Civic Innovation in America

Community Empowerment, Public Policy, and the Movement for Civic Renewal

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Over the past several decades American society has displayed a substantial capacity for civic innovation, and the future of our democracy will depend on whether we can deepen and extend such innovation to solve major public problems and transform the way we do politics. To be sure, the obstacles are forbidding and the outcomes uncertain. But important foundations have been slowly built through the painstaking public work of citizens, as well as through networks of professional organizers and practitioners who have learned to catalyze and support their work in progressively more refined and effective ways. Americans at the turn of the century face serious strains in their democratic institutions and worrisome signs in their everyday civic life, yet they have never stopped reinventing democracy. Indeed, over the past several decades they have created forms of civic practice that are far more sophisticated in grappling with complex public problems and collaborating with highly diversified social actors than have ever existed in American history.

The analysis that leads us to these conclusions will appear welcome to the thousands upon thousands of people who have been engaged in building communities and renovating the democratic foundations of American society for much of their adult lives. Indeed, it derives from a deep appreciation of their work, as well as from an attempt to learn from the paths they have taken as civic innovators. Our analysis might also provide a hopeful set of intellectual and practical handles for many others who seek new ways to become effectively engaged amid pervasive beliefs that nothing works. But our claims will undoubtedly appear contentious and counterintuitive to many others. Before laying out a fuller case for these claims and qualifying them with appropriate critical analysis, let us give a few examples of what we have in mind.
A TALE OF TWO CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS

The first story concerns Save The Bay, a statewide civic environmental organization in Rhode Island, which has transformed itself over thirty years from a local oppositional group to one that combines advocacy, policy design, education, and habitat restoration. The second is about Communities Organized for Public Service, in San Antonio, a largely Mexican American coalition of congregations dedicated to transforming poor and working-class communities that has evolved over twenty-five years from a confrontational style of community organizing to one based on collaborative public relationships rooted in faith, family, and democratic accountability.

Save The Bay

In the early 1970s citizens of the Narragansett Bay Homeowners Association and Save Our Community formed Save The Bay to stop the construction of an oil refinery in Tiverton, Rhode Island, and twin nuclear power plants at Rome Point. The bay had been degraded during two centuries of industrial development, initially by woolen and cotton mills, then by fertilizer plants and paint factories, and more recently by jewelry manufacturing and electroplating. Urban development and suburban sprawl added new sources of nonpoint pollution, such as roads and shopping malls, and sewage systems needed major upgrading. As citizen efforts expanded, Save The Bay emerged over the next decade as an effective statewide citizen action group that repeatedly engaged in legal and political confrontation with local and state agencies and polluting corporations. Its initial strategies were advocacy and opposition: advocate strong enforcement of command-and-control regulations and oppose any actions that might further degrade the bay. While it made its case in the courts of public opinion, Save The Bay did not shy away from taking cases to the courts of legal enforcement.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 and the Clean Water Act of 1972 granted citizens important rights to participate in decision making and considerable leverage to compel compliance, but these were not power enough to protect and restore the bay on a long-term basis. For this, a broader civic strategy would be needed. Save The Bay thus began to identify common interests and to highlight the aesthetics of the bay and inland areas. Its new strategy emphasized the recreational and fishing uses available to all citizens and the need to preserve the environment for the children of the community. Rather than drawing stark lines between the evil polluters and the good guys in green hats, Save The Bay chose to downplay conflicting interests and ideologies and to avoid purely obstructionist methods that stopped short of solutions. It began to build new public relationships with boating and fishing groups, schools, civic associations, businesses, and regulators.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1985 took the lead in organizing the first national Estuary Program in 1985 with the aim of uniting the efforts of all stakeholders to develop new sources of volunteer contributions that could do only so much if local efforts were not coordinated. Having established an independent organization, Save The Bay expanded its educational and educational capacities, with dozens of workshops and courses, some of which have trained over 1,500 community leaders in the principles of community-based environmental advocacy. And over the past twenty years, Save The Bay has developed a network of volunteers and citizen-engaged groups throughout the state, fostering collaboration and encouraging local action to protect and restore Narragansett Bay and its watershed.

Habitat restoration work began in the latter half of the 1990s, with the establishment of a partnership with state and federal agencies to develop a comprehensive plan for restoring the bay's ecosystems. The bay is home to a diverse array of marine species, including sea turtles, seals, and a wide variety of fish and invertebrates. To protect this biodiversity, Save The Bay has worked closely with local communities to develop innovative solutions to habitat degradation and pollution. One such project is the establishment of a network of estuarine reserves, which are protected areas designated to conserve and restore the bay's ecosystems. These reserves serve as models for other areas looking to protect and restore their own coastal habitats.

In addition to its work on habitat restoration, Save The Bay has also focused on education and outreach programs. The organization has developed a suite of educational materials and workshops that are used by schools, community groups, and environmental organizations throughout the state. These programs aim to increase public awareness of the bay's biodiversity and the importance of protecting it for future generations. Save The Bay has also worked to educate the public about the impacts of pollution and climate change on the bay and its ecosystems. Through its outreach efforts, the organization has been able to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the effort to protect and restore Narragansett Bay.
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) itself began to encourage such a shift, as the Chesapeake Bay Program in 1983 and the National Estuary Program in 1987 provided a framework for local collaborative action with the aim of nurturing a "protective ethic" and a "sense of ownership" among the public. EPA's reasoning was that standardized, technology-based approaches provided very limited tools for protecting integrated ecosystems. Citizens needed to understand the consequences of their own actions, such as the use of lawn fertilizers and household chemicals, as nonpoint pollution was to be effectively reduced. And citizens needed to develop new sources of voluntary and collaborative action, because regulators could do only so much and could never generate sufficient legitimacy on their own to make the hard choices, such as passing major new bonds to upgrade sewage treatment systems.

Having established an independent organizational base and impressive educational capacities, Save The Bay positioned itself in the 1980s to become the lead organization for public education in the Narragansett Bay Project, for which EPA provided funds and technical assistance. EPA also helped Save The Bay to organize the first national conference of estuarine groups in 1987 to develop a detailed activist agenda for protection and restoration. In the years since, Save The Bay has developed substantial organizing, technical, and educational capacities, with a staff of twenty-nine and an annual budget of more than 1.5 million dollars. More than half of its funding comes from member contributions and program revenues. It now counts more than twenty thousand members and supporters, with an average of one thousand or so volunteering during any given year. It has an ambitious, volunteer Citizens Monitoring project, built partly upon existing citizen efforts on many ponds and rivers, that includes computerized mapping, a public hotline, training of volunteers, and the operation of the specially equipped Narragansett Baykeeper boat and crew, part of the national Keepers Alliance. Save The Bay's business outreach strategy has included a cooperative effort with local businesses to develop employee education and leadership initiatives to reduce toxics. It has developed an array of local projects in Rhode Island and western Massachusetts, which is part of the larger watershed.

Habitat restoration work became increasingly important for Save The Bay in the latter half of the 1990s, and it now combines sophisticated scientific capacities with direct work by citizens themselves. In its initial assessment of habitat health across the bay, it recruited nearly one hundred citizens from shell fishermen's associations, scuba diving clubs, neighborhood associations, land trusts, town councils, environmental advocacy groups, country clubs, "friends of the stream" groups, and local conservation commissions. They were trained to do local interviews with homeowners to reconstruct the history of salt marsh degradation over many decades. They collected old photographs and maps, and developed computer mapping and databases
through diving and aerial photography. Now these and other volunteers are engaged in restoration projects, such as growing and transplanting eelgrass, removing invasive plants, and doing periodic cleanups. Their stories of public work, of the “blood, sweat, and tears” shed in hauling sandbags and building fish ladders, inspire engagement well beyond what the staff itself is able to enlist.

Save The Bay also trains volunteer “docents” and classroom teachers to work with youth groups and schools on extensive environmental education at every level, using methods that include creative puppet shows and on-line games. Its new capital campaign aims to raise 6.5 million dollars to expand bay education centers around the state, with an emphasis on urban schools with minority and working-class populations. Without a much broader public understanding of habitats, Save The Bay reasons, people will not engage in restoration on a sufficient scale, nor will they adequately pressure the state legislature to pass the habitat restoration bill with enough funding to enable citizens to do their work. Save The Bay also provides information to local families on environmentally sound yard care, household toxics reduction, and “green” energy choices within the new deregulated market. It nurtures civic friendships and celebrates community achievements through a continuous array of fairs, festivals, yacht races, bay swims, Mother’s Day sails, kayak tours, seal watches, and On the Dock of the Bay dances. Its innovative approaches have been featured in leading national and local newspapers, and it was awarded the seventy-sixth Point of Light by President Bush in 1989.

Save The Bay nonetheless continues to engage in building strong advocacy coalitions with local urban toxics groups and national organizations, such as the Environmental Defense Fund and the Conservation Law Foundation. In the interests of sustainable development with democratic stakeholder involvement, these coalitions stopped the recent Army Corps dredging project on the Providence River and the Quonset container port. As Curt Spalding, Save The Bay’s executive director, puts it, “As we move into the next century, advocacy for the bay will be much more than preventing more damage. It will be a process of repairing and restoring the vital connections between bay and community.” And for this, a “civic organizing strategy” based on education and restoration by citizens themselves “must come first.”

Save The Bay has thus developed a model of an independent citizen organization that can collaborate with regulatory agencies and industry without being coopted and can define its essential mission as ongoing civic education and the public work of restoration without losing the capacity to engage in conflict, if need be. Through a process of extended social learning, it has generated new civic capacities that build upon its organized power of advocacy, legal norms favoring public participation, and existing associational networks. Its own learning “on the ground,” so to speak, has ramified upward and outward to federal and state agencies and to other estuary and

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watershed groups throughout the country. It has provided critical local experience and national advice in the policy-learning process that is manifest at EPA and other federal and state agencies, as well as among policy intellectuals, who urged much greater emphasis on place-based strategies during the 1980s, and then inscribed “community-based environmental protection” (CBEP) as central to reinventing environmental regulation during the 1990s. Along with its eleven regional coalition partners in Restore America’s Estuaries, Save The Bay has shaped the basic policy design and advocacy strategy for the Estuary Habitat Restoration Partnership Act, which Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island was able to shepherd through the U.S. Senate before his death in 1999. This bill would require the Army Corps of Engineers to help build local capacity and work collaboratively with community groups in restoration projects.

