1 | Government as Civic Enabler

A 2005 volume entitled *Democracy at Risk* arrived at a conclusion that was as blunt as its title. Pulled together by a prestigious committee of the American Political Science Association under the guidance of Steven Macedo and his colleagues, the book notes that American democracy is at risk because of "an erosion of the activities and capacities of citizenship," which in turn tends to undermine the quality of democratic governance, the legitimacy of self-rule, and the ennobling influence self-governance can have on citizens. Despite some deep and disturbing trends in our society, however, this risk can be substantially reduced by policy design and institutional choice, which "shape the incentives, interests, identities, and capacities of citizens to participate effectively in civic life."[1]

This book attempts to extend the report's argument by examining more fully the ways government can serve as a critical enabler of productive engagement and collaborative problem solving among ordinary citizens, civic associations, and stakeholder groups—and how public policy and administration can be designed to support this involvement. I use the term *citizen* in its normative sense, not to denote a legal or membership status, since the focus here is on the productive public contributions that everyone can make. I argue that government's role as civic enabler is becoming ever more important as public problems grow increasingly complex, stakeholders become ever more diverse, and deep cultural and institutional trends continue to erode civic life. Vibrant self-governance in America today

requires that government—local, state, and federal—design policy and invest strategically and systematically in building civic capacity to enable the everyday public work of citizens. I elaborate this in terms of the concept of collaborative governance, theoretically (in chapter 2), empirically (chapters 3 to 5), and with proposed federal policy initiatives (chapter 6).

Democracy in America, of course, entails much more than the forms of collaborative civic problem solving upon which I focus. Democracy includes the full range of voting and campaign activities essential to representative government, even if there are clear downsides to the hyperpartisanship we see today.[2] Also essential to enriching democracy and periodically renewing its institutions have been social movements that operate outside the bounds of normal politics, often forging new identities for civic actors, reframing key public problems, inventing civic practices, and winning new rights.[3] In recent decades, many forms of organized interest group representation, including rising citizen and public interest lobbies, have become important components of a vital democratic system, even though many would call attention to the limits of a democracy dominated by national lobbies.[4] Independent and often contentious community organizing has also been critical for empowering citizens locally and leveraging this power in state and national campaigns.[5] Indeed, independent organizing of various sorts is typically a precondition for robust collaborative designs, even if the frames of advocates may shift in the process.[6] If, according to its ancient Greek derivation, *democracy* means "rule by the people," the organizational ecology of engaging and representing the *demos* has been enormously diverse and ever shifting throughout American history, and citizens and theorists alike have repeatedly contested which configurations best embody the democratic spirit and potential of the times.[7]

Why Government?

Government needs to become a much more strategic, systematic, and effective enabler of civic engagement for several reasons. First, long-term changes in civic organization and culture make it unlikely that capacities for self-government will simply bubble up from the wellsprings of civil society, and they will certainly not come about through the invisible hand of the market. Civic changes have been propelled in many cases by profound and irreversible socioeconomic shifts, such as the replacement of the highly civic-minded World War II generation, increased female participation in the labor force, and the continual spread of technologies that

encourage individualized leisure. Second, to the extent that government policies and administrative practices are often implicated in disabling effective and responsible civic action, they will need to become a focus of redesign. If government has become part of the problem, then we need to examine how it can, at minimum, reduce its disabling impacts on citizens and, more ideally, become an energetic partner in renewal. For government to just "get out of people's way" and unleash market or civic forces, or both, hardly represents a serious option. Third, the costs of doing civic democracy well have continued to rise as a result of the increasing complexity of public problems, the diversity of publics and stakeholders, and heightened expectations for voice and inclusion among citizens.

While civic associations and nonprofit funders make invaluable investments in promoting innovation and building civic capacity, and should certainly be encouraged to do so more ambitiously and effectively, their contributions are unlikely to be adequate or strategic enough on their own. The costs of doing civic democracy well are substantial and rising, and government can and should rise to the occasion.

Transformations in Civic Organization and Culture

Certainly a key reason that government needs to play a more robust role as civic enabler is that long-term socioeconomic, civic organizational, and cultural trends have left the supply side seriously wanting. Over the past decade or so, social scientists have offered various explanations for this supply-side deficit. Some accounts are complementary, others are competing, but virtually none sees the problem as easily self-correcting.

In *Bowling Alone* and other writings, Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam advances what has become the most widely known and vigorously debated thesis on American civic life: that social capital—those stocks of social trust, norms, and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems—has been steadily eroding for a half century owing to generational, technological, and other changes. Many measures of associational membership and political participation reveal clear declines. Electoral participation and political knowledge have decreased, despite overall increases in education, and younger generations lag considerably behind previous ones in this respect. Grassroots volunteering for political parties and party loyalty have declined. Participation in church-related groups and regular attendance at church services over the past twenty years are down by one-fifth—a significant development in light of the importance of churches for incubating civic skills. Union membership has steadily eroded since the 1950s, falling to

less than half its peak. Membership in the Federation of Women's Clubs is down by 59 percent since 1964, and in the League of Women Voters by 42 percent since 1969. Membership in fraternal organizations such as the Elks and the Lions is also down significantly, Putnam shows. While volunteering has risen, it happens increasingly on a one-on-one basis rather than through church and community groups. Especially worrisome is the collapse of the activist membership core of civic organizations of all sorts, which witnessed a 45 percent drop from 1985 to 1994 alone—nearly half of America's civic infrastructure obliterated in a single decade.[8]

Neither self-help groups nor social movements have effectively counteracted these trends, according to Putnam. The former are not closely associated with other forms of community involvement, and the latter have generally resulted in professionalized direct-mail organizations with little or no active membership or local chapters. Even when mass membership in organizations that do not rely on face-to-face member interaction and professional associations that have increased along with rising occupational levels are factored in, total associational membership declined significantly between 1974 and 1994 within all educational categories. Other forms of associational ties, such as family and informal neighborhood socializing, have also eroded, as has generalized social trust, which is highly correlated with associational membership.

