Citizen engagement: Arenas for interaction and participation

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What this presentation is (not) about

YES

- Principles of engagement, reasons for lack thereof
- What enables meaningful civic engagement?
- Why people (don't) attend/ engage with events

NOT

 Toolkits of engagement: co-creation and engagement techniques

Players and Arenas approach: strategic interactionism

Arenas:

interactive spaces where decisions and other outcomes are at stake.

Players:

individuals or groups of individuals with a goal and a stake

Compound players

social movements, neighborhood associations, nonprofits;

Corporations, governmental institutions

Players as arenas

internal discussions and decision-making processes within the group

What is at stake in the arenas?

"Future-making" takes place in interactive arenas

- change of values and visions
- decisions about the next steps
- new rules and principles of action
- allocation of resources toward new goals

PLAYERS

- Have values, principles, goals, cultures
 - Including compound, collective players (corporations have "cultures," movements have "tastes in tactics")
- Some are more, others less fixed, and can change in interaction
- Have internal differences, contradictions, and debates

Experience Beliefs and values Knowledge Emotions Tastes



Civic

Associations
Social movements
Nonprofits
Informal networks and
communities



Public





Market

Companies Entrepreneurs

ARENAS

Formal Civic Arenas

- Community Board 4 in Queens, New York, USA during a "majority minority" transition (after 1975 immigration reform)
- "old-timers" (white) and immigrant "newcomers" in civic politics
- Outcomes: a shared vision of the "quality of life" in Queens

"Without a community board there would have been no public forum at which white, black, Latin American, and Asian leaders had a place to interact." (p. 769)

Sanjek, Roger. 2000. "Color-Full before Color Blind: The Emergence of Multiracial Neighborhood Politics in Queens, New York City." American Anthropologist 102 (4): 762–72.



Encounters in community gardens, courtyards, public rituals, social media, houses of worship, etc.

Informal Civic Arenas

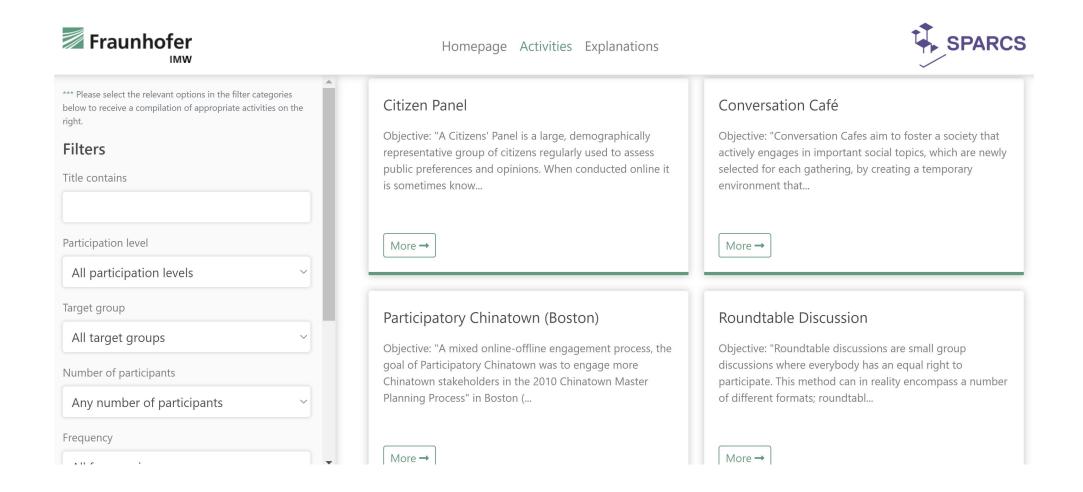
- Bus rides on their way to and from work, Los Angeles, USA
- Marginalized women, immigrant domestic workers
- Outcomes: Information, skills, confidence, emotions, solidarity, plans for action

"They constantly mentioned that before the event, the march was present everywhere; everybody talked about it. Missing it was impossible and unthinkable." (p. 341).



Boudreau, Julie-Anne, Nathalie **Boucher**, and Marilena **Liguori**. 2009. "Taking the Bus Daily and Demonstrating on Sunday: Reflections on the Formation of Political Subjectivity in an Urban World." *City* 13 (2–3): 336–46.

Participation techniques: arena creation



Why do (not) people/ groups become players?

- Becoming a player:
 - formulating an interest/ goal / vision of the future and
 - entering an interactive arena where decisions are at stake
- Importance of culture and life experiences
 - Why people (don't) do it? (facilitators and barriers to engagement)
 - How people prefer to do it? (tastes in tactics, cultural toolkits)
- Future:
 - imagining and strategizing requires resources ("capacity to aspire," Amartya Sen)

Implications for practitioners:

 Linking personal experiences and life goals to collective, social processes and change

[discourse creation]

 "get to know your community" / potential players

[research-based approach]

 Empowering people: creating a sense of belonging and entitlement

[community organizing]

Thank you!

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