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Theory to Practice: Strengthening Democracy in Global Cities

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Toward "Strong Democracy" in Global Cities? Social Capital Building, Theory-Driven Reform, and the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Experience

With faith in government waning, cultural diversity spiraling, and fiscal stress straining the ability of policy makers to address the policy challenges accompanying these developments, the salience of (re)connecting citizens with government takes on renewed urgency today. Nowhere is this more the case than in urban America, where so-called global cities teeming with ethnic diversity and controlling a disproportionate amount of global business in the world economy confront profound citizen participation challenges, choices, and opportunities. In this installment of Theory to Practice, *the authors cull lessons from their 10-year action theory–based assessment and participation in the city of Los Angeles' neighborhood council experience. Comparing and contrasting their findings in this global city with those from related studies on participatory mechanisms and deliberative processes more generally, they offer six lessons for those seeking to build stronger democracy in urban areas, argue that further advances require a greater research focus on the longitudinal implementation of these efforts rather than just on their design, and contend that university researchers have a role to play in these efforts as long as they appreciate the paradoxical nature of their participation.*

Expert e-commentary by Brian Cook of Virginia Tech, Tina Nabatchi of Syracuse University, and John Thomas of Georgia State University on the perspectives and arguments culled from Los Angeles' theory-based participatory efforts can be found on the PAR *website (go to aspanet.org, click on the link to PAR, and then on the* Theory to Practice *link). These e-commentaries are accompanied by the authors' response and instructions on how PAR readers can join the exchange.*

Perceptions of the appropriate role of citizens and other stakeholders in governance have evolved considerably through several historical transitions, from the limited direct involvement established by the nation's founders to the more recent emergence of community-based institutions for participation (Sirianni and Friedland 2001). Indeed, during the 1990s, an interest in "strong democracy" and building "social" and "civic" capital began to seize the popular imagination in the United States, especially in urban areas. As articulated by Barber, strong democracy refers to the need to overcome the "conduct of politics for private advantage" and to build self-government involving citizens rather than representative government conducted solely in the name of the people (1984, 4).

Given these developments, a host of citizen participatory initiatives have taken place across the United States. These initiatives, in turn, have generated a spate of excellent and revealing studies assessing their efficacy. We argue, however, that the broad institutional prerequisites for successful participatory institutions that have been the focus of much of the existing literature do not suffice in the development of a vibrant participatory system—especially in "global" cities with highly diverse and mobile populations. A global (or "world" or "alpha" city) is one deemed important as a strategic geographic node, creating, facilitating, and sustaining the global economic system. We contend that the focus of study and lessons for researchers and practitioners examining the building of strong democracy in global cities (and elsewhere) should shift to the details of design and the processes of implementation. These factors act as important constraints on the development of participatory systems, and they can advance, foil, or attenuate the aims of those trying to advance strong democracy in twenty-first-century urban areas. We also argue that universities and foundations have constructive roles to play in advancing this cause, as long as they understand the paradoxical nature of their involvement as neutral facilitators of that process.

Our argument is founded on a longitudinal study involving 10 years of action research and evaluation of the neighborhood council system in a major global city in the United States: Los Angeles (LA). To add to the generalizability of these findings, we compare them to those from related studies on participatory mechanisms and deliberative processes more generally. We also delve deeper into the LA experience than

previously has been done by focusing on two independent but related projects: participatory budgeting and facilitated collaboration between neighborhood council and city agency officials.

From this analysis, we draw lessons for practice and future research regarding the challenges and necessary innovations to support citizen engagement in global cities. For practitioners, we offer six key lessons that can help identify the conditions under which effective neighborhood councils are more or less likely to be implemented successfully. Some are hopeful, some are cautionary. All can serve as propositions for researchers to test, elaborate, and refine in future research as they turn their attention toward the implementation of civic participatory efforts in urban areas. We also call for more longitudinal and comparative research that connects specific features of institutional design and implementation to system success.

A focus on the citywide system of neighborhood councils and public budget initiatives in LA is appropriate, timely, and distinct in several ways from prior research on this topic. First, the design of the LA participatory initiatives was influenced by received learning and participatory theories from such studies as Berry, Portney, and Thomson's *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy* (1993). As such, and in the spirit of *Theory to Practice,* LA affords an opportunity to study over time a civic participation exercise explicitly informed by social science. The LA experience helps illuminate for practitioners and scholars how received theory and wisdom on the structure of participatory institutions translate in the implementation and development of such institutions in a larger, more diverse, more economically dominant, and, hence, more contested global city environment than typically informs the study of citizen participation.

Second, given its size and great diversity, LA represents an inhospitable environment for neighborhood-level participatory institutions. The city has been criticized for its lack of social capital (California Community Foundation 2001), as well as its Progressive-Era government institutions designed to be aloof from the populace. It is a critical case for studying the efforts by one major and diverse city to incorporate aspects of public judgment and coproduction theories into the practice of public deliberation in America. The former offers means for moving citizens away from being mere opinion holders to making informed judgments about public problems. The latter moves away from the traditional emphasis on unidirectional flow of expertise from administrators to a model of decision making that applies both administrative expertise and street-level citizen knowledge to public problems.

