# The Complementary Roles of Lay Citizens and Experts in Democratic Discussion[*]

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> There is this to be said for the many. Each of them by himself may not be of a good quality; but when they all come together it is possible that they may surpass—collectively and as a body, although not individually—the quality of the few best. Feasts to which many contribute may excel those provided at one man's expense. In the same way, when there are many [who contribute to the process of deliberation], each can bring his share of goodness and moral prudence; and when all meet together the people may thus become something in the nature of a single person, who—as he has many feet, many hands, and many senses—may also have many qualities of character and intelligence.
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> ——Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1281a-b

Political theory may not be a series of footnotes to Plato, but Plato certainly did a remarkable job of setting the stage. Even now, democratic theory, as a whole a repudiation of Plato's conclusions, is haunted by his metaphor of a skilled captain commanding the ship of state. Much of contemporary political theory can be understood as a voluntaristic repudiation of the very notion of political skill, issuing in attempts—often ironically conspiratorial in nature—to elaborate ever better justifications and strategies for mutiny. Most of the rest originates with those who continue to believe in some form of enlightenment. Their struggle has been to show how political intelligence can arise from a crew of democratic citizens—or at least be imparted to them. This remains a challenge—but not an insurmountable one, as I hope to show with a brief overview of the distinctive discursive work of the Interactivity Foundation.

The task of wedding enlightenment or intelligence to "rule by the many" is the mission of the Interactivity Foundation (IF). The primary purpose of this short essay will be to derive lessons from a cross section of four of IF's early deliberative projects. Two brief preliminary sections provide the necessary theoretical and operational context. IF identifies "intelligence" with a number of constituent elements, including: public-spiritedness; a full exploration of purposes, values, principles, and emotive orientations; foresight; a willingness to explore unchartered territory or examine old issues in new ways; an inclination to consider the wider consequences of policy; and the use of expert knowledge in a way that recognizes both its importance and its biases and limitations. We believe that all of these tend to be promoted by unhurried processes that allow individuals to express themselves fully. We go at the task consciously and very directly, by engaging both untrained lay citizens and "experts" in intense deliberation over the course of about two years. Our projects are far enough along that we can report some real successes, the most important of which is this: not only have our citizens learned from our experts, but they have learned from each other—and our experts have learned from our citizens. In other words, our projects provide case-study evidence that citizens can do more than learn, they can teach as well. Citizens and experts complement one another in the deliberative process.

### Theoretical Context—Reasons to Believe in Citizens' Deliberative Competence

There are plenty of reasons to believe that citizens can learn from and contribute to deliberation. Aristotle started us out with the most classic (and perhaps most compelling): a feast prepared by many is better than a feast prepared by one (see also Landemore, 2012). But there are many others.

- Those who bemoan the current or actual state of democratic citizens' ability to reason about politics cannot, without a great deal of theoretical effort of the kind they have generally been unwilling to undertake, explain why the status quo is a permanent feature of human affairs (Gundersen, 2000).

- When they do, the resulting "impossibility arguments" that purport to show that citizens are incapable of gaining from or contributing to deliberation—whether based on historical inevitability, philosophical maneuvering, psychological necessity, or sociological determinism—collapse under their own weight (see Gundersen, 2000; pp. 197-217).
- Meanwhile, despite the notoriously dismal portrait that emerges from survey research, more flexible methodologies like Q-sorts and interactive interviews show that citizens are capable not only of understanding complex political questions, but reasoning about them (Crittenden, 1992; Gundersen, 1995; Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2003).
- Those more positive empirical results shouldn't be all that surprising in the first place: however unflattering current portraits of the post-war American citizen, they hardly constitute a complete historical set, omitting from the photo album illustrious ancestors like the Athenians of Pericles' time, the Florentines of the 14th century, guild members of the 18th century, and the dense network of associations de Toqueville found here in the first part of the 19th century, among others.  (On this point see the voluminous historical works of Murray Bookchin, whose efforts to rejuvenate participatory democracy are to a great extent rooted in accounts of these and many other historical episodes.)
- The negative data also obscure the work of a cast of millions of contemporary grass roots political and civic activists—including the as yet uncounted moms who quit bowling leagues to organize and run soccer teams.
- A growing body of empirical research shows that citizens, when given the chance, make good use of the deliberative opportunities given them (Lewanski, 2013; Snider, 2008).
- In addition to the empirical and historical records, there are compelling theoretical reasons to think that citizens' current skills at political reason are highly contingent (these range from new insights into the plascticity of the human brain to the demonstrated impact of the mass media and education).
- More than that, the myriad institutions that we depend on for everything from air travel to dental hygiene embody an undeniable and very extensive element of ongoing political judgment on the part of "ordinary" citizens (Anderson, 1990; see also Mansbridge, 2012).
- Finally, there is epistemological humility.  As I wrote some years ago,