In Rhode Island itself, Save The Bay was instrumental in passing the first mandatory curbside recycling law in the nation. It also campaigned successfully to democratize the selection process for the Coastal Resources Management Council, on which its own founder and former director, Dr. William Miner, served as chairperson during the 1980s. Trudy Coxe, executive director of Save The Bay during this period, brought its experience in civic environmental approaches to her later position as secretary of the executive office of environmental affairs in Massachusetts during the 1990s. She collaborated extensively with a statewide network of more than sixty watershed associations to develop the Massachusetts Watershed Initiative and worked with a national network of self-described “watershed innovators” to learn from best practices nationwide. Today, hundreds of watershed “associations,” “councils,” and “alliances” identify as part of a larger “watershed movement,” and many share a vision of “watershed democracy” as a core component of effective problem solving and civic engagement.¹

Communities Organized for Public Service

Our second tale comes from San Antonio, Texas. In the early 1970s Mexican Americans had become the majority of the city’s population but remained shut out of the Anglo power structure and deprived of decent services. Their neighborhoods were deteriorating, and they were vulnerable to repeated floods that damaged property and killed residents as a result of the city’s failure to invest in adequate drainage systems. When delegates from twenty-seven churches gathered in the summer of 1974 to address this problem, someone facetiously suggested that they call themselves COPS—“You know, they’re the robbers, and we’re the cops.” Since they were engaged in a battle with the city’s Public Service Board, another suggested that the “PS” could stand for real public service, and they thus fashioned the name Communities Organized for Public Service to fit the acronym. Behind this play-
ful inventiveness, however, was a serious attempt to innovate by coming to grips with the failures of previous organizing in San Antonio, including the antipoverty and Mexican American civil rights organizing supported by private foundations and the federal government during the previous decade.

On another level, however, COPS represented a systematic effort by leaders of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the nation’s oldest community-organizing network, founded by Saul Alinsky in 1940, to reflect on the strengths and limits of its own organizing traditions, as well as those of other movement-based models that had emerged in subsequent years. Ernesto Cortés, Jr., who was in the whirl of Mexican American organizing in the 1960s, had returned to his native San Antonio after several years of training and organizing with the IAF in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Lake County, Indiana. He and other IAF leaders then began to redefine the core principles of a new organizing model based on deeply shared values of faith and family, and oriented to building long-term public relationships and leadership capacities in communities.

Over the next twenty-five years in San Antonio, COPS refined this model continuously. It has enriched its leadership training with a powerful mixture of biblical text, contemporary theology, and democratic theory, and it has articulated a robust conception of the citizen as more than mere voter, client, taxpayer, or consumer. It has expanded its network of Mexican American churches and has developed extensive collaboration with its predominantly African American sister organization on the east side of the city, Metro Alliance, which it helped to found. COPS’s organizing and voter registration work transformed the political culture of the city and made it possible in 1981 to elect its first Mexican American mayor, Henry Cisneros. It has helped to reverse the decay of the central city after decades of neglect. Close to one billion dollars of community development funds have been invested in the inner city for infrastructure and housing as a result of COPS’s innovative model of distributing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, which it does through a process of participatory planning and negotiation among COPS leaders from different neighborhoods and between them and city councilors from their respective districts. Increasingly, COPS has been able to leverage its organizational power, based on strident confrontational tactics in its early days, into complex collaborative projects with leaders in banking, industry, education, and politics.

In the 1990s, for instance, COPS and Metro Alliance developed a highly innovative job-training program called Project QUEST (Quality Employment through Skills Training) on the basis of what they describe as a “new social compact” founded on collaborative relationships among employers, workers, and the community, and a “culture of accountability, negotiations, respect, and compromise” forged over the preceding two decades of organizing. The design for Project QUEST grew out of an intensive research process on models of job training and a wide range of other activities, drawing on the experiences of job training experts and others who had worked in the field. The process was designed to gain knowledge. It was conducted by members of the community, and, through the rigorous process of deliberation, the plan was developed that would maximize the use of resources from local employers, training institutions, and government programs. To that end, the Job Training and Plant Closure Group built support for a design that would bring together local employers paying above the minimum wage to train stable workforces and create opportunities for long-term career advancement in the face of business rationalization and relocation.

With strong community involvement and Metro Alliance’s long history of success in organizing business leaders in the city, the group was able to convene a broad-based coalition of local and national organizations, including labor unions, community organizations, and government agencies. With the help of this coalition, COPS was able to secure funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, as well as from private foundations and local employers, to support the development and implementation of Project QUEST. The program was designed to provide job training and placement services to low-income residents of the city, with an emphasis on providing access to good quality jobs in the local economy. It was also designed to foster partnerships between employers and workers, and to build relationships between employers and community organizations. This approach was based on the idea that the success of any job-training program is dependent on the willingness of both employers and workers to engage in meaningful dialogue and to work together to find solutions to the challenges faced by both groups.
on models of job training and local labor markets, which a core committee of forty community leaders from COPS and Metro Alliance conducted with academic experts and others, such as former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall. The process was designed to build productive relationships, not just to gain knowledge. It was complemented by extensive “house meetings” in which members of the community told stories of their own experiences in employment searches and the job-training system, especially in programs under the Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA). These house meetings also built support for a design that would guarantee a specific number of jobs from local employers paying a living wage, secure stipends that would permit two years of training, and coordinate social services to support trainees through the rigorous process.

With strong community support and solid preliminary research, COPS and Metro Alliance leveraged the previous trust they had built with selected business leaders in campaigns on school reform and infrastructure improvement to convene a broader meeting on the future of employment in the city—the first such meeting in which employers themselves actually came together to exchange their views. COPS and Metro Alliance worked to identify the self-interest of employers—bankers interested in the continued general vitality of the city, health care employers concerned with filling skilled positions, and all employers interested in getting a supply of responsible trainees. To respond, COPS and Metro Alliance agreed to staff fifteen neighborhood centers with volunteers committed to doing eighteen thousand hours of outreach and initial screening in the first year alone. This effort would not only utilize relationships as a key source of information and continued personal support, but also build trainees’ sense of obligation to the community and promote a desire to give something back in return for the opportunity the community had created.

The struggle for funding was complex and leveraged a significant amount of CDBG funds controlled by COPS and Metro Alliance, as well as relationships built over time with Governor Ann Richards, City Council President Nelson Wolff, and leading bankers, such as Tom Frost, an early adversarial target of COPS in the 1970s. And while continued changes in labor markets have made it difficult to treat employers’ job pledges as anything more than moral commitments, Project QUEST has emerged as a broker of relationships among a variety of labor market institutions and actors, from employers and community colleges to churches and families. QUEST has catalyzed institutional changes, such as employer involvement in the design of training and the identification of future labor market needs. It has helped transform the relationship between the community college and employers, so that both are active partners in this process. It has also spurred extensive changes in curriculum design and flexibility to meet student needs and provide supportive teamwork-building practices. In its first few years of operation, its results
have been substantial: annual salary increases between $4,923 and $7,457, compared to $900 for the typical trainee in JTPA programs, and success in moving single mothers off welfare. In that first meeting, recalls Virginia Ramirez, a COPS leader,

I realized all these important people were sitting there, and they had never talked to each other about what jobs were available. And I realized we had brought them all together to talk about jobs. I remember thinking, "Here's Virginia Ramirez, who a few years ago could only get a job sweeping floors. Most of our people never finished high school. And now we are telling these men how we are going to change the face of San Antonio." It was powerful, so powerful.2

Like Save The Bay, COPS has learned to leverage power based on effective advocacy into complex civic partnerships and innovative policy designs. As part of a larger IAF network, it has been able to diffuse innovative practices on the state and national level, as well as learn from other groups within the network. Several other national and regional networks of congregation-based community organizations have manifested similar developmental dynamics, sometimes borrowing lessons and models directly from IAF. Today, nearly two hundred such organizations are active in cities across the country, as are hundreds of other faith-based community development groups with different organizing models. They possess increasingly sophisticated training and funding supports and growing capacities for interracial community collaboration based on shared religious values and an organizing model that builds upon what unites people rather than what divides them. Theirs is a vision of collaborative citizen politics based on faith and the power of public relationships, rooted in ongoing reflection on the deepest traditions of American democracy. And, as both COPS and Save The Bay like to quote from the book of Proverbs, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."3

CONNECTING CITIZENS TO PUBLIC LIFE

Our task in this book is to understand such civic innovations as social learning extending over the past several decades and to explore their role in democratic revitalization. In recent years such learning has accelerated on a number of levels, even as the stresses on our democratic institutions have deepened. Indeed, a broader civic renewal movement has begun to emerge, with common language, shared practices, and networked relationships across a variety of arenas. When we first presented this argument in 1993, the debate on whether Americans' stocks of social capital were in decline had not yet begun. We thus set the task of understanding this process of innovation not in response to a discovery of the possible erosion of social capital in American life but in response to an increasingly complex set of public problems that have proven resistant to traditional policy solutions and institutional routines, and have been directed by ordinary citizens and civic practitioners within and outside the states, funded by the Ford Foundation, the National Urban League, the Urban Institute, and the Brookings Institution. In attempting to connect these movements, we hope to contribute innovatos to public policy renewal.

At the same time, we are dealing with the great uncertainty—ever since civic democracy might mean. The story we tell is thus not one of roadblocks and detours, but of creative opportunities to make policy in ways that demonstrate the difficulty of the work in policy design and creation. The more work will be needed over the coming years to make public problem solving.

