Stoker, Gerry. "Designing Political Citizenship." *Prospects for Citizenship*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. 33–50. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781849662444.ch-002>>.

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CHAPTER TWO

Designing Political Citizenship

Political citizenship appears to be in crisis. As the first chapter of this book highlights, there is growing evidence of public disillusionment with the institutions of advanced industrial democracies. The decline in electoral turnout, low levels of trust in politicians and political institutions and decline in membership of traditional mobilizing organizations such as political parties and trade unions are just three expressions of the growing disconnection between citizens and decision makers (Dalton 2004; Power Inquiry 2006; Stoker 2006). This could be taken as a counsel of despair – a growing disillusionment with the ‘democratic project’. However, citizens in advanced industrial democracies appear to make a distinction between democracy as an idea and its actual manifestations. Behind these negative attitudes towards contemporary democratic practice is a strong and significant commitment to democratic norms and values. Surveying the evidence base, Russell Dalton suggests: ‘Most people remain committed to the democratic ideal; if anything, these sentiments have apparently strengthened as satisfaction with the actuality of democratic politics has decreased’ (Dalton 2004: 47). While reform of party and parliamentary practices may have an important role to play in revitalizing contemporary politics, the level of discontent and disengagement suggests that more serious attention needs to be given to reshaping the relationship between the governed and those who govern; to reshape the practice of political citizenship. Reforms need to ‘address expectations that the democratic process will expand to provide new opportunities for citizen input and control’ (Dalton 2004: 204).

Such an analysis mirrors developments in democratic theory, where over the past couple of decades we have witnessed a resurgence of interest in questions of citizen participation. While there are important differences in emphasis – for example, as to whether participation has intrinsic or instrumental value – theorists from different democratic traditions, be it participatory, deliberative, direct, associative, difference or cosmopolitan, offer arguments that place a premium on increasing citizen participation as a way of ameliorating the disconnect between the subjectivity, motives and intentions of citizens and those who make decisions in their name (e.g. Barber 1984; Offe and Preuss 1991).

There is, however, a significant divide in the theoretical literature on the form and location that a revitalized political citizenship should take. One stream of thinking celebrates activism, organization and networks within civil society. A revitalized political citizenship is cast either as oppositional activity and resistance towards established forms of governance (Dryzek 2000; Blaug 2002) or in relation to self-organization of social and economic activity (Hirst 1994). There is an implicit suspicion here of the role of the state, in particular the manner in which it co-opts citizen participation for its own ends. The second stream of thinking is more open towards the potential of the state to orchestrate its resources to institutionalize citizen participation: it is possible for public authorities to design and implement democratic innovations, institutions that have the explicit purpose of increasing and deepening citizen participation in the political decision-making process (Fung and Wright 2003; Smith 2009). Political activism within civil society is the subject of another chapter. This chapter will take as its focus an evaluation of the second approach to revitalizing political citizenship. The major decision-making institutions of advanced industrial democracy are not about to be swept aside; as such we should be interested in how they might be restructured so as to enhance political citizenship. Throughout the analysis, we will take seriously the arguments of critics and sceptics, analysing the extent to which democratic innovations realize our democratic ambitions. It is to such challenges that we now turn.

Designing Participation: Five Challenges

In evaluating democratic innovations we must recognize that public authorities in advanced industrial democracies have a relatively poor record in engaging their citizens effectively. The contemporary political rhetoric amongst activists, officials and theorists tends to valorize participation, but there are well-founded suspicions of strategies that aim to enhance officially sponsored participation. While increasing and deepening citizen participation may be a worthy ideal, there may be good reasons why it is unrealistic and/or undesirable and may (perversely) have a damaging effect on the institutions and practices of advanced industrial democracies. It is important that in evaluating democratic innovations, we do not sidestep the insights of critics and sceptics. It is too easy to be swept along with the rhetoric of participation and not ask hard questions of institutional designs. If it is a realistic proposition that democratic innovations should be more widely institutionalized, then it is essential that we are able to show, contra

the sceptics and critics, that participation strategies actually promote rather than undermine political citizenship.

In designing democratic innovations, five significant challenges emerge that have direct relevance to the extent to which political citizenship is realized, namely: differential rates of participation across social groups; the competence of citizens to make reasoned judgements; the capacity of citizens to influence or control political decision making; the costs borne by citizens and public authorities; and the extent to which participation can be embedded at significant levels of governance. Critics and sceptics raise important questions as to whether it is realistic to believe that we can design innovations that achieve our democratic ambitions.