The logical corollary to the deliberative rule 'Keep the floor open' is 'Expand the number of participants in the argument.' Just as excluding propositions from consideration is an expression of unwarranted philosophical arrogance, admitting a wider range of propositions into an argument is an expression of justifiable philosophical humility. No proposition, however false, weakens the truth. All propositions, meanwhile, *might* be true (Gundersen, 2000; p. 38).

The list is lengthy—and, I think, weighty, both empirically and theoretically.  By describing our Foundation's work, I mean to expand it in both dimensions.

**Operational Context—Citizen and Expert Panels in IF Sanctuary and Public Discussions**

Being convinced that citizens can learn from and contribute to a deliberative process is one thing.  Seeing it actually happen is another.  And, in our case, along the way from the potential to the actual, choices regularly have to be made about how citizens will interact: with each other, with experts, and with the public.  This section explains what IF's two groups of project participants actually do, and why we have them do it that way.

**What IF's Citizen and Expert Panels Do**

The Interactivity Foundation's work consists of projects involving two intimately linked phases.  In the first, two carefully selected panels, one of professionals in a given field, the other of non-professionals, meet "in sanctuary" to explore a selected area of social concern and develop a series of contrasting governance possibilities to address it.  The two panels meet separately for about a year and a half on a monthly basis and then come together for a briefer series of joint sanctuary meetings during which the they fuse their respective work products.  (In all, each panelist will spend 60-100 hours deliberating in sanctuary.)  In the second, "going public" phase, groups in the wider community use the materials generated by the experts and lay citizens working in sanctuary as starting points for discussions of their own—discussions that have, incidentally, turned out to be highly successful in promoting learning and civic behavior (Gundersen, 2006; on the later point, see Gundersen & Lea, 2013: chapter 5).

**Expected Complementarity of Expert and Citizen Panels**

The IF Discussion Process was the result of lengthy reflection, a significant portion of which was devoted to the question of how best to select participants. From the start, the reasoning behind using two panels, one of experts, the other of lay citizens, was that (1) each would be subject to certain limitations and that (partly—but not only—for that reason) (2) each would make different and complementary contributions to the Discussion Process and, hence, to the final discussion materials that would serve as the basic for later public discussions.

The elements that went into this reasoning are condensed in the Table 1, below, which isolates some of the reasons we expected—and selected for—differences in our two groups of panelists.

| | **Lay Citizens** | **Experts** |
|---|---|---|
| **Motive(s) for participating** | (1) Personal interest <br> (2) Lay understanding of the public good | (1) Personal interest <br> (2) Professional understanding of the public good <br> (3) Efficiency (as defined by discipline and institutional setting) |
| **Contribution(s)** | (1) enhance democratic participation <br> (2) creativity <br> (3) ability to see broader picture | (1) empirical and theoretical knowledge <br> (2) knowledge of conventional ethical options <br> (3) rigor |
| **Likeliest Limitation(s)** | (1) overly optimistic <br> (2) unwillingness to consider radical alternatives (due to lack of familiarity with ethical options, and/or "inflexible thinking"*) <br> (3) inability to work as a team <br> (4) lack of knowledge/rigor <br> (5) lack of interest | (1) overly conservative <br> (2) unwillingness to consider radical alternatives (due to instrumental thinking, entrenched positions and/or inflexible thinking) <br> (3) unwillingness to recognize and incorporate values into alternatives |

## Table 1.  Lay Citizen and Expert Panelists Compared

*An intentionally generic label, for which may be substituted any number of Anthropological, political and/or psychological terms.

In the terminology of the table, we expected the lay citizens to complement the "experts" tendency to be (1) conservative (2) value-blind, and (3) bound by disciplinary and institutional setting. How?  --By contributing thinking that would tend to exhibit (1) creativity (2) breadth of view, and (3) an interest in promoting the public good, broadly conceived.