Nonetheless, the dynamics of innovation are challenging. Yet they operate amid broad civic engagement. Perhaps the greatest challenge is one of political action among those who have been excluded from the process. These are the challenges of the last half-century, and they are the challenges we seek to address in this book.
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institutional routines, and have elicited vigorous search and experimentation by ordinary citizens and civic associations, supported by professional practitioners within and outside government. The initial interviews Sitrinanni conducted in 1994 as research director of the Reinventing Citizenship Project, funded by the Ford Foundation and convened in conjunction with the Domestic Policy Council at the White House, provided further evidence for civic innovation. In attempting to understand the process, we invariably stand on the shoulders of those whose reflective practice has been driving it forward, and we hope to contribute to the policies and politics that might help innovations to flourish in the coming years. 4

At the same time, we are deeply aware of the many obstacles that exist and the great uncertainty—even profound disagreement—about what a vital civic democracy might mean at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The story we tell is thus not only one of innovation and learning, but also one of roadblocks and detours, struggles and failures. Some of these failures, to be sure, have provided occasion for further learning, but others demonstrate the difficulty of bringing innovations to scale, embedding them in policy design, and creating a politics that will sustain them. Much more work will be needed over the course of the next several decades if civic innovation and renewal are to have a major impact on American politics and public problem solving. Nonetheless, civic innovators from all walks of life have laid indispensable foundations upon which to build.

The dynamics of innovation are quite specific to each arena, as we shall see, yet they operate amid broader trends that shape the search for new forms of civic engagement. Perhaps the most important underlying trend is one that Ronald Inglehart has identified in his extensive cross-national analyses of contemporary advanced industrial democracies. As he argues, the potential for political action among mass publics in the West has been gradually but steadily rising because the individual-level preconditions for participation have been increasing. These include dramatically higher education levels over the course of the last half-century, which enhance the skills citizens need to cope with political life and shift the balance in the distribution of these skills among elites and the general public. The increase in postindustrial job skills that favor autonomy, innovation, and collaborative problem solving in complex environments further add to this potential. Political information has also become much more available, and relative shifts in value priorities favor self-expression and the participation of women and other previously excluded groups. These changes underlie a long-term shift away from elite-directed modes of participation and towards elite-directing ones. While voter turnout may have declined, mass publics are "far from apathetic; these publics are becoming more active than ever in a wide range of elite-challenging forms of political participation." 5

In San Antonio, for instance, COPS was able to emerge because the
Catholic dioceses were searching for ways to respond to the Vatican II (1962-65) mandate for lay participation, itself a response to long-term changes in values, education, and civic skills within church communities. Save The Bay not only drew upon new legal norms of participation in the environmental arena but also leveraged access to technical information and political skills among educated middle-class supporters to enable the organization to challenge regulators and industry on their own terms. A generation earlier, citizens in each of these arenas were not nearly so favorably situated relative to elites as they had become by the 1960s and 1970s.

This powerful underlying trend favoring participation, however, occurs amid the increasingly manifest limitations of a variety of organized forms for connecting citizens to public life. Indeed, the two are related in complex ways. Political parties, the regulatory state, and the welfare state are especially problematic. First of all, the profound and systemic disintegration of parties has continued for more than a century and is manifest in popular partisan dealignment and a declining capacity of parties to aggregate the interests of an increasingly diverse citizenry. The historical factors that account for party decline include the rise of a nonpartisan civil service, the shift from generalized distributive policies to new regulatory channels, the emergence of the administrative presidency, and the increase in the number and activities of specialized, nonpartisan interest groups. This trend has been exacerbated by the post-1960s explosion of public interest and consumer groups capable of lobbying and setting agendas independent of party organizations, as well as by participatory reforms in party rules and changes in political means of communication that favor direct communication between candidates and voters independent of locally organized and party mediated interaction. Television advertising and polling techniques have played critical roles here. In the process, parties have been transformed largely into service organizations for candidates. Party loyalty has become increasingly conditional on performance, and "cognitively mobilized nonpartisans" are a growing group within the electorate.

Second, the New Deal regulatory state, characterized by industry capture, became delegitimated in both scholarly and public opinion alike in the 1960s, especially under the onslaught of new participatory claims. But the public lobby regulatory regime that succeeded it has come to manifest serious limits along a variety of dimensions. On the positive side, citizens have gained new rights of participation as a result of changes in administrative law and legislation that have accompanied the new social regulation. The proliferation of new citizen and public interest groups has permitted much greater precision in the representation of individual and group preferences through issue-oriented lobbying and has provided a more even balance in the pluralist representation of interests than existed previously. But the advocacy explosion has also manifested many drawbacks for democratic politics. It encourages a hyperpluralism and lobby along narrow interests, even when they may have outlived their usefulness. Discourse to narrow administration and institutional decision-making and bureaucratic, public interest comprehensible to the general public, yet still capable of exacerbating the decline of trust in institutions and mobilizing emotions which, when repeatedly used for public interest goals, locally driven lobbying over long periods of time, tend to do so as a result of public deliberation and control. The proliferation and fragmentation of public institutions has not yet been matched by local institutions that encourage collective action, as well as with political actors in search of mutually beneficial outcomes. The continued extension of political parties' dominance is manifest in no small measure in the crisis of the welfare state. Social welfare profit agencies alike do not foster governing communities capable of associational assets. Policy for particularistic, tends to be driven by a variety of individuals and communities, and it is not clear that the kinds of funding designed to address "program" often results in a stringent exchange and needs to be clarified. The "community" advances. The "rights revolution," which is a revolution of the legally protected rights of hand with the expansion of the
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It encourages a hyperpluralism driven by increasing incentives to organize and lobby along narrow interest and issue lines and to protect programs even when they may have outlived their usefulness. It displaces political discourse to narrow administrative arenas where complex procedural requirements and institutional coalitions among agencies, courts, congressional subcommittees, public interest groups, and industry lobbyists are much less comprehensible to the general public. Public interest groups often exacerbate the decline of trust in government because membership recruitment and mobilization emphasize not-yet-achieved goals, or even mandate unachievable standards, such as those in some environmental regulations which, when repeatedly unmet, breed public cynicism. Organizational incentives for public interest groups favor Washington-based and professionally driven lobbying over local engagement. And when they do mobilize locally, they tend to do so around narrow interests rather than broader forms of public deliberation and community building. As Robert Dahl has argued, the proliferation and fragmentation of interest groups that shape policy making has not yet been matched by a corresponding set of integrating political institutions that encourage conflicting groups to negotiate with one another, as well as with political actors more representative of the general public, in search of mutually beneficial policies.7

Third, while the crisis of the welfare state derives from a variety of sources, it is manifest in no small measure as a profound public disillusionment with the continued extension of professional dominance and client dependency. This view is due, in part, to the expansion of clinical authority in solving problems despite the relative intractability of many problems to therapeutic techniques. Social welfare policy and practice by government and nonprofit agencies alike do not foster independent, responsible citizens or self-governing communities capable of mobilizing their own knowledge and associational assets. Policy for poor and disadvantaged communities, in particular, tends to be driven by a deficit model that focuses on the deficiencies of individuals and communities, rather than building upon the individual, associational, and institutional assets and networks that already exist. Categorical funding designed to address each specific “problem” with a matching “program” often results in a jerry-built and fragmented set of antipoverty bureaucracies and serviced neighborhoods whose programs are defended by their personnel even when they produce no appreciable improvement in the community’s capacity to deal with its problems. As John McKnight argues, “As the power of profession and service system ascends, the legitimacy, authority, and capacity of citizens and community descend. The client retreats. The client advances.”

The “rights revolution,” which defines nearly every public issue in terms of the legally protected rights of individuals and groups, has gone hand in hand with the expansion of the welfare state and the public lobby regula-
tory regime. Indeed, divided government and institutional fragmentation in the United States may have increased the competition for policy innovation that is filtered through a rights discourse. On a number of important levels, as many of our cases reveal, the rights revolution has helped to drive civic innovation. Procedural rights to participate have been critical, if often blunt, tools for broadening the range of stakeholders willing and able to collaborate in searching for new ways to solve public problems. And substantive rights claims, such as rights to housing and health care, which underlay struggles for community development and community health centers, have contributed to local innovations that mobilize civic resources and relationships. Here we agree with Michael Schudson that “the rise of the rights-regarding citizen has done more to enhance democracy than to endanger it.” Nonetheless, a rights discourse often tends to frame issues as nonnegotiable and in no need of balance among relative costs and other worthy claims. The expansionary logic of rights that become translated into noncompetitive and open-ended entitlements conflicts with other crucial virtues of a civic republic, namely, responsibility and deliberation. Within this framework, citizens do not have to consider their own responsibilities and assets for solving problems or enhancing the broader public good and do not have to deliberate about costs and trade-offs involved in achieving their specific programmatic goals.10

The risk of citizens becoming disjoined from public life comes, however, from yet another direction that may ultimately be the most corrosive of all: the market. To be sure, America has been a vital civic republic only to the extent that it has always been a vital commercial republic. When Save The Bay works with regulators and corporations on environmentally sustainable methods of production that can ensure dynamic market growth, and when COPS works with businesses to upgrade the skills of poor and working-class communities so that they can compete for postindustrial jobs, they opt for a commercial republic, albeit one more deeply embedded in a vital civic infrastructure. But in recent years, corporations have pushed decisions upwards, to national and global headquarters, and executives have fewer incentives to build relationships with particular communities. Unions have been weakened, and capital has become globally footloose, sometimes devastating local communities. The market can thus rend the very fabric of civic life upon which it once depended. And as some of our public institutions go through difficult struggles to restructure themselves, the metaphors of the market become increasingly dominant and threaten to turn nearly every public good into a consumer choice. Even our attempts to reinvent government invoke the language of “serving the customer” more often than “engaging the citizen” as a vital coproducer of public goods in a commonwealth.12

Increasing awareness of the limitations of these ways of connecting citizens to public life underlies the search for ways to enrich and refine elite-
directing approaches to participation, especially by orienting them more toward deliberative democracy, community building, and collaborative problem solving among multiple stakeholder groups. Indeed, the growing social complexity, differentiation, and interdependence of postmodern societies generate increasing policy problems for which regulatory enforcement, programmatic entitlement, market incentive, and professional intervention are inadequate unless coupled with new forms of civic trust and cooperation. And many older forms of civic involvement also tend to be devalued in the face of increasing complexity and social differentiation, which raise the relative requirements of citizen expertise, the scope of relationships, and the cognitive preconditions for trust building, and increase the opportunities for "exit" to secure valued social goods. Civic innovation seeks to mobilize social capital in new ways, to generate new institutional forms, and to reinforce these through public policy designed for democracy. And it aims to provide citizens with robust roles—in their professional and nonprofessional roles, institutional and volunteer activities alike—for doing the everyday public work that sustains the democratic commonwealth.  