Deep social transformations underlie these trends, Putnam argues. Accounting for roughly half the decline is the slow but steady replacement of members of the "long civic generation," born between 1910 and 1940 and sharing formative public experiences, such as World War II. Neither the baby boomers nor Gen Xers have maintained similar levels of civic engagement. The technological transformation of leisure, which has led to increasingly private listening and viewing habits, accounts for another 25 percent of the decline. Indeed, the number of hours spent watching TV is, for Putnam, the single most consistent predictor of the decline of civic engagement. Suburbanization, commuting, and sprawl account for another 10 percent of the decline, as do the pressures of time and money, including the increasing movement of women into the labor force, which makes them less available for community involvement.[9]

For Theda Skocpol, the problem is less the depletion of diffuse stocks of social capital than the decline of a specific type of associational structure that provided the genius of American civic life for much of our history. Since the 1960s, a dramatic shift has occurred—away from broad, multi-tiered civic associations that combined local engagement with state and

national advocacy and toward narrow, professionally managed advocacy organizations with few links to genuine membership participation through local chapters and little capacity to mobilize large numbers of citizens in agenda-setting campaigns. The United States became a nation of joiners and organizers, according to Skocpol's *Diminished Democracy*, not through action focused primarily upon local community but by linking to other like-minded citizens organized in multitiered associations—Moose, Elks, Woman's Christian Temperance Union, National Grange—across many states and at the national level. Indeed, the organizational impetus and agenda were typically supplied by national offices and conventions, which in turn provided local recruits with avenues of leadership development upward in the associational structure.

Multitiered associations were thus able to take advantage of the political opportunity structures provided by the federal constitutional system. These associations nurtured civic friendships and socializing, provided charity and group insurance, and fostered virtues of fidelity and honor through elaborate rituals. Through associational affiliations, elite strata interacted with working people and provided the latter with vital leadership skills, such as running meetings and debating public issues. In addition to volunteer provisioning and support campaigns during and after wars, multitiered associations engaged in national moral crusades and policy advocacy. They provided members with a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves or their local communities. Even amid some of their worst vices of social exclusion and intolerance, these associations inculcated an American identity of republican self-governance and service to the nation.

In Skocpol's view, the decline of classic multitiered associations resulted from multiple factors. As gender and racial norms changed, the solidarities based upon associational segregation of men and women, blacks and whites, dissipated. Patriotic bonds of associational brotherhood declined in the wake of the divisive Vietnam War and professionalization of the military. Educated women, who had been key leaders in cross-class associations, have shifted their involvements increasingly to professional societies as occupational barriers have fallen. Advocacy has been professionalized, and many other professions have shifted from thinking of themselves less as trustees of the community and more as specialized experts. Elites, who have always occupied a disproportionate share of leadership roles in civic associations, no longer have to rise through the ranks or develop the leadership capacities of nonelites to influence policy. The newer advocacy groups are much more

inclined than in the past to "do for," rather than "do with," their nonelite counterparts. Because the newer advocacy groups depend much less, if at all, on membership dues, they are less accountable for their actions and often rely for funding on foundations that are even less democratically accountable. Because they depend on impersonal appeals and targeted activation through efficient campaign and communication technologies, messages become increasingly narrowed and public discourse polarized.[10]

Other scholars offer different explanations for long-term civic decline or deficit in the United States, and many contest important issues of measurement, concepts, and overall trends. Sociologist Robert Wuthnow, for instance, finds a much more mixed picture on declines in association memberships, with the lion's share of losses concentrated in more marginalized segments of the population.[11] Political scientist J. Eric Oliver finds that suburban segregation demobilizes citizens and decreases civic capacity for effective metropolitan governance.[12] Economists Dora Costa and Matthew Kahn further confirm that their increased participation in the labor force has made it more difficult for women to maintain previous levels of civic involvement, and they see rising socioeconomic inequality, ethnic heterogeneity, and immigration in some metropolitan areas as the biggest factors in the erosion of social capital.[13] Putnam's more recent analysis from the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey similarly finds that higher ethnic diversity lowers social capital on a variety of measures, such as trust and expectations that people will cooperate to solve common problems. More surprisingly, these negative impacts, at least in the short to medium term, apply to both bonding (within-group) and bridging (across-group) social capital.[14] For political scientists Wendy Rahn and John Transue, increasingly materialistic values among youth are eroding social trust.[15] The most ambitious study of generational shifts in participation in the United States, conducted by Cliff Zukin and his colleagues, finds an increasing split between declining political engagement among youth and their rising volunteer and community service activity.[16]

It is not my purpose here to adjudicate this lively and rich debate. Indeed, this overview merely scratches the surface of the empirical and analytical issues involved.[17] It is critical to recognize, however, that the socioeconomic and cultural factors implicated, in one way or another, in these and other accounts are not ones that can easily be reversed in the short to medium term, if at all. The civic-minded generation from World War II is disappearing, as are the gender and racial solidarities underlying the old

multitiered associations. The technological transformation of leisure is, if anything, becoming more deeply embedded with the spread of the iPod and similar devices. The participation of women in the labor market is unlikely to be reversed significantly, though we certainly should be able to design working-time options that better accommodate and encourage civic participation.[18] Ethnic heterogeneity is not likely to diminish anytime soon, even if immigration were suddenly closed off, since immigrant communities already here tend to have higher birthrates than other groups. Although rising inequality could and should be addressed more vigorously through social and economic policy, its reduction will undoubtedly be a long and difficult process. Even if some forms of fluid, informal, and "loose connections" may have increased in recent decades, there is good reason to doubt that these are as conducive to the pursuit of collective goals and public problem solving as the organizational forms that they have been replacing both in the United States and in other countries.[19]

The Internet, of course, offers some genuine possibilities for enhancement of civic voice, especially when combined with face-to-face organizing, as the 2008 presidential campaign of Senator Barack Obama clearly demonstrates. The Internet also can serve as an important tool for collaborative planning and democratic problem solving, as is demonstrated in the case study chapters that follow. On the other hand, as Cass Sunstein argues, it can also promote the kind of "information cocoons" and "cybercascades" that further exacerbate group polarization.[20] We will not automatically be rescued by technology; rather, we will have to design and use technology to support collaborative democratic governance.