Third, in relation to comparable systems, the design of neighborhood councils in LA has entailed far less centrally controlled features, emphasizing the grassroots development of participatory institutions. This design was informed by studies that emphasize the importance of institutional design and citizen engagement in the planning process. Nevertheless, an overarching theme of the essay could be described as "design is not enough!" While institutions are critical, we find that their details are subject to considerable conflict,

requiring practitioners and scholars to revisit conventional wisdoms that have emerged over the years in the study of citizen participation in America's urban areas more generally.

Fourth, a particular contribution of this research is that it followed the formulation and implementation process in full, from the genesis of the neighborhood council idea in early city council deliberations through implementation, allowing for much closer examination of the dynamics of civic participation institutions. In comparison, and while useful, cross-sectional and case studies of neighborhood participation (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993; Fung 2004; Thomas 1986) produce less rich accounts of institutional evolution. By integrating LA's experiences with findings from other studies, we can discern the importance of leadership, capacity building, and attention to representative legitimacy in civic participation efforts. Longitudinal analysis also allows us to identify the structure of social capital that emerged from this reform—illustrating in the process more of a bridging than a bonding phenomenon.

Finally, while we refer to some of our earlier published work, we have not previously brought the work into comparative context with other studies of neighborhood council success. Nor have we compared and integrated the lessons from two deliberative arenas within the overall LA project. This essay, then, seeks to reach practitioner audiences who may not be familiar with earlier work and—through the e-commentary from practitioners and academics afforded by *Theory to Practice*—begin a discussion to test, elaborate, and challenge previous findings and conclusions.

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Bringing Citizens Back In? Best Practices, Deliberative Design, and the LA Neighborhood Council System

Any cursory review of the literature reveals a divide in the effects of citizen engagement in governance. Advocates cite an array of benefits associated with "stronger" democratic practice (Barber 1984). They argue that participatory institutions develop citizenship by helping individuals strengthen civic skills, increasing knowledge about civic issues, and promoting more informed and better reasoned political judgment (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993; Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004; Chaskin et al. 2001; Fung 2004). These favorable views, however, are not uniformly held. At a minimum, the available evidence suggests that public deliberation is highly context dependent, shaped by—among other things—the structure of discourse, who participates, and relationships to decision makers (Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004). A more fundamental critique is that many individuals are disinclined or unable to voice demands constructively, with the result that involvement promotes alienation and conflict rather than trust (Mansbridge 1980).

The scholarly controversy regarding the effectiveness of neighborhood governance was echoed in the political debate surrounding the formation of neighborhood councils in LA. Supporters argued that it would transform the civic fabric of the city, while detractors marked it as a vehicle for NIMBYism or a tokenistic sop to neighborhood gadflies. Nonetheless, in 1999, LA voters approved a new charter, which included the creation of a citywide system of

neighborhood councils. The political impetus for the councils was a threat of secession in response to dissatisfaction with city performance: complaints that some neighborhoods did not get a "fair share" of services, that administrative agencies were unresponsive, and that downtown development interests imposed unwanted land-use decisions (Hogan-Esche 2002). What had been an unsuccessful neighborhood empowerment initiative sponsored by a minority of the city council became wrapped into charter reform, and the neighborhood council provisions were included in the face of opposition from business and development interests, Mayor Richard Riordan, and a majority of the city council. The broad goal stated in the charter was "to promote more citizen participation in government and make government more responsive to local needs."

Perhaps most importantly, the councils were given an advisory role, despite strong pressure from neighborhood advocates and some charter commission members who sought legal authority over land-use decisions. The charter directed that neighborhood councils were to be open to all stakeholders—defined as anyone who lived, worked, or owned property in the neighborhood. Moreover, the charter contained several provisions intended to create arenas for engagement, including an early warning system to alert neighborhoods of impending decisions and to provide them with a reasonable opportunity to respond, a feature of the St. Paul, Minnesota, system described by Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993). The charter also directed LA to engage neighborhood councils in the budget process, to establish regular meetings between neighborhood councils and departmental general managers, and to support a Congress of Neighborhoods, all best practices culled from the literature on neighborhood boards. In addition, neighborhood councils were allowed to emerge through a community planning process intended to produce councils that recognized a historical sense of community (rather than being mapped along city council district lines). Councils were given independence to design their bylaws and to determine how members would be elected. To provide necessary administrative support, the charter created the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), which was charged with overseeing the system.

The formulation of ordinances to implement the charter mandate and to develop a plan for this global city required an additional two years. Again following the example of other cities with successful systems, LA provided technical assistance targeted at self-organization and certification of neighborhood councils. It began to certify neighborhood councils in late 2001. As of 2008, there were 88 councils representing neighborhoods, averaging about 38,000 residents. To date, there have been 340 board elections, and neighborhood council seats often have been contested. On average, these elections have had about 300 voters, with more prominent elections attracting more than 2,000 voters. The city has given consistent, if modest, financial support for the system, providing a budget of about $3.3 million and each neighborhood council a grant of $50,000 per year.