The first challenge offered by critics and sceptics is that differential rates of participation across social groups will undermine our commitment to political equality on which citizenship rests. Studies of participation across a range of political activities provide evidence that very few citizens actually engage regularly in political action – whether conventional or unconventional – and that participation is strongly positively correlated to income, wealth and education (Verba *et al.* 1978; Pattie *et al.* 2005). These sections of the population have access to resources such as time, money and knowledge that are crucial to political efficacy. As such, Arend Lijphart argues that democracy's unresolved dilemma is unequal participation (Lijphart 1997). In both elections and official consultation exercises, marginalized social groups systematically fail to engage. As difference theorists continually stress, presence can have a significant impact on the nature of decisions: if the politically excluded are not present and able to voice their perspectives, decisions are unlikely to fully respond to their concerns (Phillips 1995: 13). Extending opportunities for citizen participation in the political process will simply reinforce and amplify the existing differentials of power and influence within society (Sartori 1987: 114; Phillips 1991: 162); in practice political equality will not, or even cannot, be realized.

Second, sceptics and critics of extending participation argue that citizens tend to lack the skills and competence to make reasoned political judgements. This sentiment is most explicitly expressed in the work of Joseph Schumpeter and was a crucial element of his defence of competitive elitism: 'the typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field ... He becomes a primitive again' (Schumpeter 1976: 262). There is plenty of evidence that most citizens are not that interested in politics and do not spend much time actively consuming political information. The popularity of opinion polls reinforces

the problem: citizens are asked their immediate response to questions on subjects on which they often have little or no knowledge and with little or no opportunity to reflect on relevant information. As Mark Warren argues:

[D]emocracy works poorly when individuals hold preferences and make judgements in isolation from one another, as they often do in today's liberal democracies. When individuals lack the opportunities, incentives, and necessities to test, articulate, defend, and ultimately act on their judgements, they will also be lacking in empathy for others, poor in information, and unlikely to have the critical skills necessary to articulate, defend, and revise their views. (Warren 1996: 242)

A third challenge is that participation will have little or no effect on political decisions. There is certainly little empirical evidence available of the material impact of consultation on political decision making (Lowndes *et al.* 2001: 452; Crawford *et al.* 2003). A range of explanations are forthcoming, from accounts that stress the limiting effect of extra-constitutional imperatives, such as the protection of capital accumulation (Dryzek 2000), to those that highlight the professional resistance amongst public officials (Newman *et al.* 2004: 210). Daniel Fiorino, at one time the Director of the Performance Incentives Division at the US Environmental Protection Agency and a respected commentator on public participation, recognizes the legitimacy of public scepticism towards public participation, arguing that consultation exercises are often undertaken to 'give at least the appearance of individual and community involvement, legitimate decisions already made, warn the agency of potential political and legal obstacles, satisfy legal or procedural requirements, and defuse the opposition' (Fiorino 1990: 230–1; see also Cooke and Kothari 2001).

A fourth challenge is that participation places too many burdens on both citizens and institutions: in other words, the challenge is that enhancing participation cannot be considered an efficient mode of governance. Warren rightly warns that 'radical democrats almost without exception hold that democratic participation is attractive activity, one that people would naturally choose if only they had the opportunity. They should dispense with this romantic dogma' (Warren 1996: 243). The demands of participation are just as likely to generate anxieties and fears and a reasonable preference to spend any spare time in other activities. David Beetham has consistently argued that the economy of time 'is the only *democratic* argument for decision-making by proxy, by some smaller group which is in some sense representative of

the whole, whose members can be released from other responsibilities to devote themselves more fully to deliberation of public issues' (Beetham 1999: 8–9). Enhancing citizen participation also has significant resource implications for public authorities, both in terms of organizing engagement and the potential restructuring of administrative procedures and working practices to accommodate engagement. Participation on the cheap is likely to be of a poor standard and will be detrimental to democratic practice. Although the climate of compulsion requiring participation in certain policy areas can lead to positive developments, it can have 'perverse consequences in terms of producing short-term and inappropriate strategies for engaging the public' (Newman *et al.* 2004: 208).

Finally, there is a widespread assumption that the effectiveness of participation is constrained by scale and thus the transferability of democratic engagement is limited. Again, Warren contends that 'the transformative ideals of radical democracy ... often seem beset by a fuzzy utopianism that fails to confront limitations of complexity, size, and scale of advanced industrial societies' (Warren 1996: 242). Robert Dahl (1998: 110) sums up the challenge concisely:

The smaller a democratic unit, the greater its potential for citizen participation and the less the need for citizens to delegate government decisions to representatives. The larger the unit, the greater its capacity for dealing with problems important to its citizens and the greater the need for citizens to delegate decisions to representatives.