To be sure, even in the face of some forms of decline, civic innovation has proceeded on a number of important fronts in recent decades, as Lewis Friedland and I demonstrate in *Civic Innovation in America* (2001) and as Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein, among others, have also subsequently shown.[21] The growth in young people's volunteering and community problem solving may also provide a more solid foundation for new forms of collaborative governance if policy and institutional design can establish more effective links between service and the democratic polity, especially with the most recent increase in youth voting. As Zukin and his colleagues note, however, this will require a "conscious, collective, and systematic effort to provide young Americans with the motivation, skills, and opportunities to participate in politics."[22] If government can play an important role in this systematic effort, then clearly it should.

Government as Civic Disabler

A second reason to focus on the potential role of government as a civic enabler is that government too often functions to do exactly the opposite: disabling civic problem solving by putting up too many barriers, not providing the right incentives, or overinvesting in professional, technical, and bureaucratic tools. Instead of being part of the problem, government needs to become a much more vigorous part of the solution. To paraphrase the old mantra, if government is not part of the solution, then it is part of the problem.

Scholars have examined a variety of ways in which government can undermine capacities and proclivities for productive civic action. Welfare state policy and administrative structure often construct citizens as passive and processed clients dependent on street-level bureaucrats, subject to the norms of clinical reasoning and authority imposed by credentialed professionals, and denied opportunities to use their own local knowledge, mobilize community assets, or formulate collective voice. This is especially true for poor and disadvantaged communities, which are often viewed as bundles of deficits and are provided services in ways that are profoundly stigmatizing and controlling.[23] Command and control methods of the regulatory state, while often indispensable, can also disable civic and business actors from finding creative solutions to problems. Command and control too often emphasizes narrow rules and bureaucratic silos that hinder holistic strategies—although the threat of regulatory hammers, under the right circumstances and with appropriate policy design, can trigger collaborative civic action.[24]

In recent decades, many forms of direct delivery of services or enforcement of rules by government bureaucrats have given way to what Lester Salamon of Johns Hopkins University characterizes as "an elaborate system of *third-party government* in which crucial elements of public authority are shared with a host of nongovernmental or other-government actors, frequently in complex collaborative systems." This "new governance" is exercised through a "dense mosaic of policy tools," including grants and contracts, loans and loan guarantees, vouchers and tax incentives, and much more. Rather than hierarchical agencies exercising command and control, the new governance emphasizes organizational networks, partnership between public and private sectors, and negotiation and persuasion.[25]

Various tools of the new governance are central to the policy design principles and case analyses that follow. But it is important to recognize up

front that many of the new tools also have costs and risks from the perspective of a robust citizenship and democratic accountability and thus need to be addressed more fully in policy design and administrative practice. Government, in short, can still be very much part of the problem in the new governance. Government-financed services provided through nonprofit agencies, for instance, are also liable to treat citizens as passive clients rather than empowered community members capable of mobilizing assets and networks to solve problems. Indeed, even those nonprofits that use substantial numbers of volunteers can do this, while the old street-level bureaucrats turn into the "new street-level bureaucrats," in the apt phrase of Steven Rathgeb Smith and Michael Lipsky.[26] The dense, complex mosaic of tools and providers can lessen visibility and accountability as well as fragment constituencies in ways that make collective voice even more difficult. Professional dominance is no less a risk when licensed experts, disconnected from communities, ply their trade through nonprofit or for-profit agencies, unless policy design and organizational culture encourage otherwise. Market-based tools can turn citizens into customers and undermine the sense of obligation and public spirit.[27]

That government can be a civic disabler is not directly connected to the overall size of the welfare state. In fact, considerable evidence shows that some welfare states proportionally larger than the American one also have higher levels of associational life and civic engagement. As political scientist Bo Rothstein points out, "The two countries with the most extensive welfare policies, the Netherlands and Sweden, also have the highest scores in the volume of unpaid work in voluntary associations." The Swedish state, for instance, provides financial support for the widespread study circle movement, and universal social insurance benefits seem less likely to have negative impacts on civil society and trust than means-tested ones. It is much more the design than the size of welfare state institutions that is critical.[28]

The Rising Costs of Doing Democracy Well

A third reason government needs to play a more ambitious role as enabler is that the costs of effective civic engagement and robust self-government are substantial and rising. Relative to national income or investments that society makes in other forms of problem solving (professional, bureaucratic, market), civic investment has most likely declined, though this is nearly impossible to calculate with any degree of confidence. Relative to contemporary public challenges, however, local civic

groups are unable to generate sufficient resources, and private foundations, while often helping to spur innovation, cannot be counted on for sustained and substantial civic investing. Without commensurate and strategic investments by government, the nation will fall considerably, even dangerously, short of revitalizing our civic infrastructure and problem-solving capacities.[29]

