

**PROCEEDINGS
of the
First International
Mary Parker Follett Conversation
on Creative Democracy**

October 17-20, 2002

Boise, Idaho

**Sponsored by the Mary Parker Follett Foundation, Inc.
and
the Boise State University Department of Sociology**

Participants in the Follett Conversation 2002

Yvette Arts – Provo, Utah

Tom Atlee – Eugene, Oregon

Shelby Berkowitz – Lansing, Michigan

Martha Dede – Los Angeles, California

Chris Francovich – Post Falls, Idaho

Juergen Hansen – Summerland, British Columbia

John Kesler – Salt Lake City, Utah

Suzanne McCorkle – Boise, Idaho

Margo Menconi – Berwyn Heights, Maryland

Marti Monroe – Eagle, Idaho

Rick Morse – Blacksburg, Virginia

Jim Pelikan – Cleveland, Ohio

Adin Rogovin – Eugene, Oregon

Carole Schwinn – Brooklyn, Michigan

David Schwinn – Brooklyn, Michigan

Matthew Shapiro – Boise, Idaho

Nancy Winitzky – Salt Lake City, Utah

About the Mary Parker Follett Foundation, Inc.

The Mary Parker Follett Foundation was established in order to meet a critical need in our time: the need for people of all societies and of all means to be able to actively participate in the evolution of their selves, their lives, and their world. In a time of complexity, change, and conflict, it is essential that the individual and the community together learn what they mean to each other. It is equally essential that difference become recognized as the source of relationship and of creation. The Foundation is dedicated to fostering core competencies for the 21st century that will allow individuals and communities to flourish in their present and to ensure the same opportunity for future generations.

The Foundation has its roots in the Idaho Systems Institute, which was established in 1996. The focus of the Institute was the promotion of systems thinking – a view of the world that recognizes the interrelationships between all things – and the participatory design of social systems. These remain central to the work of the Foundation. Among the organization’s early accomplishments was the development of a comprehensive program of community-based education reform. The Institute was also successful in advocating the reissuing of Mary Parker Follett’s seminal work *The New State*.

In the years 2000-2001, there emerged a new long-term vision for the organization. This vision focuses us on several “core competencies for the 21st century,” which are described in greater depth on this site. The organization would shift from an emphasis on internally generated projects and look toward becoming a funding vehicle for the good initiatives of others. The geographic focus would become global. And the organization would take on a new name, choosing to honor and to reflect the spirit of Progressive Era social, political and management thinker and community worker Mary Parker Follett (1868-1933).

Foundation Areas of Interest

Learning Democracy

Democracy is less a means of governing than it is a mode of living in the world. The capacity for self-determined individuals to produce and act upon a will in common is essential to fulfilling both the true individual and the authentic community. The evident lack of this capacity in our world suggests that much more is required than structures that nominally provide opportunity for citizen input. Fulfilling the promise of creative democracy requires attitudes and skills that must be cultivated and exercised in the course of normal human learning and development.

This kind of learning will take generations to foster, and must take place at the most elementary levels of the home, the school, and the neighborhood. The Learning Democracy program will provide support to initiatives that contribute to the cultivation of democratic attitudes and personal skills at these elementary levels. The program will also support the development of new institutions that can afford greater opportunities for democratic interaction and learning.

Participatory Design of Social Systems

In many senses we live through our public institutions, corporate endeavors, and other human activity systems. We are dependent upon our systems of education, health, justice, governance, and economy. Unfortunately, these institutions and organizations have become separated from the individuals that they serve. They can become opaque, rigid, and distant. They seem to take on a life of themselves that is divorced from our aspirations and the needs of the environment in which they are embedded. The values and beliefs that underlie the system become fuzzy or opaque. There is no conversation about the very nature and purpose of the institution. Stakeholders – those affected by the system – are not involved in their design. In times of change, the institutions become unresponsive, and the result is chronic crisis in community that is often mistaken as a problem inside the system requiring simple adjustment.

The Foundation is committed to building literacy and competence in the participatory design of social systems. *Design* is defined in this context as a disciplined, creative, decision-oriented process by which the stakeholders in a system – everyone who serves, is served by, and is affected by that system – create the system that fits their aspirations and the needs of the environment in which it is embedded. This kind of design is continuous and involves democratic openness, dialogue, and idealization. It is proactive, creative, and ultimately human. The participatory design of social systems is a new kind of experience for our society, but it is one that may be essential for life in coming decades.

Dialogue as Community Reflection

Our experience of reality is constantly mediated by assumptions, many of them hidden. They are carried in the language in which we think, and in the images that form the glasses of perception that we wear. Yet it is rare that we *think about our thinking*. The results can be disastrous. One problem is that our view of the world remains fixed in a fragmented state. When we are then confronted with differences in values, beliefs, or ideas, we do not appreciate it as an opportunity. Instead, we too often seek to deny or to destroy the difference. It is in this way that conflict takes on negative and pathological forms such as war, which can be seen in microcosm in our own homes and cities.

Another problem with the lack of reflection upon the assumptions that shape our perceptions – particularly the lack of this experience in a social context – is that it maintains the sense that what goes on “out there” in the world is separate from what we think and do in our daily lives. In order to break down this barrier, to empower people individually and collectively, to advance the recognition of difference as opportunity for learning and creation, and to keep culture “fresh,” the Foundation advocates and supports the experience of *dialogue* at the ultra-local level: neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. If dialogue as community reflection can become a regular and organic part of everyday life, it will go a long way toward reducing the fragmentation in our lives and in our world.

Evolutionary Inquiry

During the 20th century, developments in the biological, physical, and social sciences allowed for the emergence of a new kind of knowledge: the understanding of patterns of irreversible, unpredictable, transformative change that are common to all complex systems, whether physical, chemical, biological, psychological, socio-cultural, ecological, or cosmic. The inquiry into these patterns, sometimes called General Evolution Theory or Evolutionary Systems Theory, is best exemplified by the work of scientists and thinkers like Kenneth Boulding, Ilya Prigogine, Ervin Laszlo, Jonas Salk, and Bela H. Banathy. Evolutionary Inquiry has opened new opportunities for an integrated understanding of the world. It has also led to new questions, and potential answers, about the dynamics of our era and the meaning of our lives. It may also, therefore, be related to the choices that we make today.

This area of interest has two integrated aspects: General Evolution Theory and Evolutionary Advocacy and Activism. General Evolution Theory contributes to the fostering of evolutionary consciousness – an understanding of our position and role in a journey that goes beyond our own lifetimes. Evolutionary Advocacy and Activism refers to the skills, tools, movements, and new types of human organization that can enable the conscious *co*-evolution of cultures toward greater harmony with the evolution of the individuals who make them up and with the environments in which they are embedded. It is closely related to democratic experience. The Foundation recognizes Evolutionary Inquiry as a core competency for the 21st century, and will support its advancement.

The Mary Parker Follett Conversation on Creative Democracy

Most individuals feel powerless to affect the world around them, yet it is their daily decisions and acts that ultimately drive local, national and global policy. What can be done about this paradox in a world of complexity and conflict?

The annual Mary Parker Follett Conversation on Creative Democracy is concerned with the following question: **how can we fulfill the promise of democracy as a creative experience, one that releases both personal and social potential, from the local to the global level?**

Named after the Progressive Era visionary in the field of democratic thought and practice, this unusual conference brings together people from all disciplines whose approach to human relations, community building, public affairs and management are based on integrated diversity and continuous creativity among stakeholders. The team-based conversation format provides an enriching participatory experience that produces new knowledge, new goals, initiatives and impetus.

Conversation Format

Unlike workshop-based conferences or those focused on the presentation of papers, the Follett Conversation uses a team-based, disciplined conversation format. The format works as follows:

1. Individuals or groups propose themes to pursue. These are circulated to the body of people who've expressed interest in attending, and teams begin to self-organize.
2. Teams of participants interested in exploring topics together begin their dialogue several months prior to the conference, via e-mail. Papers may be exchanged during this preparatory phase.
3. At the conference event itself, participants engage in dialogue for several days and present their findings, ideas, or initiatives in a plenary session at the close of the conference. Presentations can be formal or technical, but creative and artistic presentations are encouraged as well.
4. Teams may continue through to the next year, with original or new participants, or they conclude their work.
5. Several months after the conference, final team and individual papers are published online in Follett Conversation Proceedings. Selected papers may also be published in a cooperating journal or journals.