**SOCIAL CAPITAL AND CIVIC INNOVATION**

Social capital refers to those stocks of social trust, norms, and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems. Networks of civic engagement, such as neighborhood associations, church groups, and sports clubs, represent important forms of social capital. The denser these networks, the more likely are members of a community to cooperate for mutual benefit, even in the face of persistent problems of collective action, because networks of civic engagement foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity by creating expectations that today's favors will be returned later. These networks facilitate coordination and communication and thus create channels through which information about the trustworthiness of other individuals and groups can flow and be tested and verified. They embody past success at collaboration, which can serve as a cultural template for future collaboration on other kinds of problems. And they increase the risks to those who act opportunistically and so jeopardize their share in the benefits of current and future transactions. Social capital is productive. Two farmers exchanging tools can get more work done with less physical capital, and rotating credit associations can generate pools of financial capital for increased entrepreneurial activity. As a "moral resource," social capital also tends to accumulate when it is used and be depleted when not, thus creating the possibility of both virtuous and vicious cycles that manifest themselves in highly civic—as well as terribly uncivic—communities.

Civic innovation, as we use the term in this book, mobilizes social capital in ways that promote broad democratic norms, enhance responsible and in-
clusive citizenship, and build the civic capacities of communities and institutions to solve problems through the public work of citizens themselves, often in collaboration with various market, state, and professional actors and through policy designs that foster self-government. Indeed, civic innovation often emerges from the initiative of state actors or is sustained through various kinds of government supports—a pattern not dissimilar to earlier periods in the growth of civic associations in America, as Theda Skocpol has argued. And innovation often draws upon the expertise of “civic professionals,” ranging from the public administrators who collaborate with Save The Bay and the professional organizers who train local community leaders in COPS to the parish nurses in coalitions for healthy communities and the civic journalists transforming their newsroom practice in profound ways. Our treatment of civic innovation is thus broader than that arising strictly “from the bottom up” but is also delimited quite intentionally. It draws upon certain traditions within normative democratic theory, as well as upon specific analytic frameworks for understanding the problems of democratic institutions, viable communities, and effective policies in the contemporary United States. We do not cast the net so broadly as to include all forms of social capital, each dimension of civil society, or every mode of citizen participation. Why do we make the choices that we do?

One reason, of course, is that not all forms of social capital lend themselves well to public problem solving, and some forms work in the opposite direction by fostering deep distrust of outsiders or fundamentalist beliefs that brook no compromise with adversaries. The world is filled with forms of social capital that promote ethnic hostility and erode capacities for democratic governance. It is also replete with social capital that lies relatively dormant as a resource for democratic politics or community problem solving. Thus, the organizational forms and strategies for mobilizing social capital matter a great deal. COPS represents an important civic innovation, for instance, because it mobilizes religious norms and church networks—and, through the latter, family networks—in such a way as to increase the power of disadvantaged communities in the larger polity, build trust across racial boundaries, develop new forms of collaboration with other political and institutional actors, and generate policy and program designs that enhance human capital in the face of a changing postindustrial economy. Civic innovations in health, environment, and social services also mobilize the social capital of congregations to develop new problem-solving capacities. But many congregations, while performing important functions, have not made their social capital available for community problem solving on a broader scale, and some have mobilized so as to make collaboration with diverse others extremely difficult.

The same can be said for other kinds of social capital. Some neighborhood associations function primarily to maintain exclusivity, while others become broadly representative, collaborate with all sorts of civic, community development, and environmental growth, and formal powers of spending a focus on recreation, while others run and restoration, and various social networks available for various social concerns that are just a soccer league that is not a good thing to do, and respect for diverse skills and link parents in ways that make sense to society, and associate with various civic movements within civil society movements such as the environmental movement as the Sierra Club plays an important role in interest groups expand citizenship in growth movements. They creatively disperse power resources, and win needs of civic innovation would often create and public interest processes we analyze. Nonprofit problems of governance and public problem solving. And monumentalism and fragmented deliberative designs at the heart of things, beyond the perceived limits.

We do not wish, however, to define civic environmentalism, for it is a movement, even as community innovations draw from it, even as it has little or no impact on agendas. Many leaders in a range of participatory scales, even as they lower significant. And many of the innovative movement labels and traits them-
opment, and environmental groups, and even evolve into citywide systems with formal powers of spending and governance. Some sporting clubs remain focused on recreation, while others take upon themselves larger tasks of conservation and restoration, and work in complex partnerships with environmental groups, agricultural associations, businesses, and public agencies. We do not mean to deny that those associations with less ambitious or explicitly public tasks do many good things or provide a reservoir of trust, norms, and networks available for various challenges of social cooperation. The youth soccer league that is just a soccer league can still teach kids the value of teamwork and respect for diverse skill levels and cultural backgrounds, and it can still link parents in ways that may prove helpful for addressing other community problems. As active (if not always competent) soccer coaches ourselves, we know this. Our focus here, however, remains on those forms of social capital that are mobilized for broader tasks of civic collaboration.10

We also delimit the story of civic innovation in this book by not including new social movements or public interest groups per se, though clearly by any comprehensive and purely descriptive classification they represent important innovations within civil society in recent decades. To be sure, new social movements such as the environmental movement and public interest groups such as the Sierra Club play an important role in our story. As we have noted, public interest groups expand citizen representation and power considerably. And movements generate new values, identities, and networks critical for civic innovation. They creatively disrupt set ways of seeing and doing, mobilize new power resources, and win new rights to participate, without which other kinds of civic innovation would often be unable to emerge. Thus, social movements and public interest groups play an important role in the social learning processes we analyze. Nonetheless, public interest groups also contribute to problems of governance and often constrain or displace effective community problem solving. And movements can generate the kinds of value fundamentalism and fragmented identities that impede those collaborative and deliberative designs at the heart of our story, which emerge often as a way of moving beyond the perceived limits of existing movement approaches.17

We do not wish, however, to draw the boundaries too rigidly. Many forms of civic environmentalism, for instance, emerge within the broader environmental movement, even as they challenge some of its emphases. Some community innovations draw from the relational organizing legacies of feminism, even as they have little or no formal connection with women’s organizations or agendas. Many leading innovators formed their core civic identities in a range of participatory democratic movements of the past four decades, even as they later significantly revised their action frames and practices. And many of the innovations upon which we focus have come to adopt movement labels and traits themselves. This is true for the “watershed movement,” the “community development movement,” the “healthy communi-
ties movement," and the "civic journalism movement." To complicate our story still further, we analyze an emergent "civic renewal movement" and make an argument for building this further as a way of rechanneling some of the vital democratic energies of recent social movements while holding in check some of their more problematic features.

What role can civic innovation play, however, if overall trends show a serious depletion of stocks of social capital in the United States over the past several decades and if Americans are increasingly "bowling alone," as Robert Putnam has argued? For Putnam, many measures of formal associational membership show clear declines. Participation in church-related groups and regular attendance at church services are down by at least one-fifth over the past twenty years. The percentage of parents involved in Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) or unaffiliated parent-teacher organizations has suffered substantial decline since the 1960s. Union membership has steadily eroded since the 1950s, falling to less than half its peak. Membership in the General Federation of Women's Clubs is down by 59 percent since 1964, and in the League of Women Voters by 43 percent since 1969. And membership in fraternal organizations like the Elks, Lions, and Jaycees is also down significantly. Especially worrisome is the collapse of the activist membership core of civic organizations of all sorts, which witnessed a 45 percent drop from 1985 to 1994 alone. Thus, as Putnam argues, by this measure "nearly half of America's civic infrastructure was obliterated in barely a decade." Neither self-help groups nor social movements have effectively counteracted these trends. The former are not closely associated with other forms of community involvement, and the latter have generally resulted in professionalized, direct-mail organizations with little or no active membership. Even when mass membership in "tertiary" organizations that do not rely on face-to-face interaction among members, such as the Environmental Defense Fund, are included, as well as professional associations that have increased along with rising occupational levels, total associational membership has declined significantly between 1974 and 1994 within all educational categories. Other forms of associational ties, such as family and informal neighborhood socializing, have also eroded, as has generalized social trust, which is highly correlated with associational membership.18

Deep social changes undermine these trends, according to Putnam. Women's increasing entry into the labor force makes them less available for community activities, and suburban sprawl draws people away from local involvements. But the biggest factors are the technological shifts in leisure that lead to the private listening and viewing habits associated with the walkman, the CD player, and especially television, and the replacement of the generation whose civic identities were formed by the World War II ethos of national unity and patriotism. But even if some of the other causes are still uncertain, he argues, "Every year over the last decade or two, millions of citizens more have
withdrawn from the affairs of their communities,” and the civic generation born between 1910 and 1940 is now being displaced by baby boomers and generation X-ers who are much less engaged.

