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## Public Judgment within an Effective Democracy

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1. Effective democracy requires public judgment to create the actions and policies that fulfill the needs of society and that solve the problems that arise; these actions and policies are legitimate and stable only when they are built on a foundation of public knowledge that effectively captures the values and hopes of all voices
2. The public determines what issues must be discussed, when and how—when the public is uncomfortable with the policies around an issue, they start talking and don't stop talking until their discomfort has been eased
3. People frame issues for discussion with or without a formal deliberative architecture; when an issue increases in urgency and importance, more attempts are made to provide a deliberative structure so more people can visit the issue and contribute to its resolution
4. Deliberation is a method for 'working through' the intellectual, emotional and ethical dilemmas of an issue; it isn't necessarily the only method, but it provides an inclusive and methodical procedure that consistently raises the most important questions to understand the dynamics of a dilemma and to 'work through' the tough choices that are required
5. Deliberation can lead participants to a basic public knowledge about an issue—it doesn't create public judgment; participants can 'work through' some of the dilemmas of the issue and come to an understanding of a shared foundation for legitimate public policy and action, but cannot ever produce public judgment
6. **Deliberation is experiential**, many times involving storytelling by those who seek a remedy from the emotional, ethical and moral dilemmas of the issue; those who deliberate must spend some time immersed in the issue to understand what values are most important and how these values make the various options of the framing either 'comfortable' or 'uncomfortable'—people enter this **immersion practice** because the issue is urgent enough on a personal basis for them to spend their time, energy and emotional commitment as active participants in the resolution of the issue
7. Deliberation in issue forums takes the participants on an '**issue tour**'—this is a small group experience that is organized to explore an issue by visiting several approaches that others have found to be most interesting in their past visits
  - a. Each issue forum provides the basic space and time for the forum participants to gather for their **immersion experience**; the forum has an agenda, like an '**issue itinerary**', that schedules with enough time to become fully and equally immersed in each of several approaches and moves the group on a systematic exploration of the issue, so the complex

nature of the dilemmas that make the issue urgent and important can be better understood

- b. The moderator is the **'issue guide'** who welcomes the participants and introduces the logistics of the event; then the moderator leads the participants in an **immersion experience** within each of the approaches on the **'issue map'**, pointing out the important features of the approach and encouraging discussion among participants about how 'comfortable' or 'uncomfortable' they are in that approach and why they feel that way; the participants learn a little of the **'issue language'** and practice speaking it with one another; after all approaches have been visited, the moderator leads the participants in a debriefing session to discuss their overall experience with the issue through the forum, or **'issue tour'**.
  - c. The recorder produces **'tour snapshots'** for the group to remember how they experienced their immersion in each approach—this isn't a transcript of the discussion, but focuses on how the participants 'worked through' the emotional, ethical and moral dilemmas from the unique perspective of the approach, satisfying some needs while leaving others unsatisfied
  - d. Deliberation can discover public knowledge only at the end of the **'issue tour'** in a time of remembering and reflecting; the participants remember how they had a **'shared comfort'** in some spaces on the **'issue map'** while at other spaces they had a **'shared discomfort'**; they reflect together on what foundational values might have led to the shared responses they experienced together as an ad hoc small group
  - e. Public knowledge always creates optimism; during the reflection time at the close of a forum, participants decide what values are most likely to lead toward the resolution of the complex dilemmas of the issue; when people discover a profound 'common ground' foundation, they are ready to share their experiences with others and eventually will look for opportunities to participate in the creation of an effective and legitimate public judgment
8. How do we know that people are 'working through' the dilemmas of an issue? Democratic ideals can provide some helpful benchmarks for the evaluation of deliberative effectiveness—when deliberation fulfills these expectations, the public knowledge that is found inspires confidence among the public and commands the attention of decision makers; if these ideals are not discussed or approached, public deliberation for democratic learning probably isn't present, because the basic dilemmas haven't been addressed; these are foundational ideals for people who want to strengthen a democracy
- a. *Justice*—the basic fairness of the benefits, costs, consequences and trade-offs of the proposed actions must be evaluated for each public policy option in deliberation—are these actions fair to all stakeholders?

- b. *Sustainability*—the health and survival of identifiable publics and the public in general must be evaluated for each public policy option in deliberation—are these actions sustainable through time?
  - c. *Participation*—the inclusion of the unique and varied perspectives of the public must be evaluated for each public policy option in deliberation—are the views and hopes of all stakeholders included in these actions?
- 9. One or two issue forums, however, cannot discover public knowledge enough to create a trustworthy ‘common ground’ foundation for future actions and policies; as additional small groups immerse themselves in the issue and then discover their own ‘common ground’ foundation for future decisions, the cumulative view of public knowledge can grow and mature; the reports of individual issue forums are gathered, correlated and analyzed to create an ‘**issue album**’ as a overview report of all groups that immersed themselves in the issue; this report can then provide some important insights about the public knowledge that all groups discovered during their individual visits
- 10. The consolidated product of a series of forums is public knowledge, but other methods can contribute their own unique perspective on the public’s wishes on a specific issue; when a variety of methods is applied to the discovery of public knowledge and the products are then coordinated, a network of agencies that practice democratic ideals can create a comprehensive view of public knowledge with wide-spread acceptance and significant persuasive power; no such network exists today, but the need is recognized by many democracy advocates to create and support a comprehensive and inclusive practice of public deliberation and ‘common ground’ analysis; at present in our society, the media does most of the framing, the public ‘works through’ the dilemmas of our times without much structure or connection, and politicians make decisions based on assumptions or special interests rather than public knowledge—a coordinated community of groups with a commitment to democratic ideals is needed to connect the varied partners in public judgment with respect and accountability
- 11. A healthy and effective democracy is continually renewed as a learning organization, discovering new public knowledge for a dynamic development of relevant public judgment; in other words, an effective democracy has a large number of ‘**tour guides**’ and many more participants in new ‘**issue tours**’ to create a culture that learns together, discovers public knowledge together and then creates constantly upgraded versions of public judgment; this culture of learning can be characterized as an upward spiral of emerging issues, issue framing and public deliberation, the determination of public knowledge and the creation of appropriate actions and policies in public judgment, leading to the emergence of new issues for public attention; a culture of learning can inspire new generations to participate enthusiastically in their own healthy and effective democracy