This approach – modeled after the experience of the Asilomar and Fuschl Conversations on Social Systems Design – is a desirable alternative to the conventional conference format because it supports integrated diversity, produces much more mutual learning and new knowledge, and

builds long-lasting networks. It also represents a recognition that the most interesting part of typical conferences has been the conversations that occur in doorways, in hallways, and over coffee and meals between presentations.

Teams Proposed and Teams Organized in 2002

*Teams in **bold** came together for the 2002 Conversation*

- A: Community-Based Non-Profits as the Vehicles for Follettian/Pragmatic Democracy
- B: Designing a Community Learning System for Creative Democracy**
- C: Visualising Post-Hierarchical Leadership**
- D: The Perpetuation of Creativity for Creative Democracy
- E: Creative Democracy through Virtual Interaction?
- F: Fostering Democratic Leadership in Emerging and Challenged Democracies
- G: Bringing to Life Lasswell's Vision of the Social Planetarium
- H: Understanding Community Learning**
- I: Addressing Power Dynamics and Inequities in Democratic Dialogue

Team B Report

Giving Birth to a Learning Democracy

*You must give birth to your images.
They are the future waiting to be born.*

Rainier Maria Rilke

The image of Follettville described in this concept paper was brought forth by an emerging learning democracy “community of practice” during the Mary Parker Follett Foundation’s Conversation on Creative Democracy, held in Boise, Idaho from October 17-20, 2002. The members of the community include:

Tom Atlee
The Co-Intelligence Institute
1680 Walnut Street
Eugene, OR 97403
cii@igc.org

Adin Rogovin
1680 Walnut Street
Eugene, OR 97403
adin@trimtab.net

Martha Dede
California State University/Long Beach
Graduate Center for Public Policy and
Administration – 111120
1250 Bellflower Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90840-4603
mdede@csulb.edu

Carole Schwinn
The Berkana Institute
14913 Oak Lane
Brooklyn, MI 49230
carole@berkana.org

Juergen Hansen
The Green Group Consultants
R.R. 4, Site 106, Camp 16
Summerland, BC, Canada V0H 1Z0
commonsproject@vip.net

David Schwinn
Praxis People
14913 Oak Lane
Brooklyn, MI 49230
schwinnd@lcc.edu

John Kesler
2733 Parleys Way, #300
Salt Lake City, UT 84109
J_kesler@woodburycorp.com

Nancy Winitzky
730 3rd Avenue
Salt Lake City, UT 84103
winitzky@ed.utah.edu

Suzanne McCorkle
Boise State University
P.O. Box 6350
Boise, ID 83707
smccork@boisestate.edu

Giving Birth to a Learning Democracy

Welcome to Follettville, the first true learning democracy in the world!

I. The Learning Democracy Community of Practice

The members of the Learning Democracy community of practice came together via an invitation to participate in the Mary Parker Follett Foundation's *First International Conversation on Creative Democracy*, held in Boise, ID from October 17-20, 2003. Coming from a variety of fields and experience, the members responded to the challenging question posed by the Foundation: "How can we fulfill the promise of democracy as a creative experience, one that releases both personal and social potential, from the local to the global level?"

In preparation for the Follett experience, the community organized around a triggering question of its own: "How can a learning system be designed that will evoke the individual and collective capacities required for a new, vibrant, democratic way of life in the places we live?" Issues to be considered by the community included:

What is going on in the world that makes learning democracy the most urgent social project of our times? How can the places we live become powerful practice fields for learning democracy? What is the role of our existing institutions – education, healthcare, government, churches, and private enterprise? What new social enterprises might be needed to increase civic agency? What can we learn from organizations and communities that are already moving in this direction? What would an ideal learning system for evoking vibrant democracies at the local level look like? What new civic competencies would it elicit? What would be different in the community that would be worth emulating elsewhere? (excerpted from the "Team B" proposal to the Foundation)

The product of the community's work at the Boise conference, a design for Follettville is offered here as the first iteration of a work in process, as an invitation to contribution and experimentation by those who are working in their own communities on behalf of learning and participation, and as an inspiration to those who dream of a better way of being and doing together in the places they live.

The intention of the learning democracy community of practice is to generate ever deeper and more explicit design iterations of Follettville, in order to enrich its members' work in the world, and to enhance the emerging field of learning democracy.

II. Integrating Inspiration, Insight and Experience

A starting place for the work of the community of practice in Boise began with each member's sharing of the inspirations, insights, and experiences that have most influenced their own work and thinking about the concept of learning democracies. From this sharing and a common framework of understanding of the work of Mary Parker Follett (see Appendix), the community hoped to derive an evolving set of principles and guidelines for the design of an "ideal," place-based learning democracy. Members' contributions included:

Patterns for Healthy Communities

The 7 Patterns for Healthy Communities listed below are based on the results of hundreds of dialogues, sponsored by the Coalition for Healthy Cities and Communities, and an extensive, collaborative, nation-wide effort to interpret them. According to reports on these patterns, a healthier community is "not just some random outcome. It is instead the result of caring, committed individuals joining together in an ambitious joint effort. And where this 'joining together' is most successful, there is a discovery and experience of common patterns." The challenge, the researchers suggest, is to transform these patterns into practices (see www.communityinitiatives.com/7pattern.html).

A healthy community:

1. Practices ongoing dialogue
2. Embraces diversity
3. Shapes its future
4. Knows itself
5. Generates leadership everywhere
6. Connects people and resources
7. Creates a sense of community

Ken Wilbur's Quadrants

Wilbur's Quadrants offer one way of seeing the whole (or what Wilbur calls *holons* or whole/parts that evolve over time). All holons, according to Wilbur, have four dimensions (the internal, external, individual and collective), four types of truths or validity claims (truth, truthfulness, justness, and functional fit), and four "faces" (intentional, behavioral, cultural, and social).

	Internal	External
Individual	The "I" Intentional Truth	The "It" Behavioral Truthfulness
Collective	The "We" Cultural Justness	The "It" Social Functional Fit

From Ken Wilbur's [A Brief History of Everything](#), summarized at www.zentraveler.com/FavoriteArt/Wilbur.htm

Interactive Design

Interactive Design is a methodology for designing and managing social systems (as differentiated from mechanical and biological systems), developed by Russell Ackoff and Jamshid Gharajedaghi, who have also formulated a systems theory and a systems philosophy (see Gharajedaghi, [Systems Thinking](#)). Ackoff and Gharajedaghi describe five dimensions of a social system, all of which interact to produce development in a social system (as differentiated from growth). Development is defined as "increasing desire and ability to meet our own needs, the needs of others, and the needs of the larger systems of which we are a part." The methodology is an iterative, dialogic process in which designers increase depth and explicitness at each iteration, resulting in shared understanding or social learning. Each iteration of designing a social system includes consideration of context (or containing systems), purpose, function, structure and processes (for learning, measurement and decision-making).

(See also www.interactdesign.com/methodology.html)

Idealized Design

Idealized Design is an approach to social systems design developed by Bela Banathy, which is also based on systems theory and philosophy. Banathy's approach is an integration of methodologies developed by Ackoff, Gerald Nadler, et al. Banathy has described design as "The Third Culture (after science and humanities), which addresses the question, "What should be?" Banathy's definition of design is a "disciplined, creative, decision-oriented inquiry by which the

stakeholders bring forth the system that exhibits goodness of fit with their aspirations and the environment in which it is embedded.” The approach has three stages:

- *Transcending*, in which the stakeholders leap out of “what is” into an idealized image of the desired beliefs, values, principles and assumptions
- *Envisioning*, in which stakeholders apply the image to design of a specified social system
- *Transforming*, in which stakeholders act to move from the “what is” to the “what should be”

Consensus-based Facilitated Roundtables

This approach, developed by Juergen and Marilyn Hansen, came out of a need for people and institutions to dialogue and work toward sustainability in the province of British Columbia. The approach is based on the Hansen’s field experiences and ten principles developed by the Canadian Round Tables for Environment and Economy. These principles suggest that round tables are purpose-driven, inclusive, voluntary, self-designed, flexible, offer equal opportunity, respect diverse interests, require accountability, and include time limits and commitments to implementation. The Hansen’s add two other principles, “a level playing field so that everyone has the same change to contribute to a solution, and fairness toward all participants so that everybody can join and negotiate with a good conscience, knowing that the process does not lend itself to biased decisions.”