Stephen Holmes and Cass Sunstein, political and legal theorists, address some of the costs of democracy in their complementary arguments in *The Cost of Rights: Why Liberty Depends on Taxes.* According to Holmes and Sunstein, rights are secured by government, as clearly recognized in our Declaration of Independence and Constitution, but "rights cannot be protected or enforced without public funding and support. . . . All rights make claims on the public treasury." Enforcing rights requires, for instance, adequately funded courts of law and legal training. Rights to public safety require us to fund police departments, and protecting the rights of suspects and detainees is enhanced by investments in police training. The right to a jury trial has added costs—by one 1989 estimate, an average of $13,000 a trial. The constitutional right to due process, such as the private right to bring an action in contract or tort, presupposes that "at the taxpayers' expense, the state maintains and makes accessible complex and relatively transparent legal institutions within which the cumbersome formalities of fair, public, and understandable adjudication occur." Private property, misleadingly counterposed to government by some conservative theorists, is itself a complex bundle of rights that are quite costly to enforce.[30]

If we are to enjoy rights to safe products, we must fund such federal agencies as the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Rights to collective bargaining are secured through the National Labor Relations Board. The right to vote, of course, requires government to provide polling stations and voting machines, as well as training and oversight of poll workers. To be sure, many forms of private investment and voluntary action—from public interest lobbies to volunteer poll workers and grassroots rights advocates—enable us to secure rights effectively. But as Holmes and Sunstein conclude, "The amount a community chooses to expend decisively affects the extent to which the fundamental rights of Americans are protected and enforced."[31]

Self-governance by engaged, informed, and skilled citizens also requires public investments. To illustrate this, I add community policing to the argument of Holmes and Sunstein about rights to public safety and take a brief look at Chicago.

    In the early 1990s, the mayor and police chief of Chicago, responding to citizens mobilized for more effective and responsive approaches to crime, established the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy, which has become the premier big-city program of its kind in the nation. Under the widely publicized slogan "Safe Neighborhoods Are Everybody's Business," the reform recognized public safety as a complex public good that police officers alone, acting according to narrow professional norms and bureaucratic procedures, could not produce effectively. Police would have to learn to collaborate with ordinary citizens, as well as with a variety of stakeholders (landlords, clergy, shopkeepers, senior citizen groups) and other city agencies (buildings, transportation, forestry, health, streets and sanitation) to develop integrative, holistic strategies to "coproduce" public safety. Enhancing safety on a particular street, for instance, might require paying special attention to problem tenants, trimming trees for better lighting, altering a bus route, and fixing various "broken windows," such as removing abandoned cars or cleaning up a vacant lot. Citizens themselves would need to share their local knowledge of crime patterns and players with police and collaborate in developing strategies tailored to specific neighborhoods, blocks, business establishments, and other institutions. They would also need to act directly in ways that complement the plans developed collaboratively with police.[32]

    Thus in Chicago, citizens organize parent patrols to enhance school safety and "walking school buses" as convoys for children to and from school. They march to "take back the night" to protect women and girls from predators, and they hold prayer vigils and barbeque "smoke outs" in the midst of street drug markets to drive them from the neighborhood. They organize "stand ups" in front of businesses that generate problematic street behavior. Citizens also clean up graffiti and gang markings, picket the homes of landlords whose buildings are sites of crime and violence, and organize court advocacy to monitor judges as they mete out sentences. To help neighbors secure their homes and report crime rapidly to the police, residents develop safety education initiatives. To fix broken windows that signify social disorder, they organize "clean and green" efforts, with implements and trash bags provided by the city. Citizens volunteer in mediation and cooperative truancy reduction programs with schools. They work with young people and court officials to develop teen courts (or "peer juries"), which typically hear cases of first-time offenders, fourteen to sixteen years of age, in crimes such as shoplifting, vandalism, minor assault, disorderly conduct, and drug and alcohol use. Youth themselves, with assistance from

pro bono lawyers and retired judges, volunteer for teen court service to help ensure restorative justice and a sense of responsible engagement in community life.

To facilitate such collaborative work, the police department has been decentralized into twenty-five districts and 279 beats. These beats convene regularly scheduled (typically monthly) meetings at which local residents and officers together analyze patterns of complaints and statistically gener-ated neighborhood crime data, develop beat plans for problem solving, review past progress, and revise strategies. For community policing in Chicago to work effectively, however, has required not just organizational decentralization and civic opportunity but also substantial investment of public monies, some provided by federal and state agencies. While some local civic groups had developed relevant organizing skills before the reform, the city has had to invest in training to generalize problem-solving skills across all neighborhoods. In 1995–97, when the program transi-tioned from its prototype stage to citywide application, the police depart-ment contracted with the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety, the lead citizens group on crime, to help provide joint community-police train-ing to 11,700 citizens through 1,065 training events. The cost of the con-tract was $2.9 million, not including direct costs to the department for police trainers or the previous training during the prototype stage. Since the citywide rollout, the department has continued to offer periodic train-ing to citizen beat facilitators and beat officers, as well as to middle and upper management to transform the organizational culture in lasting ways. It has also recruited dozens of community organizers into permanent staff positions.

To encourage broad participation in beat meetings, attended monthly by about 6,300 to 7,500 residents across the city, the department also invests in widespread advertising and outreach. In 2003 the public safety program spent $950,000 on television advertising alone, and its core civic message eliciting engagement and coproduction appears everywhere—on buses and subways, in church bulletins and utility bills, local stores and restaurants, schools and libraries, and in city employee paycheck envelopes. In 2003 the department also offered a landlord training course on screening and man-aging problem tenants, attended by eight hundred landlords with more than ten thousand rental units. Some landlords were required to attend as part of settlements with the Drug and Gang House Enforcement Section of the city's Department of Law. In the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy, the skill set of private landlords as both stakeholders and citizens complements

the civic problem-solving skills of ordinary residents and beat officers and thus represents a worthy public investment in the democratic coproduction of public safety. While it is impossible to estimate the exact dollar amount of public funds devoted to developing the relevant professional and civic skills, ensuring broad outreach for diverse participation across the city, and building organizational capacities for collaborative problem solving, the investment of the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy in civic capacities has clearly been substantial—several million dollars or more a year averaged over the life of the program to date.[33]

The Rising Costs of Self-Governance

As indicated by this example and much other research, various general factors drive the cost side of civic problem solving and collaborative governance. Among the most important are the increasing complexity of public problems, the growing diversity of publics, and the rising expectations of citizens for voice and inclusion.