Much of the focus in writing on citizen participation is on small-scale institutional structures: town meetings, workers' cooperatives, neighbourhood governance, etc. (Pateman 1970; Mansbridge 1980). Proponents of participation tend to take one of two approaches: either accepting that the size and complexity of contemporary polities means that opportunities for participation in political decision making can be effective only at a local level, whilst 'politics-as-normal' occurs at higher levels of authority; or offering a radical prescription of decentralization where political control is exercised by smaller units. Arguably, neither strategy is an adequate response to the perceived need to revitalize political citizenship across large-scale, complex polities.

This brief survey of sceptical and critical voices raises considerable challenges to attempts to further institutionalize citizen participation in the political decision-making process. Calls for embedding democratic

innovations are made against the backdrop of existing patterns of engagement that lead us to question whether government-sponsored engagement strategies can in practice fulfil our democratic hopes and expectations for political citizenship. Is there evidence that these challenges can be overcome?

A New Wave of Democratic Innovation

The last couple of decades have witnessed a groundswell of interest in democratic innovations, to such an extent that global institutions such as the World Bank are promoting citizen engagement as a strategy for good governance (World Bank 1996). It would be foolish in the extreme to suggest that the various examples of participatory budgeting (PB), participatory appraisal, citizens' juries, internet discussion forums and other innovations organized or sponsored by public authorities effectively solve all the challenges posed by critics and sceptics. However, the explosion of participatory activity has been driven by interesting examples of institutional design and it is worth investigating the extent to which they can enhance aspects of political citizenship. We will focus our discussion on what we take to be four influential innovations that offer different insights into how we might respond to the current crisis in political citizenship through careful and creative institutional design: PB as it was initially developed in Porto Alegre, Brazil; the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly (BCCA) on Electoral Reform; 21st Century Town Meetings; and Womenspeak.¹

Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Porto Alegre

PB was established in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989 as the central element in the annual municipal budget decision-making cycle. The incoming Workers' Party mayor had the explicit intention of designing a participatory process that challenged the clientelism and corruption endemic within Brazilian political culture and legitimized redistributive policies. By the turn of the twenty-first century, some 16,600 citizens participated in popular assemblies (Harvard University Center for Urban Development Studies 2003: 40) affecting the distribution of around \$160 million in investments (Baiocchi 2005: 14). What is particularly striking is that PB encourages a significant proportion of participants from poorer neighbourhoods (beyond their percentage in the population) and there is a redistribution of resources towards these neighbourhoods. As Rachel Abers notes: 'Whereas often participatory policies are dominated by the wealthy, the well educated and representatives of business interests, the opposite is true in the case of the participatory budget' (Abers 1998: 54).

Such impressive results have been achieved in Porto Alegre through the institutionalization of a creative motivational structure. PB comprises three different institutions with quite different functions which place different demands on participants. First, large-scale mobilization across the city focuses on the sixteen annual area-based popular assemblies in which participants are able to: hold the administration to account; vote for neighbourhood and regional priorities for infrastructure investment (e.g. sanitation, paving, health care, etc.); and elect citizens to the sixteen regional budget forums and the Council of the Participatory Budget (COP). The number of delegates going forward to the budget forums is related to the number of votes cast (i.e. the higher the turnout from a neighbourhood, the greater the representation); whereas there are only two councillors from each assembly that are elected to the COP (i.e. equal representation for each area of the city). The second set of institutions, the regional budget forums, prioritize the list of demands from the popular assemblies and monitor the implementation of projects by city agencies. Finally, the COP applies a set of distributional rules to decide which of the investments prioritized by the regional budget forums and put forward by the administration are to be funded. It then reviews these rules and agrees on those that will guide distribution in the following year. To defend against the abuse of power on the part of selected citizens, councillors can only be elected for two consecutive terms of office and are subject to immediate recall. The COP presents the budget to the mayor who then is required to seek the approval of the legislature of the city council. In her analysis of PB, Abers suggests that we should distinguish between the popular assemblies and budget forums where citizens are able to bring forward their own proposals with little interference from public officials and the COP where citizens often find themselves reliant on officials for information and technical advice and overwhelmed with the details of government proposals (Abers 2000: 211).