The Consensus-based Facilitated Roundtable approach is a structured six step process using dialogic methods, including: Vision; Agenda; Analysis; Brainstorming for Options; Options’ Evaluation; and Decision. (See Hansen, Jurgen and Marilyn, “Getting to Consensus: A hands-on guide to running sustainability facilitated round tables”)

Citizen Deliberative Councils

A citizen deliberative council, as named by Tom Atlee, is a temporary group of citizens who reflect the diversity of the population, officially convened to deliberate on public concerns and provide guidance for officials and the public. (See co-intelligence.org/P-CDCs.html) These official, temporary councils are often made up of between 12-50 randomly selected stakeholders, representing a fair, diverse cross-section, who deliberate as peers using facilitated, dialogic processes, and issue findings and/or recommendations to concerned officials and the larger community. Most often, additional community dialogues are then organized around the report or findings. Numerous examples and models for CDC’s exist, including the Danish Parliament’s Board of Technology, citizens’ juries, German planning cells, wisdom councils, and citizen panels.

Atlee also suggests seven principles that “nurture wise democratic process and collective intelligence in public participation:” 1) include all relevant perspectives; 2) empower the

people's engagement; 3) invoke multiple forms of knowing; 4) ensure high quality dialogue; 5) establish ongoing participatory processes; 6) use positions and proposals as grist; and, 7) help people feel fully heard.

Additional contributions from the community included a discussion of socialism as an economic theory that addresses issues of the distribution of power and wealth, and the idea that barriers to participation, including will, needs/fears, and capacities need to be transformed in order for learning democracy to come about. Suzanne McCorkle addressed the question, "If learning communities joined by democracy are such a compelling idea, why haven't individuals collectively moved toward these concepts (i.e, what keeps people from working it out on their own)? If Follettville is to be an inclusive community, the barriers to participation must be examined and methods constructed to involve all persons who might choose to be involved.

Generally, three interlocking barrier clusters should be addressed:

1. Lack of will. Individuals may resist a move toward a learning democracy because of a lack of will. Persons who feel disenfranchised, disconnected, or depressed by the current hierarchical systems may have opted out of participatory processes—lacking the will to try new methods.
2. Needs and fears. Some individuals may withhold their participation because of their current needs and fears. They may fear a loss of power, control, or security due to their perception of the changes that may occur or may have unmet needs that deter their participation. Alternately, they may have compelling needs that overwhelm their ability to participate. To those on the edge who are focused on feeding, housing, and clothing their families, a learning community is a luxury.
3. Lack of capacity. Some individuals may not participate in learning democracies because they lack some essential capacity. Capacities may be mental, physical, social, or technical. Mental capacity includes the ability to self-determination. Those who cannot make their own decisions for whatever reason (mental ability, coercion, drug or alcohol incapacities, etc.) lack capacity (at that moment) to participate. Physical and technical capacities include factors that inhibit individuals from physically or electronically being present where deliberations occur. Individuals living in poverty may lack transportation capacities that inhibit participation or may not have access or knowledge to participate electronically. Social capacities include the ability to work with groups, to communicate, and to interact socially with others.

The above are reasons why people don't work out difficulties on their own and invent learning communities on their own. If a learning community is to appeal to all members of a community to participate, the three barrier clusters must be addressed through a cluster of strategic responses and support activities. Just because we build it, it does not mean that people will come.

Finally, the community recognized that Follettville would be designed through the members' lenses, and expressed a desire to include other perspectives in future iterations.

III. Design Principles and Guidelines

From the integration of members' contributions, the community derived a set of principles and guidelines that would guide the design of Follettville as an "ideal" learning democracy.

Design Principles – The approach or methodology for design will be:

Holistic, non-linear, multi-dimensional, and iterative, allowing for the learning and evolution of both the system and its designers

Contextual and development, able both to exist in the current context and allow for the development of individuals, the collective, and the whole system

Held in creative tension between what is, what we want, and what is possible

Conscious, explicitly making the unconscious conscious, and transforming beliefs, assumptions and mental models: design as "a way of life"

Asset-based, appreciative, and value-added, emerging from that which we want to bring forth, rather than what we want to get rid of

Inclusive of the whole system, paying attention to specific structures, functions, processes, and both internal and external dimensions

Representative (or a microcosm) of sufficient diversity of perspectives and interests

A process of shared meaning-making, and a manifestation of collective intelligence

Attendant to people and relationships, as well as task and product

Design Guidelines – The design of Follettville, itself, will:

Move purposefully toward meeting the needs of self, others, the system, the world, and future generations

Generate, through practice, increasing competence and capacity at system and individual levels

Evoke trust, which often starts as trust in the process or conveners, evolving through dialogue to trust of "the other"

Institutionalize and legitimize structures and processes for welcoming all relevant perspectives, information, competences, inclinations, concerns

Work through any existing or emergent conflict, using creativity and integrative practices

Include celebration, utilizing the transformative stories and relationships that happen during community learning

Generate collective intelligence, through its capacity for transforming beliefs, assumptions, mental models, and habits, as well as increasing skilled participation and learning

Create connection at all levels with global communities of practice for purposes of generating and distributing new knowledge about learning democracies

Ensure that all members understand, at the outset and continually, the nature of processes used, their role, and potential outcomes and impacts

Allow for the iterative design of the community, and life as it is lived in the community, to be led by the learning that arises through inclusive dialogue (and other sources)

Facilitate individual and collective access and exploration of deep levels of human experience from which human motivation – needs, purpose, vision, values, and spirit – arise

Keep the “whole picture” (multiple dimensions, perspectives, worldviews, frameworks) present in the community’s design, processes, content, and experiences

Create synergistic networks of diverse, flexible process and models of inclusive, generative dialogue which constitute an evolving learning system

Develop and utilize tools that deepen the capacity of the system design to facilitate community learning

Optimize engagement of the whole community, using diverse means and media, while maximizing engagement based on the needs of individuals and the requirements of community learning

Incubate new forms (structures, processes, institutions, et al) that serve the community’s needs

Integrate, balance and optimize polarities, dichotomies and differences (e.g., inclusion/momentum, participation/knowledge, etc)

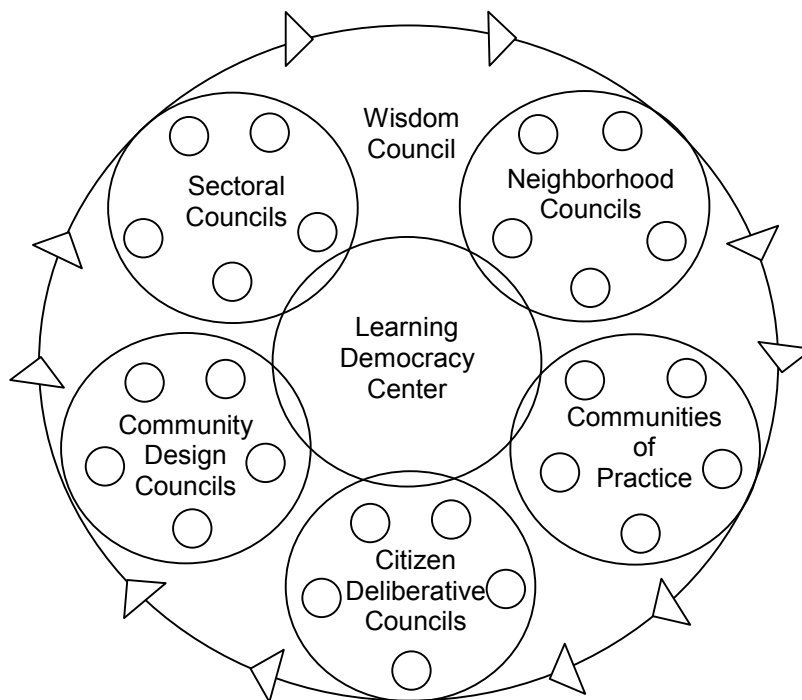
Employ dialogic processes that are fair, safe and practiced in good faith

IV. A Learning System for Follettville

Purpose – The purpose of Follettville’s learning system is to create the conditions for evoking the individual and collective will, capacities, and responsibilities required to bring forth a vibrant, democratic way of life in the community.

Structure – The structure of Follettville’s learning system is a constellation of purposeful, inclusive, dialogic/deliberative bodies organized around a **Learning Democracy Center**.