Getting Real: Six Lessons from the LA Experience for Anticipating and Coping with Implementation Deficits

What has been the evolving fate of this effort? The following integrates research findings from a multiyear action research project studying neighborhood council implementation in which we have been engaged with studies of neighborhood participation in other cities. The research underlying the broader project was multimethodological, with specific approaches varying across research initiatives. The Collaborative Learning Project (CLP) was predominately a qualitative, action-oriented project, engaging neighborhood councils and city administrators in facilitated deliberations designed to build mutual understanding and negotiate service memoranda of understanding. The neighborhood council evaluation combined documentary research, field observation, focus group research, and two network surveys of neighborhood council board members. Semistructured interviews also were conducted with an array of city officials and neighborhood stakeholders, and these were complemented by two evaluative surveys of DONE project coordinators. Unless otherwise indicated, the evaluation findings cited in this essay were drawn from a final evaluation report on the initiative (Musso, Weare et al. 2007).

The six lessons that follow integrate findings from these two participatory and theoretically informed project arenas. The lessons are somewhat hopeful but also cautionary, as they highlight the important implementation barriers facing civic engagement reforms in global cities. To some extent, generalizations made in prior research on the building of "strong democracy" are supported. Nonetheless, we also identify a need to reconsider the applicability of prior findings to large, diverse, and conflict-prone global cities—as well as to incorporate greater reference to the policy implementation literature in both practice and future research. Overall, the lessons emphasize the importance of attention to administrative supports and, in particular, political or administrative leadership, capacity building, and intervention to address socioeconomic biases in participation.

Lesson 1: Participatory systems are politically vulnerable because of the fluidity of participation of elected and administrative actors involved, and even "model" charter designs for citizen participation in global cities require considerable attention to micro details that frequently are misunderstood or subject to implementation conflict. Building a climate of compliance expectations that outlives actor turnover and institutionalizes strong democracy is difficult but critical to long-term success.

The literature on participatory reforms identifies a number of critical features of institutional design, and LA adopted many of these features. The literature that informed the LA experience, however, often frames the benefits of participation—increased individual and community capacity and improved governance—in administrative and somewhat politically neutral terms (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993; Fung 2004; Thomas 1986). Proponents argue that the systems do not exhibit elevated levels of conflict and that participatory institutions can exercise authority without becoming entangled in partisan or ideological politics.

Our findings suggest, however, that it is important not to underestimate the challenges to implementation in such reforms. In particular, the citizen participation literature has tended to downplay political obstacles highlighted in the literature on implementation (e.g., Brodkin 1990; Hill and Hupe 2009; Mazmanian and Sabatier 1989). During the LA charter reform process, opposition from business and political elites contributed to vague language that provided little detail on the form or operation of participatory arenas. The

planning process that produced an implementing ordinance was marked by the absence of a strong political champion, and the city has since resisted specific organizational reforms supporting deliberative arenas to engage neighborhood councils with city agencies. As a consequence, and as students of policy design such as Ingram and Schneider (1990) and Matland (1995) would predict for such a highly conflict-prone implementation setting with ambiguous mandates, the development of participatory arenas has faltered over time, and halting progress has been contingent on shifting leadership on the part of the mayor's office, DONE, and external agencies such as the University of Southern California (USC), Coro Southern California, and local foundations.

As is typical during implementation, the presence and predisposition of leaders involved in the process played a critical role (Hill and Hupe 2009; Pressman and Wildavsky 1984). In particular, mayoral support for neighborhood councils wavered during critical periods of implementation. Early disinterest from the Richard Riordan mayoral administration contributed to the lack of strong arenas for involvement in budget development and service delivery. James Hahn, who followed Riordan as the mayor from 2001 to 2005, provided some support for neighborhood councils, as he had campaigned on a neighborhood-friendly agenda and entered office facing an active secession campaign. Hahn appointed as DONE general manager Greg Nelson, a city hall insider who had helped write the charter language. Under Nelson's leadership, and consonant with the implementation literature's emphasis on creating a "climate of compliance expectations" and regimes (Stoker 1989), DONE staff worked to institutionalize a more interactive budgetary process and supported university engagement in action research to empower neighborhood councils. Hahn, however, was a single-term mayor, and many of his institutional initiatives were abandoned or deemphasized following his departure and Nelson's ensuing retirement.

Elected in a hard-fought campaign against Hahn in 2005, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's administration viewed neighborhood councils as a distraction at best and took several early actions to circumscribe council engagement. Moreover, under Villaraigosa, DONE has not had steady administrative leadership, having experienced four different general managers during his administration. While it has become less defensive toward neighborhood councils over time, the Villaraigosa administration has continued to take a relatively passive role regarding the neighborhood council system.