Conversely, we expected the experts to complement the lay citizens by countering their tendency to be (1) overly optimistic (2) uninformed by empirical and theoretical knowledge, and (3) less than rigorous. How? By contributing a measure of realism, knowledge, and rigor.

These distinctions are captured, if incompletely and imperfectly, by the labels I chose for my own first IF panelists: "Generalist" and "Specialist." Generalists have a broad view (in the specific sense that they are liable to cast their view widely and look for connections between things). Moreover, they aren't wed to particular ways of seeing things. They are, in that respect, relatively "disinterested." Like "experts" they can fall prey to conservatism (point 5 in the table), but because they lack the "discipline" of training (or the "interest" that led to it in the first place), on the one hand, or professional or personal experience, on the other, they are on the whole less likely to limit their vision in this way.

To sum up, then, our expectation was that each group would contribute three distinct attributes to the process:

1. the "things" they know or see (general v. specific)
2. how they see connections between the things they know or see (general v. specific)
3. a perspective on what they view as important in the picture that results from the things they know or see and the connections they see between them (general v. specific).

Note that our expectation was not simply that citizens are capable of deliberation, but rather that *lay citizens* have something *of their own* to contribute to deliberation—namely, an orientation to the general. If we were right, Plato had been gotten it precisely backwards: generalists are to be found not among the academic elite, but among the *hoi polloi*.

That said, it's important to emphasize before moving on that I the remainder of this report is confined largely to what lay citizen panelists have contributed to our deliberative work. A more systematic discussion would include a parallel discussion of the experts' contributions, as well as a careful analysis of the way in which these two sets of contributions intersected and interacted. But first things first, and that means contributing to the case for lay citizens' deliberative competence. Showing its synergies with expertise—though it reinforces that case—will have to wait for another day.

One final note. IF does not presume to be able to define the membership of our panels rigidly. We fully anticipate that some individuals will display characteristics typical of both. As applied to the citizen group in particular, the larger theoretical point is that although we expected *special contributions* from the citizens, we expected that some citizen panelists might be capable of doing all the things the experts did, as well.

**Four Case Studies in Lay & Expert Discursive Complementarity**

Asking whether the lay and expert panels made complementary contributions to earliest round of four projects—on privacy, biotechnology, depression, and retirement—is really to ask two related questions:

1. Did they make complementary contributions to the Discussion *Process*?
2. Did they make complementary contributions to the Staff Work *Product*?

Those questions can in turn be analyzed using five different lenses, each representing a different *perspective*, ranging from that of the panelists themselves to that of the public who is the ultimate subject and object of the Staff Work the panels are charged to develop. But despite some differences, the same general conclusion emerged from all five perspectives—and it is very encouraging. All indicators are that we do seem to have succeeded in eliciting strong—and complementary—contributions from our citizen-generalists.

**I. Project Participants' Comments and Interactions**

*Process*. Because IF's mission is primarily a practical rather than a scholarly one, we have not been systematic in gathering input from our panelists. Moreover, until the latter stage of our projects, the two sets of panelists are intentionally kept separate, making it difficult for our citizen-generalists to compare their contributions with those of the expert group. Nevertheless, unsolicited comments are a regular feature of all IF project sessions, and these have regularly revealed that citizen-generalist panelists themselves have had a clear sense that they were contributing something valuable to our Discussion Process.

A perhaps more telling indicator of the degree to which deliberation can create a positive role for the non-expert came, ironically, in the context of my expert-specialist panel, one of whose members had felt none too special as the project began. Later she volunteered, however that:

> This has been incredible. . . . a transformative experience. I doubted I was in these people's class, because they were all so well educated. Like F.—she is a really 'big wheel.' But now I find myself being able to communicate with them. Everyone is learning that they have their own expertise. W. is not shy anymore. Things come out of my mouth that I can't believe.

These spontaneous comments were validated later in my own project on the one occasion on which I specifically asked panelists to reflect on their project experiences. None of the most frequently repeated comments indicated that either citizen-generalists or expert-specialists had any lack of confidence in their own competence. On the contrary, there was widespread agreement among panelists in both groups that, among other things,

- the interactivity with their peers had been supportive and constructive
- the Discussion Process was effective
- Panelists greatly enjoyed the opportunity to explore the area of concern and possible responses to it.