The Follettville Learning System:
 Evoking the will, capacities, and responsibilities required
 for bringing forth a vibrant, democratic way of life
 in our community



Learning Democracy Centers

Purpose: Learning Democracy Centers help to create the kind of local conditions and culture that can evoke the individual and collective will, capacities, and responsibilities required to bring forth a vibrant, democratic way of life in the community.

Structure: Learning Democracy Centers are community-based structures that are organized to gather and distribute the training, consulting, coaching, event design and

management, and other resources needed in the community. Centers may be sponsored by local governments or other entities that offer space, staffing, funding, legitimacy, and the level of autonomy that Centers require to function effectively.

Services: Learning Democracy Centers are designed to provide the resources, processes, practices and tools to help form, support and sustain:

- *Neighborhood Councils or Associations*, that meet the need for residents to exert control over decisions that most directly impact their lives
- *Citizen Deliberative Councils*, that meet the need to fairly and justly address critical issues, concerns and conflicts with others
- *Communities of Practice*, that meet the need to generate and distribute new knowledge for purposes of renewal and innovation
- *Design Councils*, that meet the need to co-create new life-affirming, democratic systems and structures
- *Wisdom Councils*, that meet the need to work together toward inspiring visions and new directions, and to monitor progress
- *Functional/Sectoral Councils*, that meet the need to create meaningful work that contributes to society

Practices: Learning Democracy Centers make use of community and leadership development processes, practices and tools that include:

- Dialogue, conversation circles, large-scale events and other practices that promote engagement, communication and civic work
- Conflict resolution, consensus-building and other practices that promote cooperation, collaboration and harmony
- Community-based research, collaborative inquiry and other practices that promote continuous learning and improvement
- Community indicators, measurement systems and other practices that promote responsibility and accountability
- Systems design, design salons and other practices that promote creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

Team C Report

The Center is Everywhere: The Reality of Leadership and Situationality

A Report by Team C: Post-Hierarchical Leadership

Chris Francovich, Marti Monroe, and Matthew Shapiro

The First International Mary Parker Follett Conversation on Creative Democracy
Boise, Idaho
October 17-20, 2002

I. Introduction

Any exploration of the concept of democracy, and indeed any democratic experience, must confront the question of leadership. But what *is* the question? Typically, it is a question of *who*. In more progressive inquiries, it has been a question of *how*. Less often has it been a question of *what*. In a world at a crossroads, where societies must learn to release the potential of individuals and collectivities together, it seems clear that the question of leadership must be confronted in a fresh light. It also seems that we must begin with the *what*: what is leadership?

In a world of bureaucracies, large nation-states, and super-corporations, any fresh consideration of leadership – one with an eye toward democratic creativity – must be prepared to take us beyond hierarchy. The theme of post-hierarchical leadership for a Follett Conversation team was originally proposed by Kevin Nixon, who was not able to join us in Boise. Chris Francovich, Marti Monroe, and Matthew Shapiro chose to continue pursuit of this theme out of a sense of its significance and an earnest desire to explore the notion of leadership from a fresh perspective. We saw “leadership” as a notion that is vague at best, and used extremely casually. We were aware of its usual association with individual traits of charisma, vision, wisdom and strength, and – in the 20th century – “good management.” It was clear to us that the “Great Man” model has not really been transcended, in spite of the change in popular paradigms of leadership¹.

Although we generally set aside pre-existing assumptions of leadership, we did wear lenses that reflected our personal experiences, value systems, and core ideas regarding human psychology, organizational behavior, and the necessity for relationship-making and creativity. This meant that

¹ Magliocca, L.A. and Christakis, A.N. (2001) “Creating a Framework for Sustainable Organizational Leadership: The CogniScope™ System Approach.” *Systems Research & Behavioral Science*, Volume 18, 259-277.

we approached the topic of leadership by thinking about responsibility², accountability, creativity, the salience of differences in context, and situationality. Our preliminary discussions resulted in a dialogue around the nature of leadership as dependent on the situation. This, in turn, made us think more carefully about the notion of “situations” in particular.

II. Situationality and Time-Scales

Situationality seemed to be responsible for varying definitions or applications of leadership. For example, in one “situation” – say, a panicked crowd in a fire – a very directive and even authoritarian leader might emerge. A different “situation” would require a different type of leader. Our inquiry was based on the question: what is it about situations that define or suggest leadership? Follett emphasizes the *law of the situation*³, which reflects the reality that every situation of human experience – individual and collective – is unique. Concomitant is the fact that individual differences shine forth differently in different situations, and that *individuals’ differences making a difference that makes a difference* is central to leadership as a distributed and informal rather than the centralized and formal property that is associated with *authority*.

It is our position that when individuals are afforded the opportunity to make a difference, they typically do. When this property is active in only a few (those in authority), the community as a whole tends to suffer. The problem here is one of controlling or scripting the situation. The development of social categories (e.g., hierarchies) for managing “situations” can exert either a positive or negative influence on democracy.

The notion of situationality also begs the question of *where does one situation begin and another end?* Is there not an infinite range of overlapping situationality, ranging from the moment to moment shifts up to the epochal span that contains them all? This question proved to open a critical window for our unfolding thesis of “post-hierarchical leadership.”

The tone for the remainder of our inquiry was set when we associated situationality with *time-scales*. This association resulted in our model of hierarchical leadership (see Jaques, 1990⁴) characterized by the segregation of time-scales by person and class of person (Figure 1).

² Block, Peter (1993) *Stewardship: Putting Service Ahead of Self-Interest*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

³ Follett, Mary Parker (1941) *Dynamic Administration*. Elliot Fox and Lyndall Urwick (Eds.), New York: Harper & Brothers.

⁴ Jaques, Elliott (1990) “In Praise of Hierarchy,” *Harvard Business Review*. Jan/Feb, Vol 68(1), 127-134.

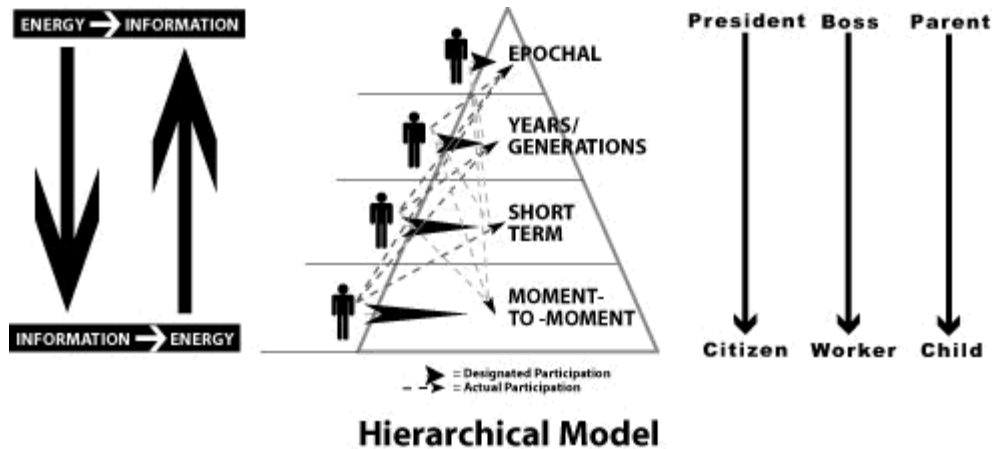


Figure 1

The vertical axis of the model represents time scales – moving from the short term (moment to moment) at the base to the long term (epochs) at the top. Each rough demarcation in the scale is indexed to a function or a class of situations. The horizontal or lateral “slices” of the pyramid represent elements of human activity segregated by role, competence, or attribute.

The short term time-scales of our model are populated by workers (in industry), most citizens (in political systems), and children (in families). In other words, most people are assigned – as a matter of routine in our culture – to roles that involve decisions and feedback (consequences) with a short time horizon. As we proceed up through the levels of the pyramid, the time-scales get longer and the number of people or groups associated with decision-making and feedback gets smaller. In most organizations, the top of the pyramid – or at least the highest level that is visible in that organization – deals with the time scale of “years.” Very few organizations or communities consciously take a multi-generational perspective, and fewer – if any – work from an “epochal” perspective of time.

We began to focus on the segregation of responsibility by time-scales. This segregation denies the reality (the situation) that every action in the moment-to-moment time scale has consequence and meaning in the long-term and epochal time-scales, and vice-versa. We decided to call this reality of simultaneous existence in all time-scales *total existence*. The lack of consciousness about this total existence would be central to our emerging definition of post-hierarchical leadership.