Increasing Complexity of Public Problems

In Chicago, public officials and organized citizens opted for community policing partly because, in line with a large body of emerging research, they recognized that public safety in the contemporary city cannot be effectively addressed by the usual segmented, bureaucratic, and rapid-response methods that had become the norm over several generations of police professionalization.[34] This new environment required police to think more systematically about a broad range of interrelated problems, from housing, land use, and transportation to social services, schools, and race and gender dynamics. After years of devaluing local knowledge and neighborhood networks, officers had to find ways of realigning these with their own professional skills. Community policing also required that citizens be able to analyze complex, geographic crime data, combine them with their own local knowledge of neighborhood patterns, and deliberate and plan effectively, instead of just complaining and protesting or, worse, retreating behind closed doors and shaded windows.

The well-being of our water supply is another example. To protect and restore ecosystems, scientists, river movement leaders, and government officials at all levels of the federal system have come to broad agreement that virtually all discrete problems of water—quality, supply, fisheries, flood control, habitat preservation, biodiversity—need to be understood as part of

hydrologically defined drainage basins known as watersheds, which have at least as many components as crime in the big city. A National Research Council report published in 1999 summarized the emergent consensus: watersheds require integrative management linking all components (rivers, wetlands, ground water, atmosphere, flood plains, upland areas), and effective management needs to integrate biophysical and social sciences, as well as lay and professional knowledge.[35] Reaching the pollution reduction goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program, notes a 2007 report from the National Academy of Public Administration, will require joint efforts by 6 states, the District of Columbia, 3,169 local governments, and 23 federal agencies; 678 watershed associations, a large number of citizen-run "riverkeeper" organizations, 2 interstate river basin commissions, 30 regional councils, 36 state-created tributary strategy teams; eighty-seven thousand farm owners and 5 million to 6 million homeowners; hundreds of lawn care companies, an uncounted number of land developers, homebuilders, construction companies, agribusinesses, and other companies that pollute the bay; and a large number of other civic and nonprofit organizations.[36]

The watershed approach presents an enormous challenge in civic capacity building: creating and sustaining watershed associations and kindred organizations for some two thousand major watersheds and still more numerous subwatersheds; developing these associations' ability to do scientifically sound volunteer monitoring to gather usable place-based data; generating their staff capacity for complex watershed planning rooted in broad public education and deliberation; mobilizing volunteers for hands-on restoration projects; and enhancing the training capacities of state, regional, and national intermediary organizations, such as the Colorado Watershed Assembly, the Southeast Watershed Forum, and River Network. Climate change, which barely figured into early analyses, now further compounds the complexity of the public management and civic capacity–building challenges for effective watershed work.[37]

When we consider these challenges in light of the decline of multitiered civic associations, at least two things stand out. First, no existing multitiered associations in the first half of the twentieth century had cognitive frames capable of addressing this level of complexity, and few if any demonstrated any propensity to develop such frames thereafter. Second, in such a diverse organizational ecology comprising so many different types of civic and other stakeholders, branded local chapters of national multitiered associations become structurally less privileged as civic aggregators at the local level and thereby in the system as a whole. This structural deficit

emerged gradually, independent of and in addition to the sociopolitical causes that Skocpol analyzes. Government investments in civic capacity at multiple levels of the federal system become increasingly necessary because social and policy complexity disrupt the civic value chain of the classic multitiered association.

Scholars in many other policy arenas—from community health and family services to education reform and urban and regional planning—demonstrate that the increasing complexity of public problems has elicited new challenges and thereby raised the bar for the types of civic skills and organizational capacity required to address them effectively.[38] As Clarence Stone and his colleagues argue in *Building Civic Capacity: The Politics of Reforming Urban Schools,* sustained reform of urban education systems requires far more than the latest pedagogical techniques and management practices. Urban school systems are what the authors call "high reverberation subsystems . . . characterized by frequent reshuffling of mobilized stakeholders, multiple and strongly felt competing value and belief systems, deeply held stakes by both educators (the professional providers of education) and parents (the consumers), and ambiguous boundaries." Existing stocks of social capital, even if substantial, will not help much unless civic mobilization occurs in ways that engage business elites, community groups, educational professionals, and political leaders in forging a shared definition of the problem and frame of action and also support parents through training and other means to become skilled and committed players in a sustainable coalition.[39]

Growing Diversity of Publics

As the American public becomes more diverse and the organized stakeholders that might constitute the relevant "publics" for any given problem or policy arena become increasingly variegated, the challenges of forging workable consensus and ongoing collaboration rise commensurately. The most obvious form of diversity, of course, is demographic. Our communities are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and immigrant status, as well as other social and cultural identities. In addition, the norms of fair representation and deliberation have become much more inclusive than in earlier periods of our democratic development. Not only are various types of formal exclusion now illegal, but it is also much less acceptable to sanction official public forums and decisionmaking processes that draw primarily from the "usual suspects," even if the process meets formal requirements of openness.

