Shifting Mindsets to Promote Effective Civic Engagement

Session III: Key Issues and General Considerations

Workshop on Building Trust through Civic Engagement

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Today: civic engagement is “business as usual” (almost)

- Participatory tools to promote civic engagement
  - Surveys, polling, policy consultations
  - Citizen’s charter
  - Participatory audit
  - Participatory budget
  - Co-production of services
State leadership for Civic Engagement

- **At its best**
  - Better services and policies
  - Better relationship with citizens: “listening and responding”

- **At its worst**
  - A void “discourse”
  - A paternalistic practice
  - A technocratic approach
Top down approach to civic engagement (business as usual):

- Government initiated efforts: **State leadership**
  - **Goal:** better policy and services
    - Complement and supplement the State’s responsibilities to enhance democracy
  - **Strategy:** voice: “bringing the citizen in”;
    **Orientation:** civic engagement at the service of the State
The other side of the coin: Citizen leadership

- Citizen leadership --> a bottom up approach to civic engagement
- Government can learn from citizen leadership
  - Need for a double-loop learning process
## Two government approaches to civic engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th><strong>Top down:</strong> Gov. leadership</th>
<th><strong>Bottom up:</strong> citizen leadership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>better policy and services</td>
<td>Governance/democracy</td>
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<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
<td>voice: “bring the citizen in”</td>
<td>voice in action: “shift power relations”</td>
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<td><strong>Orientation</strong></td>
<td>civic engagement at the service of the State</td>
<td>civic engagement at the service of society</td>
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Citizen engagement: bottom up forms

- Community led efforts
  - Advocacy and service production for a group
- Mainstream NGO led efforts
  - Social accountability
  - Advocacy, service production and co-production for the common good
Examples of bottom up forms of citizen engagement

- Community led efforts
  - Targeted services:
    - *The coalition of African, Asian, European and Latino Immigrants in Illinois -- CAAELII (USA)*

- NGO led efforts
  - Social Accountability:
    - *Bogota: ¿How are we doing?” (Bogotá ¿Cómo Vamos?)* (Colombia)
  - *Broad services: The Committe for Democratization of Information Technology (Comitê de Democratização da Informática – CDI) (Brazil)*
Characteristics

“Voice” through direct citizen action

- Originally
  - Self-motivated; Self-sustained; Self-managed;
  - Independence, resistance, confrontation

- Eventually
  - Collaboration; coordination; co-production
  - “bridge building”

- Motivation
  - solidarity; public value creation against injustice and for better quality of life
Insights from research on social change leadership:

**building capacity to leverage power**

- **Organizational capacity**
  - Using participatory processes and structures
  - Building relationships (persons, networks, coalitions)
  - Managing paradox (“confrontation and dialogue”)
  - Reframing definitions, identities, problems and solutions

- **Leadership capital**
  - Beneficiaries: from constituents to stakeholders
  - Distributed leadership (and power)
  - Activating capacity (self-efficacy and competence)
What can be learned?

- Present government approach...
  - Acknowledging the need for *government led* citizen engagement (top down: supply side)
  - Resisting *citizen led* citizen engagement (bottom up: demand side)
- A shift in mindset requires grappling with this contradiction
Civic engagement

“the activation of citizen leadership to generate public value”

Who activates?
- State leadership (top down)
- Citizen leadership (bottom up)
- Co-leadership ("meeting in the middle")
A shift in mindset: learning from citizen action

- Citizen’s trust in government requires government trust in citizens
- From top-down to bottom-up to “meeting in the middle”
A double-loop learning process

- **Joint** re-framing of
  - Issues at stake
  - Definitions (i.e. efficiency, equity)
  - Problems
  - Solutions
  - Rules of engagement, roles and responsibilities
  - Accountability mechanisms
Some Lessons

- Respect the comparative advantage of CB efforts and NGOs as producers of social value.
- Engage protagonists of citizen leadership efforts as equals and potential partners.
- Inquire into the logic of the existing relationship (confrontational or collaborative?)
- Support CB and NGO work *in their own terms*.
- Citizen leadership MUST be supported BUT NOT institutionalized.
To learn more about our research on social change leadership:

NYU/Wagner Research Center for Leadership in Action:
www.nyu.edu/wagner/leadership

Leadership for a Changing World:
www.leadershipforchange.com