The motivational structure embedded in the design of PB has a number of characteristics that encourage the expression of political citizenship by the (traditionally politically marginalized) poor. First, there is a clear relationship between numbers mobilized in the popular assemblies and levels of representation on the budget forums in which delegates prioritize the demands of neighbourhoods into a regional list of investments. The more delegates from a neighbourhood the more influence they can have on investment priorities. Second, there is no expectation that all citizens will participate in all the institutions of PB: mass participation occurs in the popular assemblies, but representatives are selected for the more

intense work on the regional budget forums and COP. Third, because no region or partisan interest is able to dominate the COP, the rules that guide the distribution of resources reflect considerations of social justice. For example, the rules have always included at least one criterion related to relative poverty and infrastructure and services deficiencies of regions. There is thus a distributional bias that favours the poor. Fourth, the administration employs community organizers who have been particularly active in promoting engagement and developing the civic infrastructure in poorer communities with little tradition of civic organization. And finally, participation has been enhanced by the 'demonstration effect' (Abers 1998: 138). The administration has invested heavily in ensuring that it delivers on PB decisions; as such citizens in neighbourhoods that did not participate in the early years of the budgeting process are motivated to engage when they witness the impact of investment in infrastructure and services in neighbouring communities that were mobilized.

The idea of PB has spread across Brazil, Latin America and into Europe and to levels of governance beyond municipalities (Cabannes 2004). However, there are conditions that make the Porto Alegre design particularly effective and which are not always recognized when practice is transferred. First, Brazilian municipal mayors enjoy significant fiscal and political autonomy: they have discretion over a significant resource stream and are in a position to undertake necessary administrative reforms. Second, on coming to power, the Workers' Party had strong support from across different social groups to break the culture of corruption and clientelism; in particular, there was strong political pressure from civic organizations for a participatory approach to budgeting and support for the investment needed to restructure the administration to encourage mobilization and deliver investments. Third, the institutions of the budget are open to all citizens rather than accredited interest groups only. Fourth, the design is explicitly based on rewarding participation: the more a neighbourhood mobilizes, the more likely it is to achieve investment. And finally, basic infrastructure investments in neighbourhoods are the primary outputs of the process. Participation rates tend to be much lower when basic infrastructure is already in place (e.g. amongst the middle class) or when the issue under consideration does not have such obvious direct impact on everyday life: even in Porto Alegre, the administration has not been able to mobilize equally large numbers around city-wide strategic concerns such as transportation, the environment, etc. Where this combination of factors is not present, PB has been much less effective, failing to mobilize the traditionally politically marginalized.

The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly (BCCA)

The late 1990s witnessed a surge of interest in mini-publics such as citizens' juries, deliberative polling and consensus conferences. Mini-publics share the characteristic that randomly selected citizens are brought together for around two to four days to discuss pertinent policy issues. Citizens' juries and consensus conferences involve between twelve and twenty-four citizens and produce recommendations; deliberative polls tend to involve between 200 and 400 citizens and, as the name suggests, seek individual opinions both at the beginning and the end of the process. While there are plenty of examples of such mini-publics, there is relatively little evidence that they have had material influence on political decision making (Goodin and Dryzek 2006).

This is where the BCCA differs dramatically. The Assembly was established by the provincial administration in British Columbia in 2004 following perverse election results and a failure amongst political parties to agree on a strategy for electoral reform. To bypass such partisan disagreement, the BCCA was charged with reviewing the province's simple plurality electoral system and if necessary recommending an alternative system. The Assembly involved 160 randomly selected citizens: a female and male from each of the seventy-nine electoral districts, plus two citizens with Aboriginal backgrounds when it was realized that no one from this social group had been selected. For eleven months during 2004, citizens were engaged in learning and deliberating about electoral reform. Over a series of weekends for the first four months (January to April), members learnt about electoral systems. For the next two months, members were involved in fifty hearings across the province, taking evidence from fellow citizens and interest groups. The Assembly also took 1,603 written submissions. Finally, between September and November 2004, the 160 participants discussed and debated competing electoral systems, before coming to a decision. After eleven months of work the Assembly recommended that the current electoral system should be replaced by a version of single transferable vote (STV). In December 2004, the Assembly published its final report, *Making Every Vote Count*, explaining its activities and recommendation (Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform 2004).²