Another feature of the model is that energy tends to flow upward and information tends to flow downward. In organizational terms, the physical labor and psychic energy released by people at the moment-to-moment time scale generate products that serve as instruments for those associated with the longer-term time scales. Based on how this energy is working for the organization from the longer-term, more expansive viewpoint, the energy is converted into

information. This information (decisions or *differences that make a difference*⁵) is sent downward to adjust the work at the moment-to-moment level, where information is converted back into energy.

Thus, in a large hierarchical system characterized by formal leadership, the conversion of energy to information and from information to energy is separated in both perception and in organizational structure. This separation would contribute to the disengagement of participants from the larger meaning of their enterprise, not to mention lack of initiative, responsiveness, and creativity.

In biological domains, we see similar phenomena as information and energy between particles, atoms, molecules, tissues, organs, and organisms structure their activities. In the biological realm, however, failure to accommodate either energy or information production needs results in relatively certain system failure. In human social organizations we are able to use coercion and exploitation (of resources) to defer the consequences of whole system dysfunction.

III. From Pyramid to Spiral

During the Follett Conversation, our team visited Team B's conversation on the design of systems for learning democracy in order that one of us could make a presentation to that team on the model of participatory design advanced by Bela H. Banathy⁶. During this presentation, Matthew introduced the image of the *spiral of living design* that can serve as an evolutionary guidance system for any organization or community.

At the center of this spiral is the image: a system of core values and core ideas that defines the context, the enterprise, and aspirations of the stakeholders. As we spiral out from this "image," we define the specifications of the system that will respond and fulfill it, and then the specific structures, functions, and activities that meet those specifications. The periphery of the spiral is *life* – the actual activity of people. Experience in the life of the system, along with changes in the environment, new ideas, and shifting aspirations, loop back into the center of the spiral. This completes the circuit of the spiral and brings it to life – thus, the spiral of "living" design.

Upon returning to our own team's conversation, this spiral model began to play a key role as an alternative structure to the aforementioned hierarchical pyramid. We noticed that the epochal and multi-generational time-scales correspond roughly to the center of the design spiral (the image). The mid-spiral rounds represent the longer time scales of typical systems (at the level of the design of structures and functions). The outer rounds of the spiral reflect the day-to-day rules and

⁵ Bateson, Gregory (1979) *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. New York: E.P. Dutton.

⁶ Banathy, Bela H. (1996) *Designing Social Systems in a Changing World*. London, New York: Plenum.

practices of the system. On the periphery is the living manifestation of the system in personal experience.

In the model of participatory design that was discussed, everyone involved or affected by the system is considered to be a stakeholder and a designer of the system. What this means in terms of the design spiral is that every person involved owns a “slice” of the spiral, from the core (image) out to the periphery. As this slice proceeds outward, we are moving from:

ideal -----> actual
 information -----> energy
 general -----> specific
 collective -----> individual

The individual inhabits all of the rounds of spiral. However, as the role of the individual leaves the space of image (the core values and core ideas representing his or her aspirations as they overlap with and complement those of others) and moves toward the periphery (life), the slice gets narrower as that person’s interests and strengths determine. This is the preservation of the natural division of labor that comes with diversity. At the center, there is no division. At the periphery, there is specialization.

The entire span from image (epochal and long-term, non-specific roles) toward specific roles in the moment-to-moment carries with it the responsibility and accountability that go with those roles (Figure 2).

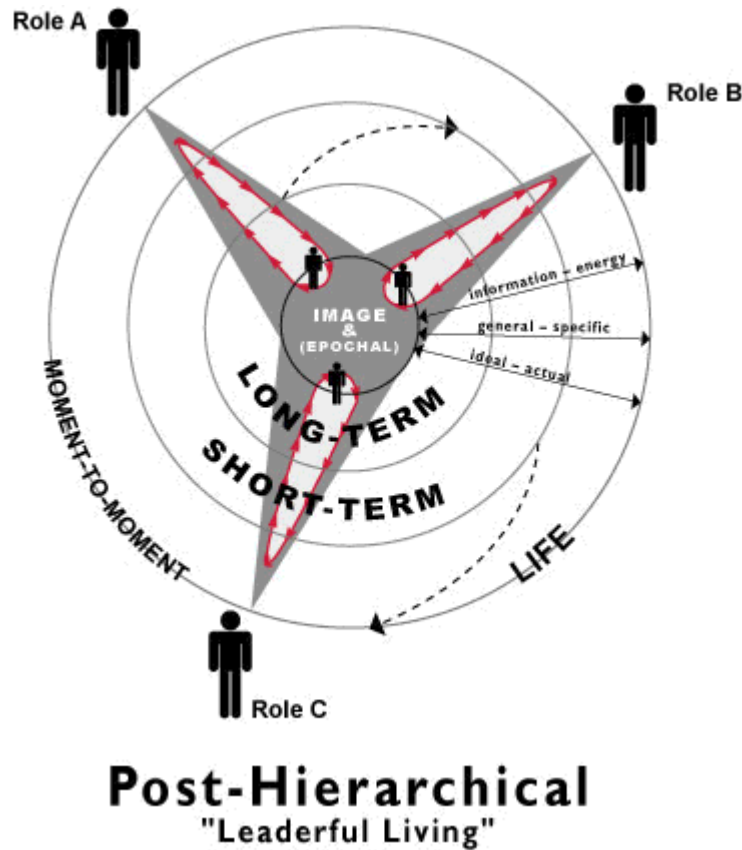


Figure 2

In this model, every individual in the system is able to travel back and forth between the image and the life arena. In this travel space, there must be *affordances*⁷ that foster the dialogue appropriate to the time scale and kind of activity at each level. In the image, the dialogue cultivates reflection upon and expression of aspirations and values. In the mid-rounds, the dialogue is more strategic and planning-oriented, maximizing creativity and responsiveness to the needs of the environment and the flow of energy and information. Toward the periphery, it is dialogue that responds to biological and psychological needs of individuals and dialogue that increases role satisfaction, skill level, and exposure to the world in ways that might trigger needed changes all the way to the core image.

One key insight that emerged was that the points located on the periphery of the spiral do not represent individual identities. They represent *roles*, and one person can play many roles. For example, if we use family as the context of this model of post-hierarchical leadership, the points on the life-round (moment to moment time-scale) are not designated as "parent" or "child," because this will lead us back into the old and inaccurate model of role assignments. These

⁷ An affordance is a "persistence in the environment that serves to structure or regulate behavior." Reed, Edward S. (1996) *The Necessity of Experience*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

assignments too often do not match actual activities of the persons labeled under those roles. The points on the periphery of the spiral should reflect *real life activity* of people in the family: cook, teacher, dishwasher, income provider, baby sitter, housekeeper, entertainer, hope for the next generation, etc. All of these *may* be carried out by one person, or they may be carried out by parents only; or they may be carried out by children in many cases. They may be carried out by grandparents, parents, children, and friends. It all depends on the context.

The important thing to keep in mind is that each of these roles carries with it an *ownership* in the spiral (consciousness of total existence), the responsibility to and with others for all of the roles played at various spheres of the spiral, the authority to act, and accountability for those roles.

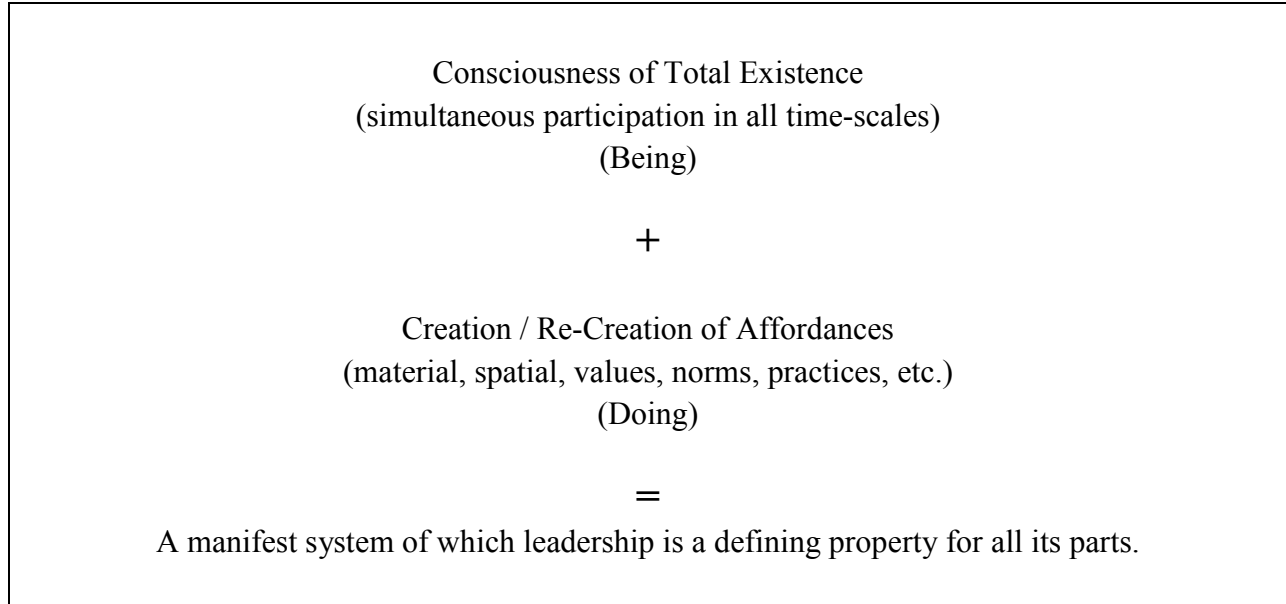
IV. Affordances for Generalized Leadership