The data that Putnam presents are undoubtedly worrisome. If he is correct—and his most recent data are considerably more compelling than his earlier data—the task of renovating civic capacities to grapple with the kinds of public problems and policy challenges that face communities and the nation at the beginning of the twenty-first century will indeed be daunting. But even if aggregate levels of social capital prove to have eroded much less than he claims, perhaps even to have increased when other measures are included, the task is still quite formidable, because the question is ultimately not one of quantitative aggregates of social capital. Rather, it is one of qualitative forms of civic democracy that, when combined with other tools of governance, can provide effective responses to the increasingly complex and obdurate problems we face and can help to form a nation of effective citizens. In simple terms, the issue is not absolute levels but qualitative kinds and complex mixes in specific community, institutional, and policy contexts.

By some measures, levels of citizen involvement still provide relatively robust foundations upon which to build. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s massive study of civic voluntarism presents data that support Americans’ deserved reputation for high levels of involvement in voluntary associations. Of particular note is the evidence that participation over the past several decades has modestly increased at the level of community and local problem-solving activities and that the decrease in voter turnout has not been accompanied by a general decrease in citizen activism, even on campaign-related activities. When Baumgartner and Walker redesigned the standard survey question on membership in voluntary associations to allow for the new types of groups that had emerged after the 1960s, as well as multiple memberships in any one type of group, they found not only 187 percent more group affiliations than would have been reported with the standard question but that “the overwhelming majority of people’s connections with the associational world are through groups that operate mainly in their immediate communities.” The Pew Research Center for People and the Press found a sharp contrast with Putnam’s findings in its survey of citizen involvement and trust in Philadelphia and its surrounding counties. Philadelphians remain actively involved in community affairs and are meaningfully linked to social support networks. Seven in ten reported confidence in their abilities to have a big or moderate impact on their community, including 50 percent of those who displayed very low levels of interpersonal trust. Of the 41 percent who tried to get neighbors to work together to improve their neighborhoods, 85 percent reported success. Robert Wuthnow’s survey and in-depth interviews show that, while many traditional civic associations struggle to remain relevant and viable, citizens continue to generate new ways of engagement based
on "loose connections." Other survey and comparative data show relatively strong levels of associational membership and volunteerism in the United States. However, the National Commission on Civic Renewal's composite Index of National Civic Health (INCH)—which includes political, family, trust, membership, and security components—reveals a weakening of our overall civic condition between 1984 and 1994, with an upturn since then. Alan Wolfe's *One Nation, After All* establishes strong support for the American political creed and its core values of civic responsibility among the broad middle class, regardless of race. And James Davison Hunter and Carl Bowman's survey research shows this to be true even for poor people, who are often thought to be far more alienated than other citizens.

Everett Ladd, former director of the Roper Center, contests Putnam's findings in broad terms, declaring that "not even one set of systematic data support the thesis of Bowling Alone." PTA membership may have declined but largely because parents have created new local parent-teacher organizations (PTOs) unaffiliated with the national organization, so that they could keep a greater portion of dues and engage in local improvement efforts independent of the PTA's advocacy agendas and organizational ties. Parental engagement is energetic, expansive, and increasing. Affiliations with old, mainline Protestant denominations may be declining, but other denominations are increasing membership, and overall church participation remains strong and may be rising. Adult volunteers in groups like the Girl Scouts and youth soccer have risen very substantially in the past two decades, and there is a "vast proliferation of community service groups."

Our analysis of innovation in specific arenas reveals a variety of patterns of social capital formation and depletion. In the environmental arena, new forms of social capital have been generated on an extensive scale, and old forms mobilized for environmental problem solving in ways previously unknown. Thus we witness the proliferation of "lake watches," "stream teams," and "friends of the river" groups that perform volunteer monitoring of water quality. We see "land trusts," "stewardship networks," "watershed associations," and "ecosystem partnerships" engaged in restoration work, and "environmental justice" groups developing strategies to reduce toxics and protect minority health. Virtually all of these are new civic forms created in response to emergent problems and alternative frames for thinking about them. But we also observe the mobilization of social capital from traditional civic associations, such as local Leagues of Women Voters, Scout troops, fishing clubs, and religious congregations. Even if one were to subtract mere dues-paying members and groups devoted purely to advocacy, the level of community involvement and civic innovation in the environmental arena has advanced enormously in the wake of the contemporary environmental movement and federal and state regulation over the past three decades.

The significant innovations and expanding networks in community or-
organizing and community development, on the other hand, have progressed amid other indicators of the depletion of social capital in inner-city communities. Some causes of this depletion are well known: urban renewal policies that led to the concentration and isolation of the poor in inner-city housing projects, the exodus of the black middle class once discriminatory housing barriers were lowered, and the flight of jobs to the suburbs abroad. These left inner-city African Americans, in particular, with fewer cross-class associational ties and other resources for maintaining their communities, and the resulting crime increases left them more fearful of congregating in public spaces. But the depletion of social capital has also elicited energetic experimentation in mobilizing those forms still remaining. On the broader urban level, neighborhood associations, crime watches, and community-visioning projects have spread considerably over the past several decades.

In health, where patient empowerment and community involvement were virtually nonexistent in the face of professional dominance until the early 1980s, significant innovations in community organizing, citizen representation, self-help groups, and healthy community coalitions have arisen, though these appear weaker than in the urban development and environmental arenas. Generating new civic capacities to address the problems that health care poses in a society with high-tech medical options, rapidly escalating expectations, an aging population living longer with chronic illness, and the persistent lack of universal insurance coverage will be particularly daunting, whether older forms of social capital have eroded or not.

Civic innovation in journalism—which is the latest to emerge among our four cases, though one that can serve as a critical complement to the others—is a response to the crisis of newspaper readership and the debasement of public discourse in the media. It attempts to achieve more robust forms of civic deliberation and agenda setting and to link these to the decision making of elected public officials and other institutional actors. In some cases, however, the innovative deliberative models of civic journalism are directly coupled with associational networks that might assume some of the tasks of community problem solving. They creatively join deliberative democratic and social-capital-enhancing strategies to renew civic life, without compromising professional norms of journalistic objectivity and public accountability.

On the question of overall trends in social capital, we count ourselves among the worried, though we disagree with some of Putnam's calculations and explanations. And on the ultimate outcomes of civic renewal, we must remain agnostic. Indeed, even if innovation becomes considerably more robust, there is no guarantee that the problems posed by an increasingly complex and global society will not continually outrun our civic and political capacities. But amid the worrisome signs, there is already clear evidence of the kinds of civic innovation that could anchor and instruct broad revitalization strategies in the coming years.
Obstinate inventiveness, indeed, often produces genuine surprise. Michael Schudson, one of our most renowned sociologists of the American press, recently noted at the James Batten Awards for civic journalism that, had someone asked ten or fifteen years earlier whether a significant movement to reform the press was possible, he would have cautioned that it was highly unlikely. In fact, he would have told the leading innovators to “Go home” and counseled their foundation supporters to “spend their money doing something more useful.”

And he adds, “I would have been wrong.”

SOCIAL LEARNING

By looking at civic innovation as an extended learning process over several decades, we are able to examine how engaged citizens, community organizers, and professional practitioners of various sorts have grappled with a new set of complex problems within changed political and organizational contexts, how they have mobilized old and new forms of social capital, and how they have attempted to link these to innovative policy designs that enhance democracy. In studying the process of social learning, we draw from three analytical traditions: (1) policy learning, (2) organizational learning and regulatory culture, and (3) participatory democratic theory.

Policy Learning

Policy learning refers to relatively enduring alterations of particular policy instruments or broader policy paradigms, which result from experience and complex feedback loops. In one influential version of this approach developed by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith, policy learning can occur within or across the multiple advocacy coalitions that have typically come to characterize specific policy subsystems since the 1960s, when the latter became accessible to a much wider variety of groups than at any time previously. Such advocacy coalitions include an array of interest groups, policy analysts, journalists, and government actors from all levels of the federal system, without any presumption of innovation proceeding from top-down institutional initiative (“Potomac fever”). The time frame most useful for examining the learning process is a decade or more, often through multiple policy cycles, if policy research is to fulfill its enlightenment function, since “numerous studies have shown that ambitious programs which appeared after a few years to be abject failures received more favorable evaluations when seen in a longer time frame; conversely, initial success may evaporate over time.”

Policy learning is an ongoing process of search, experimentation, and adaptation motivated by the desire to realize core policy beliefs, including a “deep core” of fundamental normative beliefs about power and justice. It builds
upon the cumulative impact of findings from analytic studies, as well as upon the ordinary "usable knowledge" of citizens derived from everyday problem solving. And it responds to disturbances and failures in the larger social and economic system, as well as to shifts in the distribution of political resources and governing coalitions. Learning from experience, however, proves messy and difficult because experience is itself ambiguous in a world where performance gaps are difficult to measure, well-developed causal theories are often lacking, controlled experimentation is virtually impossible, opponents are doing everything possible to muddle the situation and otherwise to impede one from learning, and even allies' motives are often suspect because of personal and organizational rivalries.29

But policy learning can nonetheless be studied, its theorists insist, by examining individual career profiles and biographies, as well as through group and network analysis, content analysis, and the sociology of ideas.

Policy learning is important to our story to the extent that "public policy for democracy" emerges over time in conjunction with innovative civic practice. Public policy for democracy, according to Helen Ingram, Steven Rathgeb Smith, and Anne Larason Schneider, is designed "to empower, enlighten, and engage citizens in the process of self-government."20 In contrast to most policy, designing for democracy aims to strengthen civil society and build community capacities, rather than lodge ever-greater power and initiative in the hands of experts and administrators. It motivates action through self-regulation and self-learning, rather than through forms of authority that breed dependence. To the extent that all policies are teachings, policy for democracy aims to teach civic responsibility, community initiative, and the arts of public deliberation, and it encourages citizens to weigh relative costs and possible trade-offs, rather than appeal to substantive rights that are non-negotiable. It does not deceive citizens about the cost of public goods, or manipulate them through simplistic slogans or symbols. It encourages them to mobilize the hidden assets of their communities and institutions, to define common values, and to collaborate across divisions wherever this might prove fruitful. And it enables and requires bureaucrats to facilitate deliberative and collaborative civic practice by providing appropriate resources and technical assistance.