The use of random selection is striking for a number of reasons. First it takes us back to early Athenian democratic practice, generating a small body of citizens in which no citizen or social group from a given population is *systematically* excluded from participation (Goodwin 2005: 45). In actual practice the BCCA (and other mini-publics) rely on 'near-random selection' (Warren and Pearse 2008b: 6) because of well-known sampling

problems (e.g. reliability of databases and an element of self-selection) and the decision in some designs to use stratified sampling to ensure the presence of politically salient social groups. In the case of BCCA, quotas were adopted along geographical, gender and age criteria, with the last-minute addition of two Aboriginal members when it was realized that this social group was not included in the sample. There is much debate over the use of stratified sampling – both in terms of whether it should be used at all; and if so, which characteristics should be the basis of quotas (to ensure, for example, a critical mass amongst a marginalized group) – but what is clear is that the BCCA (as with other mini-publics) mobilized a cross-section of the population to an extent not realized in other democratic institutions. Second, the diversity of participants in the Assembly means that citizens are confronted by difference: in coming to judgements they not only draw on the extensive education they received on electoral reform, but also the different social perspectives of the other citizens with whom they interact.

Third, evidence from BCCA and other mini-publics indicates that once citizens have agreed to participate, there is a strong incentive to stay engaged. The formal invitation to participate, a modest honorarium and the sense that they are being asked to take part in a serious political endeavour plays a crucial role in motivating citizens' engagement and support for the process. Citizens who have little or no interest or experience of other forms of political participation are willing to engage in what are highly intensive forms of political engagement. Even the BCCA – which ran for eleven months and was thus more demanding than other designs – suffered only one withdrawal. Citizens perceive they are being offered a rare opportunity to participate in a politically significant process. Political citizenship is made meaningful.

While the timescale and constitutional focus of the Assembly distinguish its design from earlier mini-publics, the most dramatic difference is arguably that it was linked to a mechanism of public ratification: the BC administration committed itself prior to establishing the Assembly to a binding province-wide referendum based on its recommendation. This took place in May 2005 with the following question on the ballot: 'Should British Columbia change to the BC-STV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform? Yes/No.' The government had placed two significant thresholds for the referendum to pass: at least 60 per cent of votes across the province plus at least forty-eight (60 per cent) of the seventy-nine electoral districts needed to vote in favour. In the end, the referendum passed the second threshold with seventy-seven districts

in favour. However, the overall vote was 57.69 per cent, missing the first threshold by only 2.31 per cent.³ Critics contend that while the British Columbia administration resourced the Assembly, it failed to adequately resource the referendum campaign: polling evidence suggests that many voters were unaware of the existence of the BCCA. No doubt this had a material effect on the referendum result since those citizens who were aware of the Assembly and its activities were more likely to support its proposal (Cutler *et al.* 2008). Whatever the final result, the BCCA offers an indication of how democratic innovations – in this case a mini-public and binding referendum – can be creatively combined to radically restructure the political process; and, arguably, political citizenship.

Emerging e-Democracy Designs

The internet has at one and the same time been hailed as the saviour and enemy of democracy. It has the potential to open up new modes of engagement *and* fragment the public sphere. However, 'little empirical research has been done on the claims of either supporters or critics of e-democracy, or the specific practices with which democracy is being brought into the public sphere' (Schlosberg *et al.* 2006: 211). The jury remains out on the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on democratic theory and practice.

Public authorities have been rather tentative in integrating new technologies into the political process (Pratchett 2006), viewing ICT primarily as a way of improving service delivery and/or providing information: e-government rather than e-democracy. Given the potential to engage larger numbers across time and space, the lack of experimentation is striking. Where authorities have experimented – typically with online discussion forums – concerns have been raised about the impact of the digital divide (differential access to and competence in the use of ICT), the tendency to engage the already politically interested and ensuring civility amongst participants.

While much of the analysis of ICT-enabled participation focuses on open online discussion forums, 21st Century Town Meetings and Womenspeak indicate the potential for using different characteristics of ICT to enable political citizenship. 21st Century Town Meeting was developed by the organization America Speaks, evoking the traditional New England Town Meeting, but, according to its organizers, updated 'to address the needs of today's citizens, decision makers and democracy'.⁴ 21st Century Town Meetings do not take place online; rather ICT is used to enable the