We can also report directly on how the two groups have interacted—an even more revealing indicator of the degree to which they have judged themselves to have made complementary contributions. The first thing to note is that there has been almost *no* effort on the part of *any* of our expert-specialists to exclude citizen-generalists from the joint panel process *nor* a willingness on the part of any our citizen-generalists to acquiesce or defer to the expert-specialists. Indeed, in my own project, the expert-specialist panel even decided to radically alter its approach to one of the key themes of its work after nearly a year and a half's work on the subject *in direct response to what it saw as the superior reasoning of the citizen-generalist panel*. (Our sense is that this is at least partly the result of the length and nature of the IF Process, which we believe results in a productive combination of—or complementarity between—learned competence on the part of citizens and learned humility on the part of expert-specialists. If so, lay citizens' competence might be characterized as at least partly potential. It is no less real for being so, however.)

Another remarkable indicator of panelists' own sense of complementarity occurred during our initial set of joint panel meetings. More than one panelist from the expert-specialist group went out of the way not simply to welcome the citizen-generalists' input, but to offer an explanation as to why it was so important, saying that professional policy analysts need to have their conclusions and speculations checked by the people they are intended to benefit. (Aristotelians reading this will no doubt be happy to learn that this sort of caterer is still in business.)

*Product.* At least as important as citizen-generalists' satisfaction with the project as a whole has been the near total *absence* of expressed concern about whether they are doing "as good a job" as the expert-specialist panel. Working separately for nearly a year and a half, both panels did wonder on a regular basis about the pace of the other group, and about the number of governance possibilities it was generating—but never about their *relative quality*.

Once joint panel sessions began, it was clear that citizen-generalist panelists believed in their own work product and were prepared to explore and explain it where necessary. They were hardly ready to simply substitute the work of the expert-specialists for their own, even where there was substantial overlap between the governance possibilities the two separate panels had generated.

As if to put an exclamation mark on this point, my own series of 46 sanctuary meetings concluded with a spontaneous affirmation of complementarity—by an expert-specialist, no less. As I wrote immediately after the meeting

> The general mood tonight was part accomplishment, part amazement. The two were clearly linked, since the amazement was rooted in a clear grasp of the interactivity responsible for [the Panelists'] accomplishment. 'I sometimes wonder who came up with this…' I recall one Panelist saying. Another said: 'It's a good thing—this document bears no individual imprints' (Internal IF memo; June 17, 2004).

Thus, without being coached—most of the time without even being asked—panelists themselves articulated, analyzed, and acted on the belief that citizen-generalists and expert-specialists had important roles to play in our deliberative process.

## II. Project Facilitators' Observations

All four project leaders have been impressed with their citizen panelists. And, despite the differences in project topic, location, participants, and facilitator techniques, the reasons have largely conformed to our original expectations. Citizens have shown their competence to deal with the governance aspects of even our most technical substantive area—biotechnology. As the director of that project reported,

> The experts have had some concerns about the capacity of lay citizens to engage in meaningful policy discussions for this technical area, so this is a case where the proof will be in the pudding; the experts will see that here a small group of lay citizens have actually done just that. This will likely be energizing for both panels—and provide a more accurate and optimistic sense of the prospects for taking the project public, for encouraging more such discussions among lay and expert citizens alike (IF Internal memo; July 23, 2004).

*Process*. Project facilitators also noted that the two panels in all four cases came together seamlessly and worked constructively, surpassing even our best hopes. Citizen-specialist listened to and learned from their expert-specialist counterparts. More to the point here, the opposite was true, as well.

Observations of the individual contribution of citizen-generalists have been nearly uniform as well. By comparison with their expert-specialist counterparts, citizen-generalists have, on all accounts, been

- Less easily diverted by details, more focused on broad conceptual issues
- Less easily distracted by instrumental concerns, more willing to explore normative questions and develop answers to them
- More willing to "think outside the box", i.e., they have been less interested in fixing immediate flaws in policy, more interested in re-thinking policy possibilities anew.

Another finding: our citizen-generalists have helped us keep the public discussion materials that they generate transparent by insisting that we eliminate jargon, and use "plain English" where possible and the right kind of nuanced phrasing where it isn't. This was an unanticipated but not unimportant benefit, directly contributing as it did to the potential usefulness of our discussion guides in stimulating and enriching public discussion.