As we considered systemic features that either foster or hinder the necessary dialogue – the image-creation and the emergence of differences that make a difference – the concept of *affordances* (see Reed, footnote 7) became important to us. As affordances “persist” in the environment they become the environment in a particularly important way: they are variously elements of sustenance, tools, and extensions of our cognitive processes⁸. The “environment” can be physical, psychological, cultural or social. An affordance can be as simple as the arrangement of chairs in a room, which influences how people are oriented toward each other. Or it can be a television that a family leaves on while eating dinner. An affordance can also be a process by which an organization addresses conflict.

Affordances, then, become a way to see into a culture, organization, or system, as well as a tool or strategy for change. A fundamental property of elements of the environment is that they become transparent to users of their environment. Making users aware of and mindful to the affordances that structure their behavior can result in a need to change behavior (learn) and so create different tools and structures (affordances).

Our “post-hierarchical” definition of leadership came into view with the convergence of the time-scale framework and the concept of affordances:

⁸ Cole, M. and Engestrom, Y. (1993) A cultural-historical approach to distributed cognition. In G. Salomon (Ed.), *Distributed Cognition: Psychological and Educational Considerations*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, pp.1-46.



Every person in an organization is both being and doing. These are not separate things. The key difference in moving from the hierarchical to the post-hierarchical mode of leadership and living is to connect *being* with *doing* in a manner that is conscious, dynamic, and recursive. Doing this for all participants and doing this *together* will, we suggest, result in communities and organizations that are *leaderful*.

VI. Implications

During our exploration of post-hierarchical leadership, we moved between three kinds of systemic contexts: corporate, civic/political, and family. Each proved to be of value for the generation of insights that would contribute to the general model. We hope that others will benefit from the use of the post-hierarchical model presented herein as they explore the questions of leadership in their own contexts.

Our own team eventually came to focus on family groupings, for several reasons. First, in spite of its critical role in human development, it is rarely discussed as a context for the emergence of creative democracy. Second, it is something that everyone can relate to. Third, most of our team members had rich experiences in this arena, including parenting and parent education. This attention to the family has led to an effort to design a Family Democracy program that will undoubtedly incorporate many of the insights reached during the Follett Conversation.

Note: The authors of this Team C report would like to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Rhonda Noneman in rendering the diagrams for this report.

Team H Report

Toward a Concept of Community Learning

A report of the "Understanding Community Learning" group's work during The Mary Parker Follett Conversation on Creative Democracy held October 17-20, 2002, Boise, Idaho.

Team members included
Yvette Arts, Shelby Berkowitz, Margo Menconi,
Rick Morse, and Jim Pelikan.

James Pelikan
Organization & Community Consulting, Inc.
Cleveland, Ohio
jpelikan@mindspring.com

Ricardo S. Morse
Doctoral Candidate
Center for Public Administration & Policy
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia
rmorse@vt.edu

Variety in Practice: Multiple Lenses on Community

Each participant in our group came from a different field of practice in which the concepts community and community learning are recognized elements of that field. We worked and/or studied in public administration, community psychology, adult education, communications, and community building. Our group's purpose we thought could be accomplished if each of us communicated our own practice perspective while together we came up with definitions of community and community learning with which we all could work. Our path was thus one of reflection on ways of practice and action. This could be contrasted to a path with greater emphasis on the future and on the ideal or with a path of action without reflection on experience. Another way of looking at it is we sought to articulate the understandings coming from applications of various perspectives engaged in the learning action of communities.

The context of our coming together was our mutual interest in Mary Parker Follett and thus we all assumed that her ideas would contribute to the process. How they would contribute was not preordained. It was pointed out that Follett's ideas on community and change included a number of variables. Models of community learning that depend on a single variable such as process oversimplify the reality of community and change. Ideology, structure, and process were suggested as three of the ingredients in Follett's thinking on this topic. We would try in our conversation to stay aware of these dimensions of our thinking as well as hers.

As an additional step in forming ourselves as a work group we discussed what we thought to be Follett's ideological orientation and shared our own ideologies with the group as well. These actions revealed assumptions, worldviews, theories and other useful pieces of information that would come up from time to time in our conversations. This merged into our first exchange of ideas regarding global views about community and community learning.

Our work together over a few days is organized below into four parts:

1. We shared and tried to understand the views and experiences we each had about the concept of community.
2. We then shifted to a more focused attempt to decide what various approaches to community learning had to offer and what we thought were essential features of such learning.
3. Next, we reexamined our dialogue about community and community learning and found in the thinking of Mary Parker Follett about association something that

- pulled together, or integrated, a great deal. With this we crafted two tentative definitions.
4. Having more time to reflect on what we did, some of us chose to make a statement about this work and our ongoing thoughts and work around community and community learning. [At least] some of us will continue exchanging thoughts and experiences regarding this concept and hope to collaborate further in some formal way.

Community: Thousands of Pieces, But Where is the Unity?

We begin with the premise that community learning is an activity or phenomenon that is a part of a social entity known as community. In order to understand such learning we need to first be clear as to our views of the nature of community. It is well, in taking this path, not to expect an easy or fast resolution. As noted by Chris Shore in describing the place of community in social thought: "One of the most vague and elusive concepts in social science, community continues to defy precise definition."¹ Communitarian thinkers such as Amitai Etzioni acknowledge this familiar critique, yet do offer some basic principles for us to consider:

Critics complain that we portrayed the essential foundation, community, in a fuzzy manner. They ask for a clear definition of the concept. Communities are webs of social relations that encompass shared meanings and above all share values.²

One contributing factor to the elusiveness of the concept of community is the role it plays in the history of social thought. Most noticeable is its role as one of the markers of the transition to modern secular societies. The paradigm coming from Tonnies³, and still largely accepted today, has *community* (Gemeinschaft) representing a form of social order that is declining while *association* (Gesellschaft) is the form ascending. As moderns we have more material and intellectual familiarity with the world of association than that of community. And as we deal with places called community or people who have a sense of community we hit a wall separating the familiar and the unfamiliar. Is "community," defined in one or another ways, a good or a negative entity? Does it exist

¹ Shore, C. (1994). Community. In W. Outhwaite & T. Bottomore (Eds.), *The Black dictionary of twentieth century social thought* (pp. 98-99). Oxford: Blackwell.

² Etzioni, A. (1995). Old chestnuts and new spurs. In A. Etzioni (Ed.), *New communitarian thinking: Persons, virtues, institutions, & communities* (pp. 16-36). Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

³ Tonnies, F. (2001). *Community and civil society* (Jose Harris, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1887)

at all? These questions take us to the core of our belief systems and worldviews. So in our dialogue about the meaning of community we touched on many diverse experiences, observations, and points of view.

Community Initiatives

Often it is a subset of the community members who participate in a structured process or community intervention that are the actual participants in a community learning initiative. These groups vary from twenty upwards to a few hundred. In addition the initiative may involve activities with a number of such groups and thus raise the number of participants in the initiative. We made two observations here. One, these groups are not only quantitatively different from community but also differ in terms of the quality of the phenomena associated with each type of collectivity. While structured groups may learn, this is not learning at the level of community. It is more like one of the factors that contribute. The question needs to be asked, what are the contextual factors, variables, and dynamics that take such group level learning and transform it into community learning?