engagement of significant numbers (between 500 and 5,000 citizens) in a one-day event, combining face-to-face deliberations in small groups with large-scale ICT-assisted interactions and collective decision making. ICT is crucial to connect the small and large-scale – and to make the event an exciting and attractive proposition for citizens. While organizers face familiar problems with mobilizing a representative sample of participants (even with targeted recruitment amongst politically marginalized communities), on entering the venue citizens are faced with a series of small tables, each with a networked computer, electronic keypads for all participants and large video screens. Typically, participants are broken into demographically diverse tables of ten to twelve citizens, each with an independent facilitator. Each table uses the networked computer to offer ideas and comments as their discussions progress. These are quickly collated and synthesized by a specialist team who distil comments from tables into themes that are presented back to the room via the large video screens either for further comment or votes. The electronic keypads provide for instant voting and the video screens present results, data and other information in real time for instant feedback. America Speaks only runs these events where there is commitment from decision makers to attend and respond to the outcomes. The sheer scale of the meetings makes them difficult to ignore and means that they often generate substantial interest from the media and public authorities. The combination of small group discussions and large-scale collective decision making on a single day could not take place without the use of ICT.

Such meetings have been used on a range of different issues, including planning, resource allocation and policy formulation: for example, the Mayor of Washington, DC held a series of seven 21st Century Town Meetings on the city's spending priorities between 1999 and 2005 (Lukensmeyer and Brigham 2002; Lukensmeyer *et al.* 2005). The most widely discussed America Speaks event is 'Listening to the City: Rebuilding Lower Manhattan' that took place in the aftermath of 11 September, attracting 5,000 citizens and (arguably) affecting decisions about the future of the World Trade Center site. In 2007, America Speaks showed how their model could be used across more than one site, linking 4,000 citizens in more than sixteen cities nationwide in discussions about the collective recovery priorities for New Orleans.⁵

A second, very different example of the potential impact of ICT is Womenspeak organized in March 2000 by the Hansard Society in the UK. Whereas most government-sponsored web-forums are open and as such engage the already-politically-interested, Womenspeak was explicitly

designed to tackle the digital divide and use ICT to engage a politically marginalized social group: women survivors of domestic violence. Around 200 women registered on a secure, moderated website and were able to exchange experiences with each other and respond to questions and contributions from Members of Parliament (MPs) (Moran 2002; Coleman 2004). Using similar technology, the Hansard Society also developed the innovative HeadsUp resource for young people, which (among other activities) again provides a secure online forum for MPs to consult with young people (Electoral Commission 2004; Smith 2005: 100–2).⁶

The designers of Womenspeak recognized that for reasons of security women who suffered domestic violence would not be willing to attend public meetings. Four elements of the Hansard Society's approach enabled these women to express their political citizenship through a virtual dialogue on a sensitive area of public policy. First, the organizers worked with a reputable organization, Women's Aid, to mobilize potential participants. Second, the discussion forum was secure – it was only accessible to those women who had registered, the relevant parliamentarians and the organizers. Participants were given pseudonyms to ensure privacy. As Margaret Moran, an MP involved in the consultation notes: 'The anonymity offered by the technology enabled women to tell their stories, often for the first time, without fear of identification and to receive support and advice without fear of reprisal' (Moran 2002). The technology ensured that a silent minority were confident enough to 'talk freely and give honest and personal evidence about their experiences' (IPPR 2004: 33). Third, technical support was provided to the significant number of participants who had no access to or familiarity with the Internet: 'Fifty-two per cent of participants had no knowledge of using the Internet before they took part' (Coleman 2004: 7). Women's refuges were able to provide access to participants without computers and the moderator had experience of working in this sensitive area and so could provide both technical and emotional support. And finally, the asynchronous nature of the discussion forum allowed women time to reflect on existing contributions before posting their own comments at convenient times.

We tend to imagine that ICT will be utilized to open up opportunities to bring together large numbers across space and time. Certainly this is the most obvious application of the technology. But 21st Century Town Meetings and Womenspeak indicate how ICT can be used creatively to enhance other forms of engagement: a large-scale one day event and a protected space for vulnerable citizens respectively.

Prospects for Political Citizenship: Lessons from Democratic Innovations

While PB, BCCA, 21st Century Town Meeting and Womenspeak are very different designs with very different ambitions, they offer us insights into the prospects for enhancing political citizenship through democratic innovations. The first – and arguably most important – finding is that carefully designed, such innovations can play a part in revitalizing political citizenship. Institutional design matters.

