decisions in a transparent and accountable way” (CPRN, 2002)



Citizen Engagement and 21 Century Democracy

- Renewing representative democracy
 - Deliberative democracy (Lukensmeyer, Barber, Mansbridge, Habermas)
 - Need for public judgment (Yankelovich)
 - Importance of social capital, social cohesion and civil society (Putnam, Jenson)



Why citizen engagement now?

- Disconnect between citizens and governments
 - Declining trust, voting decline
 - Pressure for more accountable and transparent public institutions
 - Public less deferential, more educated, demand a say
- Legitimacy and sustainability
 - Of policy and programs depend on fit with citizens' values
- More effective policies and programs
 - Citizens' contributions needed along with experts and stakeholders
 - Policy knowledge developed from multiple inputs



Public participation continuum

- Inform → consult → involve → collaborate →empower (IAP2)
- CE positioned from midpoint on
 - Involves information, learning, power sharing, mutual respect and reciprocity between citizens and officials
- CE characteristics
 - Relationship building
 - Opportunity for learning and influence
 - Inclusive



Consultation = Engagement (NOT)

- Passive → Reactive → Participative
→ Empowerment → Leadership (Tamarack Institute)
- Consultations often bilateral, expert
 - Polling / focus groups: top of mind, little opportunity for collective learning and no deliberation
- Engagement
 - Interactive
 - Shared power, mutual respect and reason giving



Citizen engagement deliberative methodologies & tools

Citizens' Dialogues

Online Dialogues

Citizens' Assemblies

Citizens' Juries / Panels

Deliberative Polling

Open Space Technology

Appreciative Inquiry

Consensus Conferences

21st Century Town Halls

Study Circles

Participatory Budgeting

Wisdom Councils

World Café

Charette



O-R-I-D methodology (Focused Conversation)

Engagement requires questions for focussed conversation: 4 levels*

Objective

- data, facts, external realities

Reflective

- personal relationship to the issue

- *Adapted from *The Art of Focused Conversation: A Top™ Method of the Institute of Cultural Affairs*



O-R-I-D Methodology

Focused Conversation (2)

- Interpretative

- grappling with the deeper meaning

- Decision making

- implications, tradeoffs and directions



The value of the question

1. Focus on the search for the right questions
2. Recognize that the struggle is the solution
3. See the reality in the current situation
4. Grieve for the costs of what exists now
5. Gain control of the nature of the debate
6. Treat the conversation as an action
7. Raise the question of what do we want to create together

(Block, 2003 – The answer to how is yes)



Methodology details

- CPRN Deliberative Dialogues
 - Random recruitment with honoraria
 - Balanced workbooks: credible information and value-based approaches with pros and cons
 - Audio/video tapes with transcripts
 - Professional facilitation
 - Qualitative and quantitative data
 - Reports to decision makers and participants
 - Linked to policy process



When to engage citizens

- On issues of global/national/regional/local importance
- Opportunity to influence/inform the outcome
- Need for new directions, make tradeoffs and/or find common ground



When to engage citizens (2)

- Throughout the policy cycle
 - Issue identification
 - Policy and program design and implementation
 - Evaluation and adjustment



Conditions and requirements for successful citizen engagement

- Clarity of purpose and objectives
 - Attentive to defining the right questions
 - Consider political/policy context
- Inclusive
 - As representative as possible
 - Complements stakeholder engagement + brings new voices to the table
- Participatory process and quality design
 - Opportunity for learning and deliberation



Conditions and requirements for successful citizen engagement

- Adequate planning, resources and realistic timeframe
- Transparency re: expectations and feedback
 - Commitment to respectful listening
- Opportunities for learning and contribution
 - Real potential for influence on the outcome
- Reflection and evaluation
 - Needed for accountability and learning
 - Too often the poor cousin



Voluntary sector, citizens and policy

- Symbiotic relationship
 - Voluntary sector engages citizens in policy
 - And public involvement processes engage citizens in voluntary sector
 - Policy makers need contributions of voluntary sector AND citizens for effective and legitimate policies
- Different roles and purposes: complementary
 - Citizens: non-organized
 - Stakeholder: organized interests, advocacy



Voluntary sector, citizens and policy (2)

Challenges

- Danger of using CE to bypass or undermine voluntary sector role / contributions
- Understanding/managing tensions between voluntary sector views and public views
- Policy role for voluntary sector generally under funded
 - Engaging members in policy requires resources, time, skills and patience
 - Policy role of citizens and politicians also underdeveloped



Citizen engagement challenges

- Experts' scepticism about the value of engaging citizens
- Citizens' scepticism about whether their voices will be heard
- Resources and time requirements
- Research and evaluation gaps
- Political institutions and culture
 - Fear of outcomes
 - Reluctance to share power



Citizen engagement opportunities

- Evidence shows citizens are prepared for meaningful engagement and want a higher standard for governance
- Leadership in Cities
 - Cities have rich experience with citizen engagement
 - e.g. Sustainable Calgary, Imagine Calgary, Halton RM Plan, Vancouver Citizens Agenda, Toronto Listening to the City, Montreal Citizens Forum, Guelph Participatory budgeting, Envision Halifax, Regional Health Authorities, Vibrant Communities, Inclusive Cities Canada etc.
 - People have natural affinity with place



Citizen engagement opportunities (2)

- Democratic renewal initiatives across Canada
 - British Columbia Citizens Assembly, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and at the national level (maybe)
- Service Canada
 - Potential for new citizen-centred delivery models
- 1st Canadian Conference on Dialogue and Deliberation (C2D2) Ottawa, October 27-30/05
 - Opportunity for building networks of people committed to engaging people in policy



How tos are important but...

“Transformation comes more from pursuing profound questions than seeking practical answers”

Peter Block (2003)
The answer to how is yes



Some Questions

- What's your vision of good citizen and civic engagement?
- Why do you want to engage citizens ... stakeholders....groups...?
- Are you seeking to generate ideas / brainstorm or deliberate on choices? Or Both?
- What tools and skills exist in your networks to do this work?
- What supports would help?



Sources and further reading

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For additional information:

<http://www.cprn.org>

e-mail: public_involvement@cprn.org

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