Chicago, for instance, has spent millions of dollars for public outreach and skilled beat-meeting facilitation to ensure that participation in community policing reaches not only white but also African American and Latino communities, not only homeowners but also renters, not only middle- and upper-class residents but also those residents from less economically advantaged neighborhoods. The Department of Neighborhoods in Seattle invests in relational organizing among new immigrant and refugee communities to include them more quickly and thoroughly in the civic life of the city and to generate bridging social capital across communities. Demographic diversity, of course, is not only a statistical census category but also one deeply imbued with distinct cultures, identities, and styles of public communication, which further add to the challenges of facilitating democratic deliberation and building civic relationships that can enable common public work.[40]

Publics are also becoming ever more diverse as a result of increasing institutional differentiation, pluralization of interests, and proliferation of stakeholder groups.[41] Such diversity raises the costs of negotiating interests, aligning perspectives, and building ongoing relationships of civic trust. In more and more communities and policy arenas, it has become clear that the hyperpluralism of fragmented interest representation too often leads to unacceptable levels of conflict, stalemate, and suboptimal policies. To counter such tendencies, various innovations in community visioning, consensus building, and civic partnership have emerged. These often include dozens of stakeholders—100 or more in some cases—involved in what Indiana University public management theorist Robert Agranoff calls "complex value creation networks."[42] An ecosystem partnership in the West, for instance, might include a dozen watershed, conservation, and recreation groups; an equal number of farmer, rancher, timber, irrigator, and other local business groups; various federal, state, and local agencies operating with diverse legal mandates and organizational cultures; local foundations and land trusts; schools, universities, and research institutes; and elected local officials from multiple jurisdictions.[43] To take another case, a multistakeholder partnership for comprehensive community revitalization in a minority and poor neighborhood of Portland, Oregon, during the 1990s included forty-one different civic and nonprofit groups and an equal number of government agencies, schools, universities, and business groups that collaborated in developing and implementing the plan through 140 public meetings over a three-year period.[44]

For broad community visioning, complex participatory planning, and sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships to work well typically requires

various kinds of investments. These might include trained facilitators to ensure effective and fair deliberative processes as well as association and government staff that can play ongoing bridging and trust-building roles. Investments might also be needed for broad outreach and public education to ensure engagement and participation by ordinary citizens and associational memberships as well as planning support systems capable of generating usable place-based data.[45] The City of Seattle provided $4.5 million directly to independent neighborhood planning groups—which typically included representatives from diverse community councils, neighborhood business associations, and other civic and nonprofit groups—to develop inclusive participation, broad consensus, and technically sound proposals. In addition, the neighborhood planning office hired ten project managers to assist the neighborhood planning groups, help build trust among various stakeholders through ongoing relational work, vet the emerging plans with a dozen or so city departments in a continuous iterative process over several years of planning and the first years of implementation, and coordinate the entire process with the city council's neighborhoods committee to ensure democratic accountability at the city level. Without these public investments in collaborative governance, it is very likely that comprehensive planning in many areas of the city would have stalled and—as a result of delay, disruption, and legal action—imposed comparably higher costs on city departments, business investors, homeowners, and renters.

Rising Public Expectations for Voice and Inclusion

A third factor driving the costs of civic problem solving and self-governance is citizens' own rising expectations that government consult them and provide them with opportunities to contribute productively, as well as the proliferation of citizen veto opportunities to obstruct government action. This was the case in Seattle, where the 1985 downtown plan was sabotaged by a successful initiative campaign for a Citizens Alternative Plan. Such heightened expectations are no surprise to public officials who have to manage clamorous public claims for voice or veto, nor to scholars of participation, who attribute such heightened expectations to increases in education, postindustrial job skills, and democratization of information as well as various value shifts favoring self-expression and inclusion.[46]

In Hampton, Virginia, an innovative citywide system for youth civic engagement emerged in the early 1990s when young people themselves, convened as part of a collaborative community planning process, made it clear that they wanted to be treated not as problems but as problem solvers

and contributors to the community at large. But if they were to be given new opportunities to participate, they wanted to be sure to have the requisite skills and leadership development so as not "to be set up for failure," as one seventeen-year-old leader said. In response, the city began to institutionalize a system of youth civic engagement with a variety of complementary components: a youth commission made up of two dozen students from the city's seven public and private high schools, part-time teenage youth planners (housed in the Hampton Planning Department), a superintendent's advisory group for students in all public high schools and principal's advisory groups in each high school (later expanded to middle schools), and youth representation in neighborhood associations and on the citywide neighborhood youth advisory board, as well as on advisory boards and programs of various other city departments, commissions, and public-private partnerships.

To provide leadership development to youth, and to help catalyze culture change among adults in city agencies and nonprofits, the city council invests some $400,000 a year in staffing the Coalition for Youth (a small city department) and enabling it to provide training contracts to a local youth development nonprofit. The public schools also contribute $70,000 annually to similar training and facilitation, not including their recent introduction of service learning across the high school curriculum.

Investment in Civic Capacity

In short, the costs of doing civic democracy well in contemporary America are substantial and rising. The growing complexity of problems, increased diversity of publics, and heightened expectations of citizens for voice and inclusion all contribute to the enhanced civic skill sets and organizational capacities needed for effective problem solving and democratic self-government. Rising costs are hardly peculiar to forms of engagement sponsored or supported in some way by government.

Congregation-based (or faith-based) organizing—arguably the most effective and steadily growing form of independent community organizing today—now recognizes clearly that sustained investments in leadership development must be made if ordinary citizens are to acquire the capacity to grapple with complex issues in their communities, build bridges across denominational and ethnic-racial boundaries, and establish sustainable institutional and policy partnerships, such as job training or education reform. Indeed, professional organizers from the major national networks,

such as the Industrial Areas Foundation, the Pacific Institute for Community Organization, and the Gamaliel Foundation, agree to work with a community only on condition that the coalition of congregational leaders sign a contract promising to provide sufficient resources for developing the kind of citizen-leaders that can build "relational power" for the long run. True, faith-based organizing can draw upon stocks of social capital and civic skills already existing in congregations, as well as within other member organizations that one might find in a coalition. But substantial up-front investment, as well as much more systematic attention to leadership and partnership development than was typical in earlier community organizing, is requisite to realize genuine value added in building inclusive, accountable, relational power capable of sustained achievements.[47]