While very different in design, there are some generic lessons for revitalizing political citizenship which relate to the challenges of critics and sceptics raised earlier. First, effective innovations are explicitly structured to motivate mobilization and engagement. PB as practised in Porto Alegre indicates how it is possible to motivate significant numbers from a politically marginalized social group: in this case the poor. Womenspeak offers different motivations by creating a safe haven for vulnerable women to share their experiences. And BCCA – with its use of random selection – indicates that we should not limit our institutional imagination to traditional modes of selection. There are a variety of institutional solutions to overcoming democracy's unresolved dilemma of unequal participation (Lijphart 1997).

Second, the different designs indicate how judgements of citizens can be shaped. BCCA offers an approach in which a diverse body of citizens learn about an issue of public concern and deliberate together. The design both informs and orientates participants towards the common good. With a very different selection mechanism, similar dynamics are in place in the COP where decisions about the distributional rules of PB are made. That said, however, whereas members of the BCCA have institutional protection from public officials, the COP involves direct negotiation between citizens and officials, with analysts arguing that this places citizens in a position where they are liable to be unduly influenced by technical and bureaucratic status and knowledge. 21st Century Town Meeting offers us some indication of how ICT might be employed to enable collective judgements to emerge across a large number of participants. What is striking about the four cases we have discussed is the way in which they all rely on some form of facilitation to enable participants to voice their perspectives: political judgement is actively shaped.

Third, while Womenspeak's impact on decision making was disappointing, PB, BCCA and to some degree 21st Century Town Meetings indicate how innovations can be designed to ensure that citizens have material effect – at times control – over significant political decisions. In Porto Alegre and

British Columbia, in particular, political leaders have been willing to hand over significant decision-making powers to participatory institutions. What is striking in comparing PB and BCCA is the different ways that they organize large-scale public ratification. In PB, the significant numbers attending popular assemblies legitimize the process, but participants in these assemblies have no decision-making powers. These rest in part with the regional budget forums which prioritize investments and the COP that applies the distributional rules. Decisions are made in smaller arenas. The opposite is the case with the BCCA design. Here a small body of randomly selected citizens sets the agenda: recommending reforms to the electoral system. At this point their proposal is put to a binding popular vote. While examples remain rare, there is no single method of institutionalizing and legitimizing popular control.

Fourth, all four designs indicate that under the right conditions, citizens are willing to bear the burden of participation. And participation can be extensive and demanding: a year of engagement for BCCA participants and delegates and councillors in PB. In comparison, 21st Century Town Meetings indicate how large-scale participation can be organized that is less demanding. The experience of successful democratic innovations also indicates that effective participation does not come cheap for public authorities. But as a study of PB in Porto Alegre states: 'Assessment of feasibility depends on the value placed on empowerment and participatory local governance. It is primarily a political decision because the constraint on successful implementation is institutional capacity rather than costs *per se*' (Harvard University Center for Urban Development Studies 2003: 63).

Finally, the four examples indicate that innovations do not need to be limited to the local in their reach: political citizenship can be enabled at higher levels of governance. Porto Alegre is one of Brazil's largest municipalities; 21st Century Town Meetings have been sponsored by mayors and other public authorities in some of the United States' largest cities; BCCA dealt with a provincial level constitutional decision; and Womenspeak brought together participants from across the UK. Experiments such as the Europe-wide deliberative poll 'Tomorrow's Europe', run in 2007, indicate that mini-publics such as BCCA could be organized across even larger scales of governance involving different linguistic groups (Fishkin 2009: 183–9).⁷ 21st Century Town Meetings and Womenspeak offer insights into how this might be done without the costs of physically bringing all the participants together.

Our analysis suggests that we can design political citizenship, in the sense that new opportunities to increase and deepen citizen involvement in

political decision making can be embedded effectively. But there is a *caveat*. Rhetoric is not enough: institutional design matters. Public authorities need to exhibit the willingness and imagination necessary to invest in democratic innovations. These emerging democratic practices offer actually existing examples of how the relationship between governed and those who govern can be recast. Democratic innovations can be part of the strategy for reinvigorating political citizenship – and potentially re-imagining democracy itself.