These fluctuating political fortunes have affected neighborhood council efficacy with respect to the development of arenas for participatory budgeting and service engagement. Turning first to budgeting, despite charter language requiring neighborhood council advisement in budgetary processes, progress developed haltingly from a largely symbolic "Budget Day" that did not involve deliberation or, indeed, any interaction on the budget. While it has become better institutionalized over time, the process remains far less deliberative and empowering than oft-cited best practices of participatory budgeting in the literature (Baiocchi 2001; Musso, Sithole et al. 2007). It does incorporate several features suggested in the literature on participatory budgeting, including advance education of citizens regarding city budget processes and fiscal issues, employment of a survey intended to collect information about stakeholder preferences, and creation of facilitated regional deliberation providing an opportunity for representatives to develop informed viewpoints. However, the information provided to participants is broad, the survey of stakeholder budget preferences has varied highly in quality, and the information from deliberations seldom has been used by decision makers (Musso, Sithole et al. 2007).

In the case of service delivery, and charter language aside, LA has never undertaken any systematic attempt to develop systems for monitoring service delivery or engaging neighborhood councils with general managers. Hence, when the city did nothing to implement the charter provision requiring neighborhood council engagement with departments, the CLP became involved in an intermediary role to create an arena for sustained deliberation (Kathi and Cooper 2005). The CLP at times faced misunderstanding of its role; an example was criticism by neighborhood councils when researchers acted as observers and note-takers rather than active participants. Nonetheless, the CLP achieved some success in producing a memorandum of understanding process that later was emulated by grassroots efforts among neighborhood councils with the city's Planning Department and the Department of Water and Power. However, Mayor Villaraigosa prohibited memorandum-of-understanding processes early in his first term, and there has not been any ensuing systematic effort to comply with this provision of the charter. There is continuing disinterest in neighborhood councils at the departmental level, and a survey of mid-level departmental administrators found that they perceived neighborhood councils to be even less important for setting goals and getting information than other informal civic associations, such as homeowner groups. These severe political obstacles tend to be ignored in other studies, and the LA experience suggests that more detailed mandates requiring specific types of deliberation processes are required for global cities to ensure that deliberative processes involving citizens occur over the long run.

Lesson 2: The descriptive representativeness of participatory bodies influences their substantive focus and perceived legitimacy, but realizing even mandated diversity on those boards can be a challenge. The LA experience, considered in the context of the experience of other cities (global and otherwise), highlights the obstacles and some strategies for achieving descriptive representativeness in culturally diverse global cities.

A thorny issue confronted by efforts to develop participatory institutions is that they are vulnerable to the socioeconomic biases that characterize political participation in the United States and, in particular, high-effort activities such as those required of voluntary boards (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). These biases call into question the extent to which participatory institutions fairly and effectively speak for their communities. The LA experience confirms the entrenched nature of these biases, while at the same time pointing to new challenges to the legitimacy of participatory bodies.

The planners of the LA system attempted to address the dangers of socioeconomic and ethnic bias through requirements for representativeness. The implementing ordinance, section 22.810.1 of Los Angeles Administrative Code Division 22, required that the board would "to the extent possible, represent the diversity of the neighborhood council's community stakeholders. No single stakeholder group may comprise a majority of the neighborhood council's governing body." Nonetheless, the traditional biases emerged during

implementation. The members of LA neighborhood council boards are disproportionately white, highly educated, and wealthy homeowners.

These apparent biases raise particular concerns about ensuring the suitability of participatory institutions in highly diverse, global cities. Given the high housing costs and mobility found in LA, the homeowner bias is acute. More than 80 percent of neighborhood council board members are homeowners, whereas LA's homeownership rate of about 38.6 percent is the lowest of any major U.S. city. In comparison, the cities studied by Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993), Fung (2004), and Thomas (1986) had homeownership rates ranging from 63 percent to 76 percent. Also troubling are the barriers to involving foreign-born residents. While more than 39 percent of LA residents are foreign born, less than 2 percent of respondents to neighborhood council board member surveys were noncitizens, and not a single member had been living in the United States for less than five years.

In the face of socioeconomic biases in participation, it is theoretically possible for volunteer bodies to attain representative legitimacy in substantive terms (e.g., the degree to which the council acts in the community's interests) or participative terms (e.g., the degree to which the council provides opportunities for stakeholders to be active within the organizations) (Guo and Musso 2007; Mansbridge 1980). Some research even suggests that socioeconomic biases have not prevented local participatory groups from representing substantive community interests fairly and fully (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993; Fung 2004). Other studies have further argued that more homogeneous forums may operate more effectively (Chaskin 2003; Williamson and Fung 2005).