Not all investments by government, to be sure, are wise, even in some of our best cases. Programs thus need to be continually evaluated for effectiveness, often revamped, and sometimes discontinued. Some up-front investments, such as those for citizen and professional training during the initial citywide rollout of a program, can be reduced considerably during later phases, as more skilled participants train and socialize newcomers in a variety of informal ways and as civic problem solving becomes more embedded in organizational and professional cultures. There is no one model for providing training. Often it makes sense for a government agency to contract with an independent citizens group or intermediary association or institute, sometimes to provide some or even most of the training itself. Community policing in Chicago began with one model and later switched to another. In any case, citizens invariably mix civic skills from many sources—families, schools, churches, and jobs—as well as organizing or advocacy quite different from those that are the focus of this book.[48] Some of these skills will derive, at least partly, from government investment, as with civic education and service learning in public schools or national service through AmeriCorps.[49] Others reflect the continued vitality of some independent associations and community groups, large and small. Government neither is nor ever should or could be the prime mover or sole provider.

Not all citizens, of course, need to develop higher-order civic skills, such as those one might use to facilitate a beat meeting in a big city, organize study circles on contentious and complex issues, lead a community-based research project on cumulative toxic risk, or cochair a multistakeholder ecosystem partnership. For some, it will be enough that they can build relationships with neighbors and get them to help out regularly with a parent

patrol at the school, deliberate in a study circle for several sessions over a three-month period, monitor air quality periodically at a busy intersection in their neighborhood, or help plant trees in the springtime to restore the riparian buffer of a local stream. A vibrant civic democracy can undoubtedly thrive with many citizens who are only occasionally involved and have fairly circumscribed civic skills and with some who are not involved much at all—although a good polity might certainly wish to aim for some minimum of civic virtues and skills for all citizens.

Nor do all professional staff partners in a government agency need to have well-developed enabling skills for a civic partnership to work well, as long as enough of them do and as long as the broader organizational culture and administrative practices of the agency do not undermine civic modes of problem solving. Capacity building, both on the civic side and the agency side, is never a question of every citizen, professional, or organizational partner having the perfect skill set but rather requires a rich enough mix available through the relevant networks to enable effective democratic work, determined through a pragmatic process of testing and mutual learning.

Shared Responsibility for Civic Investment

If the costs of doing civic democracy well are rising, some might nonetheless also ask why government should become a major, strategic investor. Indeed, why should it play any role at all? Is not this the proper role of civil society? Are there not dangers that government will discourage or distort investments by citizens, civic associations, and nonprofit funders or that it will co-opt and undermine independent civic action? Chapter 2, on elements of policy design for democracy, addresses some of these concerns, and later chapters provide case analyses that take them up in more detail. Let me here make only a few basic points.

First, democratic government has a fundamental and fully legitimate interest in its citizens' having the requisite civic skills, networks, and deliberative forums needed to sustain a self-governing republic—at least if, to paraphrase Benjamin Franklin upon exiting the Constitutional Convention in 1787, we wish to keep it. We may test—and contest—what a self-governing republic means for a complex polity in a globalizing world of the twenty-first century and how direct civic engagement can and should be properly interwoven with democratic representation, bureaucratic administration, and other tools of governance. Some would undoubtedly contest

government investment in a citywide neighborhood association system on grounds that it might compete with independent, faith-based community organizing. Others would prefer a social movement with an us-versus-them frame over a collaborative one or national advocacy for command and control over local multistakeholder partnerships. Indeed, in Holmes and Sunstein's parallel argument, Americans are always contesting the boundaries and forms of various rights and hence the types of investments we might make to secure them effectively.[50]

Some conservative thinkers have vigorously contested the role of the federal government in funding national service and service-learning programs through the Corporation for National and Community Service, established in 1993, as well as earlier national service programs. Nonetheless, the core normative debate has largely been resolved in favor of a government role, and national service has found many conservative enthusiasts and leaders.[51] Justifying a democratic government's fundamental interest in helping to ensure adequate civic skills and capacities and backing up its interest with the investment of public resources of various sorts (funding, tools, staff support) are not problems of a different order from justifying investments in civic education or national service. This is especially true if one recognizes, as Putnam argues, that "like all public goods, social capital tends to be undervalued and undersupplied by private agents."[52] A democratic polity needs capable and connected citizens and should do what it can to enable them to develop as such.

Second, democratic government has an interest in investing in some types of civic capacity building over others and, indeed, of not investing in some types at all. Government funding of trial by jury, voting machinery, and training of poll workers, as already noted, is clearly fundamental to protecting democratic rights and securing democratic representation. We all accept this as unproblematic, even if we might battle over the types of poll machines to use or the trustworthiness of specific vendors to ensure fairness and accuracy. My argument takes this one step further: democratic government has a fully legitimate interest in investing in the kinds of civic capacity building that enables it to solve public problems effectively and to enlist diverse citizens and stakeholders to collaborate in doing so. Government, in other words, ought to invest in collaborative governance to help ensure that its partners have capacities for fair and informed deliberation and shared work, especially those forms that engage citizens in productive and value-adding roles. Evidence of effective performance and value added contributions, of course, is critical to building and maintaining public support for

such investments, an issue I examine in this book on the local level but one that also begs discussion for national policy.

However, democratic government has no business investing in certain electoral partisans or advocacy groups over others. It is also not the role of government to sponsor protest movements. The right to protest, of course, is vital to a democracy, and many contentious movements have made enormous contributions to expanding democracy and participation and to changing how government works—indeed, even to supplying civic activists for collaborative problem solving along the way.[53] But resource mobilization for protest clearly remains a task for independent organizing that stays largely clear of government financing. In practice, of course, it is not always easy to draw clear boundaries, especially when policy feedback loops can tend to encourage some forms of civic mobilization over others.[54] However, as long as government protects rights to independent citizen action and makes adequate investments (through civic education, open public information, courts) to ensure that citizens understand and are capable of exercising their rights to protest, its investment in collaborative forms of governance is not fundamentally problematic, though there are important issues at stake, to be sure.