Future Research Agendas

Democratic theorists are paying increasing attention to democratic innovations and their impact on the practices of political citizenship. This is a promising development: an all too rare example of the integration of normative theory and empirical political analysis (Beetham 1999: 29; Shapiro 2003: 2). But there are arguably limits to the approach that currently dominates the study of innovations. Ever more sophisticated analytical frameworks have been developed from competing normative accounts of democracy and these frameworks have been applied to particular innovations (Saward 2003: 162). So, for example, deliberative democrats have taken particular interest in mini-publics (Fishkin 1997; Smith and Wales 2000; Warren and Pearse 2008a); direct democrats have tended to focus on the initiative and referendum (Budge 1996; Saward 1998). While such studies have generated a number of insights into the way in which particular institutions shape political citizenship, their value is limited for at least two reasons. First, evaluations of innovations are located within ongoing debates between competing democratic theories: empirical examples of innovations are often primarily chosen to strengthen or undermine the case for particular accounts of normative foundations rather than the development of insights into institutional design and their effect on political citizenship. This is reinforced by a second limitation: evaluations tend to be of a single institutional design, be it citizens' juries, deliberative polling, PB or some other innovation. As such it is difficult to draw reasonable generalizations about the impact that variations in institutional characteristics have on practices of political citizenship, or make judgements about how innovations might be combined to complement and overcome the deficiencies of particular designs. There is a lack of systematic *comparative* analysis of democratic innovations.

One possible approach to comparative analysis is the development of an analytical framework based on the goods that we expect of democratic innovations: To what extent and in what ways do democratic innovations

realize the goods of democratic institutions? The challenges of critics and sceptics of institutionalized participation discussed earlier in this chapter point to the significance of various goods that we associate with democratic institutions, including, for example, inclusiveness, popular control, considered judgement, publicity, efficiency and transferability. Applying an analytical framework composed of such goods allows us to evaluate both the democratic potential and feasibility of a wide variety of innovations: from PB and mini-publics to direct legislation and e-democracy designs (Smith 2009). Such an approach is potentially ecumenical in that while it takes as read the differences over normative foundations within theories of democracy, it recognizes that there is convergence in relation to the goods of democratic institutions. This is not to claim that goods will be conceptualized and prioritized in precisely the same way by different theorists; rather that, if carefully chosen, the goods we associate with democratic institutions, and hence political citizenship, will resonate with theories of different intellectual hues. The approach offers a framework within which very different designs can be compared and contrasted. This allows us to better understand how variations in institutional design can enhance or diminish political citizenship. A further pragmatic advantage of a goods-based framework is that it can accommodate most existing studies of institutions which tend to focus on a particular good, or combinations of goods. The goods-based approach provides an organizing framework for existing research and helps us to recognize where our knowledge base is limited.⁸

A second (not necessarily mutually exclusive) approach to the comparative analysis of democratic innovations could make use of recent developments in qualitative comparative analysis, in particular the work originally developed by Charles Ragin on Boolean algebra and more recently fuzzy-set analysis (Ragin 1987, 2000). While there is a range of case-study material on innovations available, the body of work is too small to undertake meaningful conventional statistical analysis. If dependent and independent variables can be well defined and measured, Ragin's methodological developments may provide insights into the varying conditions under which democratic innovations promote (or indeed inhibit) political citizenship. A recent report on empowerment strategies for the Department for Communities and Local Government indicates how such a comparative analysis of innovations might proceed (Pratchett *et al.* 2009). Whether such comparative analysis can be undertaken only *within* families of innovations (e.g. mini-publics or participatory budgets), or *across* families remains an open question.

One particular issue that hangs over studies of democratic innovations, and which is also ripe for comparative investigation, is the role that political leadership plays in embedding effective institutions. Democratic innovations do not appear fully formed. We have already noted that in Porto Alegre, for example, the Workers' Party mayor played a critical role in establishing PB. It takes a particular type of political leader to recognize the potential of participatory institutions and be willing to hand over significant powers to such bodies. In coming to some understanding of the nature of such leadership and the context in which it emerges, we will also have to account for the activities and actions of 'policy entrepreneurs' who promote and transfer knowledge of innovations. This would include those individuals and organizations that design and promote specific innovations – for example Carolyn Lukenseyer, the president and founder of America Speaks which promotes and organizes 21st Century Town Meetings; or James Fishkin, the designer of the deliberative poll – and international organizations, such as the World Bank, that transfer knowledge of emerging practices across continents. An overview of the take-up of innovations from around the world would give the impression that policy transfer has been effective and political leaders are embracing innovation (Smith 2005, 2009). However, forms of engagement promoted under the label PB, mini-public or e-democracy often do not merit that designation, with organizers or sponsors either purposely using these labels to pass off poor imitations (often to save money but gain kudos) or simply failing to understand the centrality of certain aspects of the institutional design. There is a real danger that these imitations will, in the long run, have a detrimental effect on public confidence in democratic innovations, further reinforcing political disillusionment amongst citizens. Understanding the political dynamics that lead to the effective institutionalization of democratic innovations is crucial.