Unfortunately, in LA, descriptive biases clearly skew the substantive representativeness and the perceived legitimacy of neighborhood councils. Because homeowners dominate board membership, there is a strong emphasis on planning and transportation issues, while the general public is more concerned about crime, schools, and jobs. Moreover, the lack of representative diversity has weakened the political legitimacy of the neighborhood councils, as city officials and administrators frequently call critical attention to their underrepresentation of Latino constituents. As ethnic diversity and economic inequality rise in the United States, the issues with representative legitimacy that have encumbered the LA system are likely to challenge participatory systems in other global cities.

There are some levers for action, however. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) argue that citizen participation requires motivation (a reason for citizens to participate), invitation (specific opportunities and outreach to encourage participation), and resources (financial and cognitive capacity, attitudes of political efficacy). In LA, there has been considerable attention to resource constraints, and many neighborhood councils provide translation and child care at meetings. More challenging are motivation and invitation. To the extent that they are dominated by higher-income individuals, such

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forums may fail to motivate diverse participation in that they focus on issues of less interest to historically disadvantaged groups (e.g., land use rather than education or jobs). This is consistent with the historical institutionalism literature (Mettler, 1998), which elaborates the manner in which policy and institutional design shape—intentionally or unintentionally—feelings of citizen efficacy and, hence, participation.

Thus, the relative success of Chicago's participatory governance efforts argued by Fung (2004) may be attributable to the city's focus on schools and public safety, issues that are much more salient for minority residents than the land-use problems emphasized in LA. Localities can improve motivation by providing targeted grants or other incentives to engage community groups around issues that cross the income divide. At the same time, higher-income citizen representatives need to be motivated to be inclusionary. A tactic that has been employed successfully in participatory budgeting is to allocate resources to neighborhoods contingent on the mobilization of community residents (Baiocchi 2001). Another option is to incentivize agendas of broad interest through targeted categorical grants. For example, the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program, in existence since 1990, has provided grants, funded by tax increment monies, to 81 501c(3) residential organizations (Fagotto and Fung 1995). To ensure outreach and engagement of community stakeholders, the program requires resident organizations to develop an inclusive community planning effort that produces "Neighborhood Action Plans" that are a basis for the funding.

A capacity constraint is that community volunteers often lack skills in organizing across cultural differences. In LA, there has been a tendency to rely on outreach fliers translated for diverse language groups. This is necessary but not sufficient. The community capacity literature suggests that outreach efforts must move beyond impersonal and passive media campaigns. They must strategically deploy nonprofits and their associated community networks to mobilize disadvantaged populations using personal connections and invitations (Chaskin et al. 2001). A more subtle and difficult to address issue is that community meetings may not feel familiar or socially welcoming to people who are not members of the dominant cultural group (Fischer 2006). Prior research suggests that a more hospitable atmosphere may be created by systematically engaging leaders from nonprofit organizations or churches that represent historically disadvantaged groups.

Lesson 3: Deliberation in global cities requires two-way capacity building to address mismatches between citizen and administrator knowledge and attitudes. These efforts at capacity building should not be so complex as to confuse or intimidate citizens, will need to be repeated, and should not unduly raise expectations of citizen influence lest disillusionment arise.

Innovations in deliberative practice are theorized to enhance government responsiveness, trust in government, and policy making (Forester 1999). The experience of the CLP shows that a

well-designed deliberative forum can achieve trust, partnerships, and new discourses (Cooper, Bryer, and Meek 2008). The LA experience also suggests, however, that design alone is not sufficient to ensure success; capacity building for both government agencies *and* citizen groups is a necessary precondition for successful deliberative practice (also see Fishkin 2009, who focuses in particular on citizen capacity building).

Both the CLP and budgeting processes faced challenges that required two-way capacity building aimed at citizens and administrators. In the case of the budgeting process, city officials and neighborhood stakeholders identified gaps in stakeholders' knowledge of the budget process that were barriers to substantive neighborhood council deliberation. In the beginning, LA's information forums were at such a level of complexity that they confused rather than enlightened. At the same time, participants had conflicting and sometimes unrealistic perspectives of their role. Some neighborhood councils sought full audit authority or demanded city actions that were not part of the budget process, such as land-use concessions. Six iterations of the budget process were required for the city staff to develop an understanding of what information was helpful and for a core of neighborhood council participants to develop a base of knowledge and more reasonable expectations of the process. In turn, city finance staff needed to develop a role definition that recognized the importance of engaging stakeholders during the process.

Turning to service delivery, the CLP was designed in large part to address the need for two-way capacity building through direct and open interaction between administrators and neighborhood activists. Difficulties, nevertheless, remain evident. The best example is from the first collaborative process with the Department of Public Works. The department agreed to develop an individualized service plan for neighborhood council participants and did so eventually for every neighborhood council in the city. However, the plans were so complex and detailed that they overwhelmed the capacity of neighborhood councils to analyze and respond to them. While the neighborhood councils clearly required additional intellectual resources to engage in public works planning productively, volunteers could not be expected to be administrative experts. Further progress on this relationship also requires the Department of Public Works to understand its audience better and to provide information accordingly.