In our story, civic innovation and policy learning for democracy represent a process of search, experimentation, and adaptation motivated by deep norms of democratic participation and power. These norms have a long history in the United States and have been reinforced and reinterpreted in recent decades in the wake of democratic social movements, changes in administrative law, and legislated rights to participate in many policy arenas. Learning has responded to problem-solving knowledge generated by ordinary citizens in their communities and by practitioners from various kinds
of civic and business organizations and at various levels of government. It has also responded to scientific paradigm shifts and technical knowledge accumulation in some arenas, such as ecosystem science and epidemiology, which have helped to legitimate community-based environmental and health strategies. And learning has been triggered by changing configurations of power and conflict in local arenas, as well as in national governing coalitions, and in response to new opportunities as well as perceived failures in policy tools and participatory programs themselves. Networks that support innovation and policy learning for democracy have developed considerably over the past several decades. Such networks share information, reflect on problems and failures, diffuse best practices, provide technical assistance, and fund local projects. They include multiple constellations of grassroots organizers; foundation program officers and centers; agency officials at local, state, and federal levels; university institutes and consulting firms; professional staff in banks, businesses, health systems, and newspapers; mainline civic associations; and social movement organizations.

Learning is clearly evident in the activist biographies and professional career profiles of many leading innovators over several decades. Like the former head of a major regional chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) who has spearheaded various community partnerships on the environment at EPA, or the former antirape and antinuclear organizer who has convened tens of thousands of citizens in deliberative health values forums in California, or the former antinuclear activist who have pioneered statewide watershed associations and volunteer stewardship restoration networks and strategies, many civic innovators have drawn upon a deep core of participatory beliefs at various junctures in their ensuing careers, even when they have substantially revised their approaches so as to emphasize collaboration and trust-building more than they may have initially done.

Organizational Learning and Regulatory Culture

A second helpful analytic tradition, organizational learning theory, has emerged with the crisis of bureaucratic organizations in an information society characterized by dynamic complexity, where performance increasingly depends on the capacity to learn and opportunity, experimentation, and inevitable error, rather than on the application of formal procedures and lines of authority. While this approach has been applied to many different kinds of organizations, participatory mechanisms have been repeatedly identified as key to facilitating the learning process. These include openness of information, self-directed work teams, and voluntary learning networks as a parallel organizational architecture. They are also building shared vision and consensus through dialogue and leadership that promote adapt-

we work. And, as Paul Light argues, are essential for sustaining innovations that engage the public.

Organizational learning theory, deliberative and collaborative approaches to the limits of command-and-control approaches. Among the key facts protest from citizens and public participation in decision making.

Giving citizen groups new capacities for balance of power—along with cooperation among adversaries reducing transaction costs that thrash face enough trust to sustain mutually beneficial solutions. The empowered citizen and public in industry to relinquish their commit regulation and to become capable regulatory officials. "Communicate influence of broader social norms and bind managers to the 1
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Organizational learning theory also holds that, under certain conditions, deliberative and collaborative regulatory cultures can emerge in response to the limits of command-and-control, expert-dominated, and adversarial approaches. Among the key factors driving the learning process have been protest from citizens and public interest organizations, as well as the establishment of citizen participation rights, which balance power dynamics by giving citizen groups new capacities to punish and reward other parties. This balance of power—along with continued interdependence and everyday interaction among adversaries confronted with strategic decisions about reducing transaction costs that threaten valued outcomes—can eventually produce enough trust to sustain deliberative and collaborative searches for mutually beneficial solutions. The result can transform regulatory cultures. Empowered citizen and public interest groups are more likely than weaker actors to relinquish their commitment to inflexible, command-and-control regulation and to become capable of learning collaboratively with corporate and regulatory officials. Community right-to-know laws can further extend the influence of broader social networks on the “theories in action” within firms and bind managers to the norms of the larger community. Administrators, for their part, can redefine their role as one of enabling a process of “civic discovery.” Self-organizing and polycentric systems of common-pool resource governance capable of adaptive learning and experimentation often emerge with regard to forests and fisheries. And the constitution of the administrative state can be shifted fundamentally towards a “democratic experimentalism,” as Michael Dorf and Charles Sabel argue in their analysis of new forms of self-government within regulatory arenas.

Participatory Democratic Theory

A third tradition that emphasizes learning is participatory democratic theory itself, which stresses the educative function of participating in community and political affairs for creating the kinds of citizens capable of sustaining democracy. Through active participation, citizens become more knowledgeable about the political system, develop a greater sense of their own efficacy, and widen their horizons beyond their own narrow self-interest to consider a broader public good. This tradition rightly begins with Alexis de Tocqueville, whose visit to America in the nineteenth century prompted him to recognize how participation in town meetings and voluntary associations permits the citizen to practice “the art of government in the small sphere within his reach.” Participation engenders a sense of ownership and responsibility for improving local conditions, and refines the “passions that
commonly embroil society" so as to interest "the greatest possible number of persons in the common weal." For Tocqueville, town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within people's reach, they teach men how to use and how to enjoy it. These arguments were taken up as part of the 1960s movements for participatory democracy and were further developed in an influential book by Carole Pateman in 1979 and later by Benjamin Barber and others.

Jane Mansbridge's important book, Beyond Adversary Democracy, has enriched this approach enormously by theorizing unitary and adversary democratic processes in the context of specific participatory communities' understandings of their practice and their emergent capacity to reflect and learn. Specifically, she argues that participation can provide experiential knowledge and opportunities to deliberate so that citizens can come to recognize when their interests converge and when they conflict. They can thereby develop appropriate forms to manage their affairs democratically under each set of circumstances and to switch between different practices when this serves them best.

Sriyani has extended this learning model by examining how participatory democracy within the feminist movement and various women's organizations and networks over the past three decades has prompted a sustained process of critical self-reflection that might be characterized as "learning pluralism." The early movement, especially in the small groups, suffered from a variety of participatory ills: the tyranny of structurelessness, false consensus, imposed sisterly virtue, lack of democratic accountability, and the marginalization of those unwilling or unable to make totalizing time commitments. A process of learning, however, emerged rather quickly. It drew upon internally generated movement resources, such as small-group skills and an ethic of careful listening and empathy. It also utilized pluralist democratic theory in the writings of those, such as Robert Dahl and Michael Walzer, who were sympathetic to the goals of participatory democracy yet poignantly in their critique of its deficiencies.

Because of a variety of methodological obstacles, such as the difficulty and expense of doing massive before-and-after studies that measure the effect of participation on people's characters, Mansbridge argues that no one has been able to prove definitively whether participation makes citizens better, even though she remains convinced that it does. This question, however, cannot be answered apart from the specific organizational forms and reflective practices of participation, and these evolve as part of a broader social learning process. Compare, for instance, the concrete models and tools for consensus seeking and dispute resolution available to both grassroots groups and diverse institutional stakeholders in the 1980s and 1990s with those available in the 1970s, when unitary democracy first became a focus of research. The earlier period was a vital seedbed but with relatively crude methods and
certain results. The current systematically incorporates legal and is sustained by vibrant institutional centers.

Compare also those neighborhood citywide systems and the impact of face-to-face participatory knowledge, sense of political interests of one's neighborhood among low-income groups of participatory inequality of effective IAF evaluation session on the long term public relations of community organizing short, the structure of participatory organizing models matters and how participation is educative in terms of processes, as we shall see.

The continued development in this theory since the late 1960s has been considerable and ahead of agencies in the 1970s were often ad hoc and informal, controlled science, where they had involved aspects of citizen participation and citizen participation groups through the 1970s. This was evident in the Council on Citizen Participation utilized for learning within the IACM, and other new organizations from the pragmatic traditional experimentation to the contexts. They have used the Habermas on issues of community, and incorporated insights into democracy within contemporary and activist intellectuals, such as Alvin, Jean Bethke Elsdon, Robe of the themes of civic democracy, sussibility. They were widely read in the turn, began to formulate the grassroots. Thus, not only does pr
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...democratic and participatory practices... uncertain results. The current one is flourishing with considerable success; it systematically incorporates lessons from the field and insights from theory and is sustained by vibrant and ever-growing networks of practitioners and institutional centers.86

Compare also those neighborhood associations that are part of well-structured citywide systems and those that are not. The former show a greater impact of face-to-face participation on citizen learning as evidenced by political knowledge, sense of political efficacy, and ability to look beyond the interests of one's neighborhood. And these educative effects are especially strong among low-income groups, which generally suffer from a variety of forms of participatory inequality.89 Or compare the disciplined and highly reflective IAF evaluation sessions, which analyze the preceding action's impact on long-term public relationships with power holders, to many other forms of community organizing that haphazardly attend to such issues. In short, the structure of participation systems, deliberative democratic designs, and organizing models matters. It matters because it determines whether and how participation is educative and cultivates good citizens. And these forms and practices themselves evolve as part of a larger historical learning process, as we shall see.