*Product*. According to all of the project facilitators involved, the sanctuary discussion phase yielded products that represented a genuine fusion of the work of both of the separate panels. Neither of the individual panels in any of the projects can be said to have contributed "more" than the other to the discussion guides that resulted from the projects, guides that have proved their worth in numerous subsequent public discussions (Gundersen & Lea, 2013: chapter 5).

At least in the early going, the citizen-generalists' contributions to these results were perhaps most acutely apparent in my own case, since I had been researching a book on the project topic nearly full time for about a year and a half prior to beginning the panel discussions, and so considered myself something of an expert on the topic. My goal in the book was not very different from what we were asking the panel to do: explore depression as a socio-political rather a purely medical phenomenon and think of broader and more innovative ways of combating it. After only eight three-hour sessions, this panel of seven citizen-generalists had far surpassed my own thinking, despite lacking my policy and theory background and the work I had put into this particular subject. As I wrote at the time:

> The book on depression that I was working on as I joined IF was going to be an attempt to correct what I saw as the overly individual approach our society has taken to this area of concern. But this Panel has gone beyond anything I'd thought of in terms of a response based on "significant others," added an entirely new way of thinking about what a social response might mean (community rather than significant others), developed an economic perspective, and rethought just what an individual response might mean. All that, and a national health care system, too. Count me one "public intellectual" who's learned first hand the value of working directly with the public's intellect (Internal IF memo, July 17, 2003).

These judgments have since been confirmed by time in my own project and by my colleagues' experience in theirs. We had high expectations going into the projects. But we have all been not only happy with the results, but often surprised, and occasionally mildly euphoric.

And at least as often as not, those positive reactions have been in response to the contributions our citizen-generalist panelists have made to the evolving work product—the natural corollaries of the process contributions discussed in the preceding section. In significant measure due to the influence of the citizen-generalists, the emerging work product of the various Foundation projects has been

- rich in conceptual exploration
- wide ranging in its consideration of normative options—and their consequences to people in all walks of life
- innovative, even inventive.

In short, my sense is that we have come to view our citizen-generalist panels as less a drag on the process than or hurt the work product in any way. On the contrary, we increasingly see them as an invaluable, if not indispensable, asset.

## III. Project Supervisors' Evaluations

IF is a very interactive organization internally. Consequently, two supervisors have guided the projects, monitoring progress and discussing suggestions along the way. Their views provide a third perspective on the panelists' work.

*Product*. I am reversing the order of the other sections here because this one contains an apparent anomaly that I think can be resolved in the next. The anomaly is this: Those supervising the projects were struck less by the differences in the two panels' work product than by their similarities. The consistent reaction to the reports being submitted by project leaders was that the two panels were arriving at very similar sets of governance possibilities. Although this view strongly supports a belief in citizen competence, it appears to be an anomaly, for it calls into question the notion of complementarity.

Although real, I think this difference is primarily one of emphasis. My sense is that all four facilitators would admit to significant overlap in their respective panels' work products, while our supervisors would agree that there are distinctive elements, as well. (For example, they have noted how the expert-specialists have in general tended to move away from disciplinary and professional formulae and how the citizen-generalists increasingly belied the stereotype of partisan bickering as the sanctuary process unfolded.) But there is also something more subtle at work here. If we return now to the use the two panels made of the IF discussion process, the apparent anomaly is lessened, if not wholly eliminated.

*Process*. Those who developed and oversaw the Discussion Process expected the two panels to use it differently. And their expectation was largely fulfilled, according to their own regular reports. Complementarity between citizen-generalists and expert-specialists here returns at the level of process. What is indeed fascinating is that, from the standpoint of those reading the panels' work at one remove, the different ways the two panels made use of the same discussion process should lead to such similar results.

If what project facilitators have seen can be summed up by the phrase "Different routes to different governance possibilities", what those keeping track of our work have seen might be summed up by the phrase "Different routes to similar governance possibilities." Even if the second of these descriptions turns out to be more accurate upon closer inspection of our project records, it would provide further evidence that our citizen-generalists have "performed" equally as well as their expert-specialist counterparts—and thus would lend still further support to a belief in citizens' deliberative

## 1V. Summary of Results

Taken together, these sets of observations repeatedly and solidly confirm what we had expected from the citizen-generalists. They confirm our expectations repeatedly in the sense that they are drawn from nine different perspectives on four different panel projects, each numbering upwards of 60 hours of discussion among about a dozen panelists. (Although I don't mean this to be taken too literally, that's a lot of data and inter-coder reliability.) And they confirm our expectations solidly in the sense that the *way* the citizen-generalists contributed was generally by taking a broader view of the subject than their expert-specialist counterparts.