Unfortunately, following the completion of the CLP experiments in 2007, LA has done little to develop the capacity for deliberation among either neighborhood council staff or city administrators. An attempt to create a leadership academy has faltered politically, and our surveys of departmental attitudes toward neighborhood councils found that they are not viewed by administrators as important stakeholders. As a result, neighborhood councils appear to be developing more adversarial as opposed to deliberative relationships with the city. For example, neighborhood councils have used horizontal networks to mobilize in opposition to several citywide initiatives, most recently a solar power referendum that was perceived by some as a city union power grab.

Thus, the LA experience confirms findings from other studies showing that administrators frequently resist citizen engagement because they do not perceive citizens to be in conformance with norms of

agency decision making (Kweit and Kweit 1980). It is important to address such imbalances so that citizens are not unduly disadvantaged in deliberations (Fung and Wright 2001). It is also critical to note that citizens and administrators bring different forms of knowledge and expertise that play distinct roles in the deliberation. As Renn et al. (1993) discuss, whereas administrators bring expertise that may be critical for the design of alternatives, citizens bring street-level knowledge that can be employed in understanding the value trade-offs between different options. In developing deliberative arenas in global cities, it is important to create opportunities for both types of knowledge to be considered and appreciated.

Lesson 4: As in other types of cities, strong elected and administrative leadership are necessary to overcome organizational barriers, develop sustained deliberation, build trust, and improve administrative responsiveness in global cities. The scale of such cities makes this a particularly difficult challenge. Cultural change can be fostered through a variety of techniques applied by supportive leaders, including aligning incentives and standard operating procedures with cooperation and deliberation, improving role coherence and redefinition, modeling appropriate behavior, and pursuing first-, second-, and third-order effects.

Prior research suggests that administrative and cultural changes are key to integrating neighborhood councils as productive partners in administrative processes, as is a similar cultural shift among elected officials. In Cincinnati, for example, the development of programmatic incentives for neighborhood engagement in governance changed the attitudes of local elected officials and reduced their tendency to "succumb to pressure rather than risk open conflict" (Thomas 1986, 157). What is less clear is how this cultural change in administrative values came about. Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993) likewise identify the importance of political support in general terms, but they do not describe in much detail the role that leadership played in changing the culture of the city council or administrative agencies toward accepting neighborhood involvement in deliberative processes.

Thus, prior research suggests that revamping perceptions of the proper role of city officials in relation to neighborhood councils is a prerequisite of building strong urban democracies. In addition to facing all the other obstacles to organizational change cited in the literature (Fernandez and Rainey 2006), cultural change involving the building of a strong democracy can be difficult, as professional expertise and role orientations shape administrator behavior. Consequently, altering perverse incentives for cooperation, modeling desired behavior by leaders, and manipulating organizational levers for change are critical.

The LA experience provides examples of how these strategies can be employed to some degree. The LA city government places a strong value on technical expertise, which, not unexpectedly, has contributed to a dismissive attitude toward neighborhood councils. In the case of the CLP, cultural change was accomplished by a leader in the Department of Public Works, Director William Robertson of the Street Services Bureau. Robertson sought to remove his staff's fear of working with the public, and he modeled desired behavior by visiting neighborhood council meetings and engaging members in open discussion (Cooper and Bryer 2007). His leadership promoted the

success of the first memorandum-of-understanding experiment, as administrators within the department came to perceive their role as a partner with neighborhood councils that supported joint problem identification (Bryer 2009). An important contrast, however, was presented by top managers in LA's Department of Transportation. They perceived their own roles as prescriptive, wherein neighborhood councils might describe a perceived problem but would depend on expert administrators to diagnose the root issue and prescribe the solution.

Similarly, in the case of participatory budgeting, development of an engaged budgetary process involving neighborhood councils overcame some obstacles related to administrative culture because it was controlled and channeled within a political office that perceived advantages to involving neighborhood councils in budgeting. Under Hahn and Villaraigosa, members of the mayor's budget team and the city administrative officer staff have been technical analysts who were inclined to resist neighborhood involvement. Political leadership has been critical to overcoming this gap. For example, under Mayor Villaraigosa, budget staff resistance was overcome by commitment on the part of the deputy mayor for neighborhood and community service, Larry Frank. As a city staff member involved with the budgeting process put it, the budget staff "received the memo" and, over time, became accustomed to presenting at Budget Day (a role previously handled by staff from DONE).

In the LA cases, cultural change depended on leadership to reconfigure a match between citizen needs and administrator expertise and procedure. A more participative budgetary process slowly evolved, in part because of this realignment of incentive systems— a realignment that allowed the staff to experience role coherence. The traditional role of budget staff in most public agencies emphasizes the translation of expertise and advice to decision makers, which could become coherent with their new role of delivering information to neighborhood council representatives. Thus, a fit between administrative culture and the participatory budgeting process gradually emerged. In contrast, the CLP took on a more challenging venture—to help agency staff to reexamine their role assumptions and potentially to modify operating procedures to engage the citizenry—which proved rife with resistance. When appropriate leadership was in place, as in the Department of Public Works' case discussed earlier, Cooper, Bryer, and Meek (2008) found that progress could be made. Those hoping for strong democracy need to reform culture and institutional restrictions to stand any chance of success.