This is related to a second observation. People interested in understanding community learning, professionals like us, are often the same experts that design programs designed to achieve such learning. Implicit or explicit in such designs are the products of our own experience and thinking about community. While our thinking gets articulated, often we have less awareness about how our experiences of community shape what we do. Our vision of community acts' as a subtle *should*, a normative standard in light of which the community of our current attention is found wanting. In fact, the reason that we come to assist a community in a change process is the belief that it is not what it can or should be in order to meet some internal or external challenge. Some common beliefs about what a community should be include notions of diversity, security, inclusiveness, respect for individual rights, and democratic deliberation.

When an initiative designed as community learning is not explicit about its assumptions concerning community it may create invisible obstacles to success. This occurs when one aspect required for community life becomes the lens through which everything in the community is evaluated. For example, individualism is a strong force in modern U.S. culture. It is often likely that beliefs associated with individualism will be offered as the key function or purpose of community. The rights of the individual and respect for the diversity of peoples are examples of this. While the rights of the individual may be a critical feature of community it is not sufficient for understanding the collective function of community. There are also community features limiting the behavior of individuals, establishing authority and selecting particular habits as agreed upon ways of behaving. Community must be understood from more than a single lens. And if for example we move unreflectively to an initiative that is built on a single lens such as enhancing

environmental supports for the rights of individuals, we may create a barrier to acknowledging the character of community in sustaining shared expectations not encompassed in that aspect of community.

Many assumptions influence our capacity to understand a specific community. One of the most common barriers to understanding a community is the *assumption that a community is present* within the scope of the intervention. Community is a complex whole with many parts reflecting that whole incompletely. What typically occurs is that some part of a community, a civic group or political official, contacts a professional known to have experience in helping communities learn. The issues at hand and people concerned about these issues are gathered to design a process for a subset of community members. The search for action along with the consensus and energy required for results is often the challenge that takes priority. What is left un-addressed is the manner in which this place exists as community.

Another way to look at this is to ask the question, *is there a community?* While the presence of a community may seem obvious, the fact is that in engaging parts or segments of the whole we need a framework for determining when these gathered segments reflect community in this place. It is not uncommon to use guidelines of representation (interests, stakeholders, diversity, etc.) as a rule-of-thumb. These will not always be successful. The deep structures of governance, of economic activity, of past experience with community learning, or the historic narratives associated with the formation of this place as a settlement are likely to be untouched. We concluded that it is likely that communities experience ongoing learning and that some attention needs to be paid to how the proposed intervention builds on this history.

Our discussion at this point took a more cynical turn with the suggestion that all participation may just be an exercise in power and consequently that all approaches have blindsides. Two consequences were suggested. First, everyone, or the required mix to represent community as a whole, never is fully present or heard. Second, people interested in community often do not care as much as our discussion would suggest about understanding the views or ideologies of those involved. In practice these processes are dominated by concerns for action; that is what people in modern communities seek. Literature regarding social movements, small group processes, the “argument culture,”⁴ and the contributions of Ken Wilkinson⁵ on social interaction and community were used to illustrate diverse views here. Clearly this is an area that requires further exploration and clarification in terms of its relation with the development of community learning as a concept.

⁴ Tannen, D. (1998). *The argument culture: Moving from debate to dialogue*. New York: Random House.

⁵ Wilkinson, K. (1991). *The community in rural America*. New York: Greenwood.

At points in our discussion one or the other of us struggled with seemingly irreconcilable ideological commitments. For instance, a dualism of words vs. works set in the context Christian culture was highlighted. We found tension in the presence (within one individual) of hard to reconcile worldviews of an apparent conservative theology combined with a progressive social-political ideology. This translated for the individual into an assumption of individual potential or capacity in contrast to institutional incapacity. The individual as authority and the social as oppressive is a dualism reflecting our culture and much in evidence in thinking about community. In fact, dualisms persist in our culture and within each one of us and can become potential stumbling blocks to learning in community. Pragmatism was suggested as a vehicle in the U.S. for challenging things presented in such dualistic terms. On this note we again tried to get back to the level of community, this time by asking how might a community retain what it learns?

Community Learning

While not yet reaching a definition of community, we did have some areas of agreement and maybe an implicit sense of what we were trying to articulate. At any rate the lack of closure around what community means was not a barrier to turning our attention to idea of community learning. Frameworks to identify if learning is taking place, such as Susan Peterson Gong's⁶ work, were shared. The experience of grassroots adult education was also placed on the table. In Canada we were told this approach takes the form of a social movement. In the U.S. it is less social movement and more focused on literacy, although there are exceptions such as the Highlander Center that trained civil rights workers.

At issue in discussing the approaches to learning was the identification of what constitutes *community-level learning*. As one reviews the use of groups, whole-systems, social context, and community as factors shaping a variety of learning techniques, the learning entity or learner often is still the individual. The structure of popular and folk education were offered as more holistic models. International and North American centers (University of Toronto, Columbia, and NYU for example) offering ideas about transformational learning⁷ also were offered. While not a consensus, the prevailing view in the group was caution about educational programs under the rubric of “learning communities or community learning.”

⁶ Gong, S. P. (2002). *Learning and teaching for exponential growth*. Provo, Brigham Young University.

⁷ Mezirow, J. and associates. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Information on the various approaches to community learning piled up and in an effort to find a handle or means to differentiate the structure and focus of change implicit in each. The question was posed, what are the purposes for community learning implied by these approaches? The first suggestions were human potential and social justice. The assumption related to the former purpose was that we tap human potential through involvement of collective or community learning and that potential was the change. Yet is it a variable like human potential that provides the core content of learning at the level of community? The list of the lenses used to understand community could be large. Human potential, social justice, and community building are only an off the top of the head listing. Maybe we need to ask more about, what are the foundational purposes contained in the different approaches to community learning? Other questions that would be part of such an inquiry include:

What assumptions do different perspectives have about why communities need to learn or about how to recognize this need?

How do we know a community is learning?

What are the variety of ways in which a community might learn?

Does learning in community always have to be linked to change? Can it be linked also to sustaining longstanding values or habits?

This leads to the observation that while many approaches are promoted as community learning, we need better grounding in theory and experience concerning the attributes of community. Initiatives that are community learning in the sense we want to articulate, are those directed at community as an entity with place, boundaries, history, political base and external relations. These are initiatives that look to understand and see movement in those features that constitute the community as a whole or as a collective phenomenon.

Also as a group we proposed that learning is always going on in a community and that much of it may go unnoticed by experts and/or activists who design structured interventions. We think that communities may learn in multiple ways and that maybe based on our experience and ideological commitments, we prefer or value one or another way. Coming from a modern culture of applied social science we may value facilitated processes, but need to be open to ritualized or indigenous collective process. There are times that applied social science work has insufficient awareness of its own values or normative foundations. In community work this can lead to treating our interventions more as social goods than as hypotheses to be tested with some rigor. It may result in a false attribution of community level learning to changes in parts of a community or in

phenomenon related to the techniques of the process itself. The scope of community learning calls attention to a wide range of human behavior and thought.

In order to give some order to our discussion we made an attempt to list what we thought were the components of community learning. This is one of the lists of possible components for community learning:

1. A specific entity or community is the learner. The community has place, history, boundaries, and is known a type of human collectivity called community. It fulfills the conditions of human settlement and people reside there.
2. There are one or more holistic learning processes with which the community has some acquaintance. By holistic we mean that the focus is on communal phenomena, it deals with the purpose or ends of human settlement, and it connects to all members.
3. The parts of the learning process or the entity, such as groups, subsystems, individuals, organizations, events, etc. are understood in terms of the whole and not mistaken for the process itself.
4. What is learned may be composed of activity in one of more spheres of learning (social, economic, belief, culture, capital, consciousness, technology, association, etc), but must also involve ends based relations.

Additionally we took another look at the components by asking what community learning might look like. The result was more descriptive: truly participatory; messy; presence of risk, such as social engineering; power and social justice variables; praxis; social vision; et cetera.

Once again we reached a point where we found no consensus and choose to move on. We again searched for the means by which a community retains what it learned. The suggestion was made that the means for community learning retention would not be found in the variables associated with individual learning. Using human potential as the model of collective potential is not the path. While the parts contributing to a community learning involve individuals and groups the sign that the community as a whole has learned and retained the learning may better be revealed on the *institutional level*. That is, the community learning process comes to a point where the common understanding of how the community functions includes a new tradition, something that was before not broadly recognized. Other ways to describe a new tradition of this sort might include creation or modification of an institution; incorporating something as part of the

community narrative or sense of meaning/habits; or significant changes in institutional memory.