The continued development of participatory and deliberative democratic theory since the late 1960s has served as an intellectual resource for critical reflection and learning within various networks, though practice has often run considerably ahead of theory. Public participation staff in federal agencies in the 1970s were often recruited from graduate programs in political science, where they had completed dissertations on practical and theoretical aspects of citizen participation. Conferences among federal officials and citizen participation groups regularly included reflections from democratic theory. This was evident already in the mid-1970s, with the Interagency Council on Citizen Participation (ICCP).40 Democratic theory has also been utilized for learning within the IAF, civic journalism, health decisions, community planning, and other networks. Many innovators have drawn inspiration from the pragmatist tradition of John Dewey, a resource for democratic experimentation that should never be underestimated in the American context. They have utilized the German critical theory tradition of Jürgen Habermas on issues of communicative competence and discursive democracy, and incorporated insights from the lively debates on pluralism and democracy within contemporary American political theory. Other theorists and activist intellectuals, such as Harry Boyte, Benjamin Barber, David Mathews, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Robert Bellah, and Amitai Etzioni, have also contributed new directions and research. How successful and
very significantly as a critical resource over the course of the past several decades, but its relationship to the world of practice also becomes increasingly more direct and reciprocal. 41

These three analytical and theoretical traditions—policy learning, organizational learning and regulatory culture, and participatory democratic theory—can help us understand civic innovation in the United States. Of course, learning proceeds along varied and complex paths in response to political opportunities and constraints specific to each arena, as well as to recognized limits and failures within participatory organizations and projects themselves. Often learning becomes blocked, organizations dissolve, and practitioners disperse, though many carry a set of critical lessons to other venues as they renew their work. Sometimes learning is considerable at the level of local activity, but bureaucratic resistance or a change in administration obstruct further progress or steer it along more circuitous routes. And, needless to say, there is no guarantee that it will all “add up,” either in a decisive paradigm shift within any given policy domain or in civic renewal on a larger scale. But a cumulative process is evident along a variety of dimensions that can serve as a substantial, indeed indispensable, foundation upon which to build.

THE CONTESTED LEGACY OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Our interpretation of civic innovation as an extended process of social learning over several decades beginning in the 1960s differs in important respects from a number of other interpretations of the participatory democracy of this earlier era. Most notable are our differences with many New Left scholars, as well as Samuel Huntington and James Morone.

First, Left scholarly proponents of participatory democracy, such as Doug McAdam, James Max Fendrich, Jack Whelan, and Richard Flacks, who have analyzed the careers of sixties youth activists, do recognize important continuities between earlier and later stages, but primarily in activists’ sustaining personal commitments. Despite their own evidence that many activists have thoughtfully redefined their commitments so as to place more emphasis on community problem solving or civic involvement through congregation-sponsored activities, these authors see broader historical continuity predominantly in terms of movement politics and an awaited upsurge of Leftist activism. James Miller, whose compelling account of Students for a Democratic Society initially pointed out how sixties veterans modified participatory democracy in light of their mature experience, seems to have retreated in the face of his Left critics by restricting his understanding of continuities to women’s, gay, and green movements and to the legacy of the “wild
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culture" of the period. The civic republican approach to participatory democracy, which the student leaders of SDS had derived from Toqueville and Dewey and which competed with a more volatile existentialist version during the sixties, now seems to have lived on for Miller only in political theory. Some interpreters of the sixties, such as Meta Mendel-Reyes, dismiss any life-cycle and maturation analogies, while others, such as Stuart Burns, see the inevitable life-cycle imperatives of family and jobs as simply a drag on participatory commitments, rather than as an opportunity to modify and rationalize them in less totalizing ways through other community networks and institutional settings. The analytical frame of repression and/or cooperation in many Leftist accounts reinforces the overriding sense of historical discontinuity in the participatory democracy of earlier and later periods, with the exception of a few ideologically preferred grassroots movements. Our research, by contrast, reveals that, for an important set of civic innovators in subsequent decades, there occurred considerably greater and quite self-conscious learning and revision that have built upon their often profound and identity-forming experiences in a broad range of earlier settings: the "participatory democracy" of SDS, the "beloved community" of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the citizenship schools of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the "maximum feasible participation" of Community Action, Head Start, and Neighborhood Health Center programs, the "widespread citizen participation" of Model Cities, the "broadly representative citizen participation" of Health Systems Agencies, the consciousness-raising groups and community-based rape crisis and battered women's shelters of the feminist movement, the self-help groups of the disability rights and independent living movements, the urban ministries of mainstream Protestant and Catholic denominations, old-style Alinsky organizations, and all sorts of democratically run collectives and other grassroots efforts. The self-conception of the great majority of activist innovators whom we have interviewed is one of having matured and learned from experience.

These innovators view themselves as having become more strategic and effective over time, as manifested in how they structure their organizations and choose their tactics. They place much greater emphasis upon building relationships of trust with diverse stakeholders and adversaries and much less upon personalized fulfillment or intense and ideologically pure identity-forming activities. They see themselves as having reached out to broader sections of the American public and as having become more richly enmeshed in their local communities. They do not feel burdened by the guilt of not having been able to maintain their previous forms of radical and totalizing commitment but are generally hopeful and energized about the pragmatic work and commitments that they can sustain. Nonetheless, they worry deeply about the state of American democracy and agonize over how to make their own work more effective and broadly relevant. Perhaps most impor-
tant, they see themselves as having progressively learned to do democracy in ways more consistent with their original ideals and more appropriate to the complex political and institutional environments and policy conundrums that they face. As we hope to demonstrate, the pragmatic choices that underlay these self-perceptions can be reasonably viewed as, by and large, wise ones that testify to the coming of age of a civic generation—or, more accurately, an important segment of one whose work continues to manifest broad democratic possibilities and to engage younger and more politically diverse activists not directly socialized by the movements of the 1960s.43

A second influential interpretation of the participatory democracy of the 1960s and 1970s is that of Samuel Huntington, who argues that this period of "creedal passion" has produced an "excess of democracy" that not only has eroded capacities for governance, but has also had deleterious effects on participation itself. A highly educated, mobilized, and participatory society, Huntington argues, generates a "demand overload" and weakens institutions such as parties and the presidency charged with aggregating interests. Expectations rise much faster than they can be met; political authority declines; and citizens' sense of political efficacy and trust actually declines as well. Participatory overload also produces increased policy polarization and further exacerbates the tendency of voters to withdraw. Huntington's analysis has served as an important filter in intellectual and policy circles and helped to dampen official enthusiasm for citizen participation. While anathema to participatory democrats of all stripes at the time, his argument has no small measure of truth, especially at the level of impacts on political institutions and the policy process. Highly mobilized public interest groups, hyperdemocracy in the use of initiative and referendum, the diffusion of power in Congress, and the proliferation of presidential primaries have exacerbated the problems of governance and have likely discouraged the participation of citizens with moderate views.44

Examining civic innovation as an extended learning process, however, permits us to recognize how some of the creedal passion became tempered over time and how in a variety of arenas, if not those upon which Huntington focused, there began to emerge new participatory innovations for aggregating interests, resolving conflict, and solving practical problems in communities. These were still largely invisible when Huntington first developed his analysis in the mid-1970s, and it is thus hardly surprising that a powerful argument about the excesses of democracy would become so influential. It is even less surprising in view of the dominant public philosophy of rights-based liberalism at the time and the role played within it by those such as Ralph Nader, whose claims for direct participation tended to emphasize those forms with the least potential for deliberation and problem solving, such as the initiative and referendum or constitutional rights empowering consumers, workers, and communities to take direct action in the courts.45

Our analysis also differs in interpretation of the participatory democracy of American state by temporary period in terms of negation attempts to realize the "myths" of the direct participation in regularity in response to the institutionalism of American liberalism implement new political institutional dissolves into a clash of interest groups. Reformist energies are central political authority. And increased by crude organizational learning within participatory administrative power but a state genuine common interests and proves itself chimerical. The sea of bureaucracy.46

Morone's analyses of the severe dynamic is supposed to have them, and the two post-1960s agencies (inform our own think displays a tendency to exaggerate with reforms presumed a myth of a consensus rather than a more rigorous in practice and often their organizational boundaries of the science of learning or refinement of participatory innocence and one wondering from whence the rational wishes to contemporary once.47 By examining civic innovation rather than an endlessly request for recognizing civic actors a practice, our framework is definitive way for answering just this so

We have employed a variety of innovation in the United States 1993 to January 2000 we interv
Our analysis also differs in important ways from a third influential interpretation of the participatory democracy of the 1960s and 1970s, that of James Morone. In *The Democratic Wish*, Morone presents a sweeping reinterpretation of American state building from the early Republic to the contemporary period in terms of repeatedly disappointed cycles of reform based on attempts to realize the “myth of communal democracy.” This myth, which presumes the direct participation of a united people, reasserts itself with great regularity in response to the institutional stalemate and fragmentation characteristic of American liberalism. As this myth gathers force and attempts to implement new political institutions, however, the united republican people dissolves into a clash of interests and struggles for representation by new groups. Reformist energies are channeled away from more radical goals and real political authority. And innocence of organizational dynamics is superseded by crude organizational maintenance as the basic logic of developmental learning within participatory settings. The ironic result is new administrative power but a state still too weak and fragmented to pursue genuine common interests and communal needs. The communal myth proves itself chimerical. The search for direct democracy simply builds up bureaucracy.46

Morone’s analyses of the seven episodes since the early Republic in which this dynamic is supposed to have played itself out have much to recommend them, and the two post-1960s cases (Community Action and Health Systems Agencies) inform our own thinking in certain ways. Yet the general model displays a tendency to exaggerate strongly the extent to which participatory reformers presumed a myth of a united people with an already established consensus rather than a more realistic view in which consensus had to be forged in practice and often through conflict. It draws the temporal and organizational boundaries of the narratives in such a way as to miss any evidence of learning or refinement of practice that does not fit the stylized poles of participatory innocence and organizational maintenance. And it leaves one wondering from whence the practical wisdom needed to “marry democratic wishes to contemporary institutions” in a realistic way could ever come.47 By examining civic innovation as an extended process of social learning rather than an endlessly repeated cycle of disappointed myth making and by recognizing civic actors as capable of critical and reflective revisions in practice, our framework is designed to provide a potentially more fruitful way for answering just this sort of question.

A NOTE ON METHOD

We have employed a variety of methods to understand the process of civic innovation in the United States over the past four decades. From October 1993 to January 2000 we interviewed 738 individuals, of whom we classify
as innovative civic practitioners: community organizers, founders, leaders, and staff of major organizing networks and intermediaries; neighborhood association activists; civic journalists; consultants and technical assistance providers; foundation officers; and federal, state, and local agency staff responsible for citizen participation programs. Our practitioner interviews included, wherever possible, biographical information about formative participatory experiences and ideas, critical turning points, formal and informal network ties, and changing perspectives and practices in individual careers and organizational development. They also included reflections on current practices and anticipated challenges.