Lesson 5: Universities and foundations have a critical role to play in supporting deliberative reforms in global cities, including overcoming informational impediments and bringing institutional innovations to the process. However, they also face formidable challenges in doing so that can preclude their effectiveness as facilitators, including animosity from citizen groups, political resistance, and resentment of their efforts. Paradoxically, the neutrality that makes their contributions useful can compromise the impact of their prescriptions.

Previous work across a range of disparate city types has noted that foundations have played an important role in successful experiments with citizen participation (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993;

Thomas 1986). For example, the Mott Foundation helped support the development of Cincinnati's neighborhood governance reforms, while the Ford Foundation assisted neighborhoods in organizing in some cities studied by Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993). These foundations were interested in supporting change agents that could address deep-seated social problems (Lagemann 1999). While much of the work acknowledges the supporting role played by foundations, however, there is little explication of the types of roles third parties usefully might play.

Our experience in foundation/university partnerships suggests that third parties can be particularly useful in helping participatory systems overcome information impediments by serving as politically neutral sources of knowledge and policy ideas at important junctures. As noted in previous lessons, administrative resistance, unrealistic expectations, and fragmented knowledge in LA hampered the development of political innovations important to successful neighborhood involvement in governance. In addition, LA experienced particularly low levels of trust in government, evident in the secession movements that catalyzed the neighborhood council movement.

The USC research teams, supported by foundations, played an important role as convenors and distributors of information at a number of points. Soon after enactment of the charter reform, USC brought neighborhood stakeholders and city officials together in a series of facilitated workshops where they were able to begin deliberating over such design issues as boundary designation, organizational structure, and stakeholder designation. At these workshops, many interested actors met for the first time and developed relationships that became a basis for continued engagement.

USC also successfully introduced a number of institutional ideas that were eventually incorporated. The memorandum-of-understanding process developed by the CLP was adapted by neighborhood council activists to negotiate an agreement with the Department of Water and Power. Likewise, in the case of participatory budgeting, USC proposed a regional model for deliberating budget preferences and developed a survey instrument that asked respondents to weigh in on specific budget options being considered by city hall. Both of these innovations were adopted and continue today.

Importantly, however, while university and foundation involvement is important for developing participatory systems, outsiders can do little to introduce institutional innovations in the face of political and administrative opposition. For example, the Villaraigosa administration, concerned about how memoranda of understanding with neighborhood councils might impede administrative actions, would not permit departments to participate in later CLP processes. In the end, neighborhood activists and departmental staff adopted some USC suggestions, but neither independent memorandum-of-understanding processes nor participatory budgeting closely resemble the specific processes recommended or used by USC team members.

Also, as others have noted (Lagemann 1999), the research mission of universities can clash with the action orientation of neighborhood groups. In the CLP process, for example, a number of citizens

were skeptical of the motives of USC and perceived it to be treating neighborhood councils as an academic exercise. In budget workshops, some activists reacted angrily when USC researchers pointed out the difficulty of making anything more than marginal changes to a complex budget with limited discretionary spending. As such, a paradox can develop. While involvement of neutral and trusted outsiders may assist participatory efforts by providing information and neutral facilitation, the very nature of universities and foundations that ensures their function as neutral brokers also may constrain their ability to assist in overcoming political barriers to neighborhood empowerment.

Lesson 6: Participatory institutions can develop and unleash social capital beyond the original goals of innovation, the form of which may be shaped by design decisions. This may occur despite popular perceptions that a dearth of social capital exists. In the absence of targeted investment in community capacity, the function of these networks may evolve to be one of "bridging" rather than "bonding" social capital, such that these networks are less likely to promote deliberation in global cities than hoped for originally.

While theory suggests that the benefits of participatory institutions accrue to the broader community, much research focuses more narrowly on effects among direct participants (Fung 2004; Mansbridge 1980). Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993) provide an exception, finding that cities with strong participation systems have higher-quality civic participation, improved government responsiveness, and increased citizen levels of political efficacy. The LA experience provides additionally textured findings on the promise of participatory reform.

The ability of the neighborhood council system to emerge is a testament to the power of such reforms to unleash social capital. Contrary to the conventional wisdom that LA lacks a civic culture or neighborhood identification (California Community Foundation 2001; Sonenshein 2004), the opportunity to organize neighborhood councils was met by citizens with enthusiasm. Organizing efforts developed rapidly throughout the city, even in the absence of city resource support. Existing social capital was clearly a facilitator, according to an analysis of the factors that influenced time to formation (Jun 2007). Despite early concerns that self-organization might be difficult for lower-income or migrant communities, the neighborhood council system is citywide, and the few areas without neighborhood councils are very wealthy communities that resisted the procedural requirements placed on certified neighborhood councils.