Our own response to these ideas reflects something about our culture, which has a great respect for individual rights and suspicion of institutional capacity. We often see creation of an institution in the context of organizations where it is referred to as "institutionalization." This is the direction the discussion took at this point. Institutionalize was substituted for create a new institution, as if all institutions were bureaucratic organizations (spoken of in a pejorative sense). Various views about the danger of established ideas in groups or community and other forms of manipulation (social engineering and group think) emerged, where darkened rhetoric hides the possibility of building community.

This confusion over what is meant by institution and institutionalize illuminates the need to have clarity about the differences between this community phenomena in contrast to organizational behavior. Approaches to community learning include the need for "unfreezing" peoples' views. However, the need to "freeze-in" a new form is given less attention, but is essential for social action. Organization and community are distinctive forms of social order and we know way too much about one form (organization) and way too little about the other (community). We were again agreed that community learning is an activity within a community. Now what had we decided about the nature of community?

Is There Glue?

We had rejected and selected parts of the two concepts, community and community learning. What was required to come up with two definitions? Maybe framing the concept of community learning in terms of process and product does not offer a sufficiently broad perspective to capture community-level phenomenon. Are we still falling back and observing some of the contributing or component parts of a process of an entirely different scale and quality?

At times in the discussion one or another raised the concern a concern of how revealing our belief systems (ideologies) to each contributes to achieving an understanding of these concepts. Is not community learning all about *action*? Participatory action research, such as that coming from Loyola University of Chicago, was tossed into the pot at some point. But so were recently published books like *The Metaphysical Club* by Louis Menand (2001) and *The Communitarian Persuasion* by Philip Selznick (2002). The latter two authors suggest that maybe it is a very broad view of ideas, values and history that is part of the tapestry that is our shared understanding of these concepts.

That may be what makes Mary Parker Follett a current light for this dialogue. She brings a very in-depth and broad view of American Social Thought to bear on the practical concerns of poor immigrants living in crowded neighborhoods. Her goal was to develop the core competencies required for democratic association. Her view holds that collective behavior is the context for developing (and unleashing) human potential. This leads some to be concerned about the tensions between self and collective in such creative processes and whether manipulation of self by group or other forms of social engineering are not what occurs in practice. Follett suggests that groupthink is avoided by the clash of differences. This would be much like the multicultural arguments today. Yet the example of a female authority figure cutting off discussion by male group member about the foundations of feminist research suggests that even progressive groups have norms and authority that set limits on the articulation of differences. At this point in our discussion we again affirmed that community learning is an activity within community. There may be a variety of contributing elements in community learning such as individual learning, group learning, and the influences of roles and place. What we seek to understand is how they come together and result in a qualitative transition for a whole community.

Community of place at least contains a variety of factors. In discussions such as this we need to continue to account for the whole range of these factors. Governance is a key factor that we often attend to more by imagining how we would like it to be rather than accounting for the reality in a given place. The reality of a de-politicized populace and a private public may seem too much to transform for the reigning model of democracy (the U.S. model) in our world today. Public discourse on community cannot avoid the political nature of community. Community of place is the locus for most citizen involvement in functions ranging from voting, to being counted in the census, to payment of taxes, and in most instances the basic schooling of children. Localized space is the base of citizen governance. We wonder why this is not recognized in definitions and approaches to community?

In a similar way we need to be open to the variety of elements that various perspectives contribute in terms of the components or parts of community learning. In a sense when we ask what does community learning look like, we need to realize that for different people there are different practical visions. For some the issue of a community with boundaries is not important and the target community is quite open. When process is the framework ordinary issues such as boundary and structure are less critical. Even though Follett emphasized the primacy of process, her thoughts about community centers imply some recognition of structure in local neighborhood and governing as relevant.

While it may have been the patroness (Miss Follett) and deadlines of the conference schedule more than good thinking that leads us to the glue, we decided the idea of

association was worth a try. We took a community structure view as a broader basis for framing community learning and community. We think it is worth attention as a perspective sufficiently broad to capture community-level phenomenon. And from there is crafted two definitions.

Community is a place-based social entity sustained by an infrastructure of associations which provide members with the means for ends- based relationship and external linkages.

Community Learning is a collective action within a specific community impacting its institutional base, cultural elements, ends-based relationships, and/or shared understandings.

Having selected the lens of association as the glue for community and feature of our group's joint approach we tried to package it. Still with a mix of debate and collaboration we tried a variety of ways to package all of our points of view into a common definition. Every time four agreed, a fifth would object. After a few cycles of this, we seemed to arrive at integrative statements about both concepts. The fact that this turned out not to be the case eventually may or may not be of importance. For obviously the question of whose approach to community and community learning is accepted suggests that in all of our practices we need to understand more the basis of the approach of others.

What is The Significance of All This?

As we reflect on the results of the group's work and its application in practice and theory we each need to look again at the work we are doing and its connection with our public life. What are our actual communities and how are they like or not like the places where we introduce change? The two of us conclude with addendums to this report, offering reflections on how our actual work (that is, our practice and thinking about it) resonates with our two tentative definitions formulated in Boise.

In conclusion, we see our conversation in Boise as a very initial exploration into a concept that holds significant potential for understanding what might be meant by "creative democracy." We hope that we can continue collaborating, sharing experiences and understandings, and contribute toward the further development of this concept. We hope that our experience contributes to more reflective practice on our part and that it might lead to more reflective practice and thinking about community and community learning on the part of practitioners who might read this report. We invite those interested in sharing stories and ideas from the field to contact us and contribute to our developing sense of what community learning might mean.

Jim Pelikan owns Organization & Community Consulting, Inc. (O&C) which does Organization Development (OD) and Community Building (CB) with a focus on the relationship between formal organizations, systems of human service and communities. Background in health care, social services, community and religious organizations and the public sector. An adjunct faculty member at Cleveland State University. His current work includes the Ward 18 Community Dialogue.

Rick Morse is a doctoral candidate in public administration at Virginia Tech and project manager at the university's Institute for Policy Outreach. His work and research interests center around community development and citizen engagement. Information on his "deliberative visioning" project in a rural community in Virginia can be found online at www.cpap.vt.edu/ipo/horizons and www.filebox.vt.edu/users/rmorse .

Though this paper attempts to report on the group collaboration in Boise, the authors take full responsibility for their expression in this paper. Thus, not all aspects of this paper necessarily reflect the views of everyone in the group. A fair rendering of the collective effort is attempted, but we realize that we have in some places extended the thinking and throughout have expressed this work through our own lenses.

ADDENDA

Jim's Reflection on the Definitions

On reflection I would tend to stress more the primitive political character of community. I think all human settlement includes some governance structure. I would consider modifying our definitions as seen below.

Community: A place-based social entity sustained *by some form of structure for governance and* by an infrastructure of associations which provide members with the means for ends- based relationship and external linkages.

Community Learning is a collective action *reflecting to a group's views on the meaning of settlement and inclusion in a particular community. This action impacts* on community's institutional base, cultural elements, ends-based relationships, and/or shared understandings.

Rick's Reflection on the Definitions

As my work in community development deals directly with this concept I find myself constantly reflecting on our definitions. I am happy to have engaged in the conversation, despite some of the difficulties our group had, because it has helped me to think and rethink how I approach my outreach work. I think Jim's emphasis on illuminating ideological commitments was particularly important because all too often I see community interventions that are one-size fits all and clearly seek to impose a particular worldview. Thus I agree with Jim's modifications to stress more the indigenous characteristics of community.

I think we advocates of deliberative or creative democracy can easily (and ironically) slip into a social-engineering mode that (while usually good-intentioned) fails to truly appreciate local knowledge and practical experience. Communities can and do learn in different ways. Some ways are more democratic than others, and it may well be that the more democratic means are best. Community developers from this perspective (this includes me) would do well to be more upfront about the normative commitment to creative democracy and consider how this model of learning "fits" the local community of practice.

As for the definitions, I think my understanding fluid, ever-changing so that it is difficult for me to settle on one. Perhaps outlining the dimensions of the concept is enough. I think our tentative definitions, including Jim's modifications, represent a good first step though.