We attended and took extensive field notes at 141 practitioner conferences, trainings, strategic planning retreats, and board meetings of various networks, as well as neighborhood association and town meetings. We examined participant lists and biographical data from these meetings, where these were provided, as well as directories of specific organizations and organizational fields. We kept detailed logs or summary notes of approximately nine hundred additional telephone conferences and planning calls. We also examined the publications, strategic planning documents, annual reports, websites, and board membership lists of various associations and networks. We reviewed approximately 80 community action guides and training manuals and videos, which provided important insight into how participatory models and techniques have changed over time, as did government agency handbooks and field guidelines, especially when triangulated with other sources that testify to how such manuals were utilized and modified in practice. We examined primary sources, such as government, foundation, and consultant reports; evaluations and case studies; video and audio tapes of projects; and conference proceedings dating back to the 1970s. Our analysis of public journalism projects included field observation, print, and broadcast analysis, and interviews with editors, journalists, civic leaders, public officials, neighborhood associations, and citizen panels in ten cities. Secondary historical sources and social science studies of participatory organizations, networks, programs, and ideas also proved indispensable throughout.

To help build further capacities for learning and innovation in various organizations and networks, and as part of a broader movement for civic renewal, we have approached our work from a participatory action research framework. To this end, we have served in various roles as advisors, evaluators, trainers, faculty, awards jurors, website developers, and steering committee and executive board members for a variety of organizations and projects. As noted earlier, one of us served as research director of the Reinventing Citizenship Project in 1994, which was funded by the Ford Foundation and convened in conjunction with the Domestic Policy Council at the White House. This project provided an opportunity to consult with and interview leaders in federal agencies who wanted to explore how to make active citizens a central component of strategies to promote both within agencies and among practitioners in this and subsequent projects and academic and develop strategies for projects are discussed in cl. This is a book about social issues, not a systematic analysis. solving in comparison to old and new efforts to improve outcomes and the search for better outcomes, job training effectiveness, and it responds to the various changing conditions and issues. such as the sense of political moment. But we do not try to do this, nor for the four arenas, to include learning in the face of it...
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This is a book about social learning and capacity building over several decades, not a systematic analysis of the results of civic approaches to problem solving in comparison to other approaches. Thus, our methods do not attempt to measure outcomes directly. To be sure, learning is partly driven by the search for better outcomes, as measured by indicators of ecosystem restoration, job-training effectiveness, housing production, and community health, and it responds to the perceived relative ineffectiveness of other approaches under changing conditions. Some studies have generated systematic quantitative and comparative evidence of hard measures, as well as softer ones, such as the sense of political efficacy, and we cite these where they are relevant. But we do not try to do this for any particular model or arena as a whole, nor for the four arenas combined. Our intention is different, since it includes learning in the face of limits and failures, as well as successes, and since it raises issues about effective citizenship that are normative and political, as well as empirical.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The next four chapters analyze civic innovation within four arenas: urban development, environment, health, and journalism. The first three represent major arenas characterized by local mobilization and federal action since the 1960s but also reveal distinct dynamics and policy challenges. In the fourth arena, civic journalism has emerged only over the past decade and is independent of local organizing and government initiative, though its mission to create a more vital public sphere complements work in the other three and engages local government and civic actors in new ways. Innovation in each of these four arenas has also been important to the emergence of a broader civic renewal movement over the past decade. The concluding chapter examines this movement and some larger theoretical and political questions bearing upon its future.

Chapter 2 analyzes community organizing and community development in urban areas, beginning with the Community Action Program of the War on Poverty and the heritage of Alinsky organizing, which extended back several decades further but was given new life in the context of African American and Latino movements of the 1960s and neighborhood movements of the 1970s. We focus on three broad streams of innovation: congregatio-
based community organizing, which emerged directly out of the Alinsky tradition; community development corporations and revitalization strategies; and neighborhood associations and other forms of community visioning and collaboration at the urban and metropolitan level. Finally, we consider how these various approaches define ecologies of local organizing—whether they complement or conflict with each other, whether they can become components of different kinds of urban regimes, and what kinds of larger policy challenges remain.

Chapter 3 analyzes citizen participation as it came to be mandated in environmental legislation and administrative law in the 1970s and the gradual emergence of various civic, community-based, and collaborative approaches in the 1980s and 1990s. We examine the dynamics within three distinct policy arenas: (1) water and watersheds, (2) forest planning and ecosystem restoration, and (3) toxics and environmental justice. We attempt to develop an understanding of the complex relationships among innovative local projects, mainstream civic associations, and the environmental movement, including its professionalized and more radical wings. Finally, we examine recent proposals to restructure environmental policy and the EPA so as to build directly upon civic and community-based approaches, and the continuing obstacles to this reorientation.

Chapter 4 begins by examining the Neighborhood Health Centers and Health Systems Agencies that emerged, respectively, from the War on Poverty and federally mandated public participation in health planning. While each of these proved to be a limited foundation upon which to build, they nonetheless made important contributions, and a variety of other civic and community-based approaches emerged from them. Among subsequent models in the 1980s and 1990s, we examine the "health decisions" model of public deliberation in several states, with an extended case study of the Oregon Health Plan. Here, independently convened community meetings about underlying health values were utilized to educate the broad public and policy makers over an extended period, and were later incorporated as a key feature in the formal development of a plan by the legislature and an appointed Health Services Commission. We also examine the emergence of a "healthy communities" movement in the 1990s, which defines health broadly within community contexts and develops multisided partnerships among health care institutions, public health agencies, community, church and other groups. Healthy communities projects also build upon various other community-based and self-help approaches from the women's health movement, the disability rights and independent living movements, and AIDS/HIV prevention and care. Finally, we examine some of the opportunities and obstacles confronting deliberative and community-based approaches to health reform under managed care in a marketplace that is continually restructuring itself, yet is unable to stem the growth of the uninsured.

We consider some of the civic elements of the Clinton plan.

Chapter 5 analyzes the emergence of the crisis of the press under the intellectual stirrings and foundation philanthropy, a major corporate birth to this movement practices that have been developing the kind of public deliberation for fostering active forms of participation. Our analysis develops in partnerships in three cities—Madison, North Carolina—and various other cities. We examine how movement in sustaining civic innovation, and how it has reinvented itself as "civic transformation" civic engagement, and the networks, as well as the controversy that civic journals analyze its potential in relation to the larger political economy of the United States on the various themes, models, development, civic engagement, and other kinds of work success.

In Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, we consider movement in the United States on the various themes, models, success, and other kinds of work success.

We analyze core texts of the movement in Canada, and a collective action frame that every movement must consider. Without a powerful movement, public work and innovators will remain invisible and segregated.
And we consider some of the civic lessons that might be drawn from the failure of the Clinton plan.

Chapter 5 analyzes the emergence of public journalism in the 1990s in response to the crisis of the press and politics in the United States. We examine the intellectual stirrings and entrepreneurial initiatives within academia, foundations, a major corporate newspaper chain, and local newsrooms that gave birth to this movement within journalism. We explore a range of practices that have been developed in print and broadcast media for enhancing the kind of public deliberation in which citizens are center stage and for fostering active forms of community problem solving and collaboration. Our analysis develops in-depth case studies of media institutions and partnerships in three cities—Madison, Wisconsin; Norfolk, Virginia; and Charlotte, North Carolina—and draws upon further analysis of projects in various other cities. We examine how these initiatives have attempted to transform themselves into self-described “learning organizations” capable of sustaining civic innovation, and how journalists and editors have attempted to reimage themselves as “civic professionals.” We also look at the broader movement and its networks, as well as several national projects, and examine the controversy that civic journalism has sparked within the press. Finally, we analyze its potential in relation to other civic renewal efforts and within the larger political economy of the media and the information revolution.

In Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, we analyze the emergence of a civic renewal movement in the United States in the 1990s. This movement builds upon the various themes, models, and networks in community organizing and development, civic environmentalism, healthy communities, civic journalism, and other kinds of work such as community youth development and the civic engagement movement within higher education. But it also attempts to raise these themes to greater prominence in American politics and to define the contours of a much grander mission: revitalizing American democracy for the twenty-first century. The civic renewal movement seeks to build relationships across different associational networks and policy arenas, to further cultivate common language, and to catalyze mutual learning. It has also attempted to bridge some familiar ideological divides of left and right. We analyze core texts of the movement to discern how it has developed a collective action frame that attempts to reimagine what it means to be a citizen and how citizens act in the world. This constitutes the fundamental symbolic work of all movements in reconstructing identities and reframe the scope and meaning of civic action. We also examine the organizations and networks that are at the core of the movement and the role of key movement entrepreneurs.

Without a powerful movement capable of shifting the tides, too much of the vital public work and innovation of citizens analyzed in our core chapters will remain invisible and segmented, unable to inspire broad and vig-
uous commitment, and unable to redefine the underlying dynamics of "politics as usual." In contrast to those who would link civic renewal directly to party renewal, however, we argue for a principled nonpartisanship in building the movement, and we sketch a set of challenges that it must confront in the coming years if it is to develop into a robust movement with the capacity to have a major impact on American society and politics. In many ways, the civic renewal movement is an unlikely movement, and it diverges significantly from other recent democratic movements for civil rights and social justice, even as it builds upon their accomplishments in creating a more inclusive and participatory polity. The civic renewal movement thus does not have available to itself much of the rhetoric and repertoire of rights and justice movements. In other ways, however, the civic renewal movement can draw upon some of the deepest traditions of democracy in America and can leverage many important institutional and cultural resources to carry the great work of democracy forward. We conclude with an ambitious, albeit eminently practical, proposal for building the movement on the basis of its existing networks and distinctive repertoires, while nonetheless enabling it to make a dramatic new claim to authority within the political culture that might capture the public imagination. We call this a National Civic Congress convening annually or biannually on the Fourth of July.