One of IF's chief activities is to generate policy possibilities capable of enhancing subsequent public discussion. What we're finding along the way is that one of the brightest possibilities of all is expanding the citizens' role in public deliberation.

**Conclusion—On the Significance of These Four Case Studies**

I said earlier that all our panelists are carefully selected for their potential to contribute to our discussion process. This may lead some to accuse us of a sampling bias—a clear methodological red flag if ever there was one: "Of course *some* citizens can deliberate," it will be objected, "but IF's projects exclude those who can't from the start." I conclude with five responses to this objection.

*First*, the results of IF's projects are not intended to be reproducible, strictly speaking. Each set of participants is unique; different participants would almost certainly have arrived at different results. However, there is a great deal of consistency across the projects: *all four projects* described above showed that citizen-generalists have important things to say and make important contributions to the resulting work product. And all four projects showed this in a variety of ways.

*Second*, IF's projects are *experiments*, intended to (among other things) test the hypothesis that small groups of citizen-generalists are capable of making important deliberative contributions. What they forfeit in breadth is gained by the depth of the insight they provide into this hypothesis. They "confirm" the hypothesis not by demonstrating that it applies to the mass of American citizens, but by demonstrating *how well* it applied to four separate groups of six individuals.

*Third*, although deliberative skill and diverse points of view—not representativeness—were and are our primary goals in recruiting panelists (Gundersen, 2006), the citizen-generalist panels almost inevitably ended up being reasonably diverse demographically. For example, my own citizen-generalist panel—with only six members—represented

- an even balance of men and women
- a spread of ages from seventeen to sixty-five
- a mix of work experiences (nurse, high school student, taxi driver/writer, counselor/social worker, teacher, and an individual living primarily on disability)
- a variety of health status and health care options
- a wide range of political orientations, ranging from classical conservatism to non-partisan and from there to populism and what used to be called the new left
- a measure of racial diversity (one panelist was Hispanic; an African American participant was forced to drop out when her job moved).

Similar diversity was a side-effect of the selection process in the other three projects as well. Further diversity resulted from the fact that the four projects were organized and run in different regions of the country: one in rural Maryland and Washington D.C.; a second in Madison, Wisconsin; a third entirely in Washington, D.C.; and a fourth in upstate New York in the vicinity of Rochester.

*Fourth*, let's not forget that self-fulfilling prophesies cut both ways. Tell citizens they're incapable of deliberation and they may start to believe it—especially if they have the proper reverence for social science. Ask them to deliberate, as we have done, and they may well deliver.

*Fifth*, impressionistic evidence from IF's 20 later projects provides little or no reason to question the analysis presented here. On the contrary, we expect that more systematic scrutiny of our projects as a whole will only reinforce our confidence in citizen competence.

Ultimately, what is at issue is not whether John and Jane Q. Public deliberate, but whether they *can* deliberate *given the right circumstances* (Gastil and Keith, 2005; Lewanski, 2013). The circumstances we created for our citizen-generalists seem to have been helpful: our panelists were able to use our discussion process to deliberate as they started the projects; they were better at it as they finished their work. As one of my colleagues observed, the change was extended beyond the subject matter of the project itself:

> The citizens initially expressed greater hesitancy in speaking about public policy concerns for genetic technologies, since they felt they were unqualified to do so. […] [But] panelists adapted to this approach and exhibited increasing levels of confidence in their ability to discuss public policy issues in general—and as pertaining to such a technical area. […] The panelists seemed to realize that these were not technical discussions of things beyond their expertise, but 'political' discussions about how the technology should be governed, an area where they, as democratic citizens, were competent to make decisions. […] They seem to become more self-assured democratic citizens, more confident in their ability and right to discuss public policy concerns in general. At times this emerged in tangential comments that would be made when discussing the topical area, and at times it emerged in the informal discussions that unfolded during the discussion breaks—where the content of discussion changed over time from casual small-talk to other political issues (IF Internal memo; July 23, 2004).

Other citizens, including ones we haven't selected, can do the same. Or they can find other circumstances that will help them deliberate. Or they can create them.

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