The political networks that have formed around the neighborhood councils connecting them to their communities, city agencies, and other neighborhood councils have been shaped by the experience of elected council members in visiting their neighbors, volunteering, and by past associational memberships (Weare, Musso, and Jun 2008). This social capital, in fact, had stronger effects than income or education, the attributes that most commonly predict civic involvement. The political networks that have arisen, however, primarily are "bridging networks" connecting disparate neighborhoods across the city. The number of contacts between neighborhood councils increased fourfold between our 2003 and 2006 surveys of neighborhood council members. In contrast, the frequency of contacts between neighborhood councils and stakeholders in their own community decreased by 25 percent between the surveys, suggesting that neighborhood councils are less successful at generating "bonding" social capital that can build community capacity (Weare, Musso, and Jun 2008).

Importantly, the evolution of these networks over time highlights how the effects of institutional innovations extend beyond the specific deliberative goals, designs, and forums that are created initially. While many have struggled, networked neighborhood council activists have become important change agents in pushing for collaborative work with the departments, lobbying for a more inclusive budgetary process, and organizing citywide campaigns to support or oppose city initiatives. Moreover, the LA experience shows that even in diverse and conflictual global cities, a core of individuals can exist who are interested in taking advantage of opportunities.

At the same time, however, the LA case also highlights the difficulties of connecting the activities of core participants to a broader community of interests or to connect agencies with their constituencies at the grassroots. In the absence of a broad and extended feedback loop, the interaction of core participants may have limited benefits for councils and their communities, or lead to community fissures. For example, when the resources necessary for collaborative learning forums necessitated a focus on a limited number of neighborhood councils, the process was challenged by activists who were excluded. This lack of connection became manifest in fissures between local communities, the neighborhood councils that purported to represent them, and city agencies. For example, community outreach was cited to be the most significant challenge facing neighborhood councils, and survey data indicated that neighborhood council meeting attendance decreased significantly between 2003 and 2006. The deficiencies in design of deliberative arenas also led to limited contacts between neighborhood councils and city officials.

The long-term effects of the emphasis on bridging social capital remain to be seen. Research demonstrates that civic groups with inward-looking, bonding types of connections are not as successful at achieving goals as those that form more extensive, outward-looking bridging networks (Hill and Matsubayashi 2005; Oztas 2004). However, surveys of the general LA population have shown a decline in support for the council system. At the beginning of the reform, 68 percent of survey respondents believed that neighborhood councils would improve the quality of LA city government, and 71 percent believed that they would improve citizen participation. After five years, the percentage of residents who held these favorable views dropped significantly to 41 percent and 51 percent, respectively (Guerra et al. 2007). Thus, designers of deliberative systems need to understand better how design decisions on the front end may produce specific forms of social capital in the long run.

Conclusions

The LA experience suggests that best practice lessons from an array of cities could inform the institutional design of a participatory system in a highly diverse global city. Attention to existing best practices supported some important achievements. Despite thin and inconsistent political support, a citywide system nonetheless emerged through volunteer excitement about the opportunities for self-determination offered by the flexible charter design. The most important theme of our research, however, is that the

politically contested nature of participatory reforms geared toward the tenets of "strong democracy" poses an array of implementation hurdles that can diminish the benefits of institutional reform, constrain participatory opportunities, and shape the political and social networks that ensue from reforms.

This theme elaborates previous studies that have noted challenges to participation across a range of city types, but they have not fully explored the implications of specific features of the arena of engagement. These include the presence or absence of continuing political support, administrative leadership, outreach to encourage diversity of engagement, facilitative support from neutral outsiders, and the latent nature of social capital. The nature of these factors in the LA experience has contributed to the development of a system that is horizontal in nature ("bridging") rather than bringing together neighborhood stakeholders ("bonding"), that is politically reactive rather than deeply deliberative, and that lacks needed capacity building within deliberative arenas in this most global of U.S. cities. Our research also shows that while universities can serve as neutral experts helping to reduce participatory transaction costs (e.g., information about processes), the legitimacy that neutrality brings is both vulnerable to political factors and susceptible to attack by citizens doubting third-party commitment.

In addition to the specific suggestions we have offered in this article, future research needs to go beyond a focus on the study of successful systems at one point in time and produce fine-grained comparative work that examines over time the effect of design features. A key question is how the proper confluence of political and administrative supports can be crafted—perhaps with the aid of universities and foundations—to support implementation and maintenance of more successful systems for citizen engagement. Such a focus on implementation deficits and strategies for attenuating their negative fallout is long overdue. This focus need not abandon concern about best practices but rather link design to implementation and implementation research in more systematic, longitudinal, and comparative ways. Regardless of the research agenda ultimately pursued, a more thorough examination of the relationship between civic participation initiatives, barriers to implementation, and the building of a strong democracy in increasingly diverse global cities merits the sustained attention of public administration scholars and practitioners in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

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