Third, government investment is critical because investments from the independent civic and nonprofit sector, as essential as they have been, tend to fall short for a variety of reasons. On the positive side, it would be difficult to imagine some of the important civic innovations and sustained capacity building of the past several decades without the leadership and resources of private foundations, large and small. The Kellogg Foundation, for instance, has made strategic field-building investments in service learning that have paid substantial dividends.[55] The Kendall Foundation funded a series of watershed innovators workshops in the mid-1990s that enabled critical learning for state watershed networks and agency programs that have become essential to the watershed approach.[56] A number of important foundation leaders, from the Kettering, Surdna, and Boston foundations and the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, among others, formed a "civil investing group" to help educate the larger foundation world about the critical need for investments in civic infrastructure and practice. The Grantmakers Forum on Community and National Service changed its name to Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement as it began to recognize a much broader mission that included community problem solving, civic education, and leadership training.[57]

However, such foundation leaders and program officers are generally the first to admit that private foundation investments in civic infrastructure

are hardly adequate relative to existing and future needs or comparable to those investments that government can make. As critical as Kellogg's investment in service learning has been, for instance, Learn and Serve America, a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, has made strategic field-building investments several times the magnitude of those of Kellogg and other leading foundations. And still further investments in service learning and the broader civic mission of schools are sorely needed.[58] Similarly, the Kendall Foundation's investments in developing the watershed approach and building the civic capacity of the field, while formative, have been dwarfed by those of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and many state environmental agencies—and again, the unmet need is still substantial.

Foundations, of course, also go through faddish innovation cycles and often fail to sustain their civic capacity–building work. Many also tend to be hooked on categorical programs and issue-specific niche funding, as well as professionalized therapeutic interventions for clients rather than problem solving by citizens. Although much room exists for private foundations to increase investment in building capacity for robust civic problem solving, and various public policy designs should elicit further increases through matching grant requirements and the like, there is little sign that private foundation investments will be adequate any time soon. In addition, there are some forms of investment, such as police training and staff time for collaborative problem solving with citizens, for which reliance on private foundation funding would clearly be inappropriate.

Finally, of course, government is accountable to the general public, however complex and challenging a task such accountability has become, whereas private foundations are accountable first and foremost to their boards. If a foundation board chooses to invest in programs that treat people as recipients of charitable services and as communities defined by their deficits, we may complain and criticize and try to induce changes in practice. When our government fails to invest in the tools we need to be effective citizens and to enable our collaborative public work, or even worse to impede it, we have every right and responsibility to hold such a government accountable.

Indeed, we have the right and responsibility to hold one another accountable. As citizens, we are accountable for our collective willingness to invest in our civic capacities. Yet we can only begin to properly hold one another accountable if we understand clearly that a vibrant civic democracy

is not a free good. Civic capacities do not simply bubble up from the well-springs of community life, supplied by the bountiful aquifers of grand republican traditions, at least not in the complex and transformed world in which we currently live. It is relatively easy for us to appreciate the need for capital investment if business is to grow, and as taxpayers we agree to various tax incentives to make this happen. Those who are homeowners know that maintenance and renovation have long-term payoffs, and we expect our financial institutions to support us in such work, even when we put up the studs and sheetrock or new clapboards ourselves. In fact, we also grant tax deductions for interest on home equity loans and recognize multiplier effects to ourselves as well as our neighbors—the value of their homes increases when we make certain kinds of improvements to our own.

We have become far more aware as a society than we were a half century ago that human capital investments have multiplier effects of many sorts—for employers, employees, and the nation's productivity as a whole. Management theorists now recognize that investing in leadership has multiplier effects in attracting, retaining, and optimally engaging human capital. But we have not yet developed a sound understanding of the nature or importance of investments in civic leadership, collaborative tools, and organizational and network infrastructure, especially those kinds of investments that government itself can and should make. Investments in civic problem-solving capacities and governance do not typically show up on our public balance sheets, even in a city like Seattle, where there is clear recognition that investments in neighborhood planning have not only reduced costs owing to delay and obstruction but have also helped yield, many times over, a positive return on investment in the form of highly visible public improvements.[59]

The following chapters begin to explore public investment in civic capacity, especially through specific components of policy design and administration. Investing, of course, takes many forms: funding to help build associations and networks that can tackle public problems effectively; training and leadership development for both citizens and agency staff and staff time devoted to collaborative problem solving; matching grants designed to leverage additional resources and volunteer labor from other institutions and communities themselves; information systems to enable citizens to generate, share, and productively use knowledge.

Like other types of investment, whether private or public, civic investing raises a range of questions that will typically be contested and will challenge elected leaders, agency officials, advocacy groups, nonprofit service

organizations, and foundations to account for the rationality of choices: visible versus less tangible impacts, direct costs as well as opportunity costs, long-term and short-term payoffs, problem-solving capacities versus immediate service deliverables. Will investing in community policing have greater impact on public safety than putting a hundred more cops in cruisers, and what will be the relative impact of each choice on race relations in the city? Will extended deliberation to bring regional stakeholders to a working consensus take too much time in the face of urgent problems that might be amenable to a regulatory or market solution? When budgets are tight, do we cut money from the city's direct service or leadership development programs, the latter already only a tiny fraction of the former? How do we measure return on investment and develop plausible accounts that generate support for elected leaders willing to invest in democracy?[60]

Although real dollars matter enormously, investment should not be construed too narrowly. In many areas of our lives, we often ask ourselves and one another whether we are sufficiently "invested"—in our friendships, our marriages, our children's future, our work projects, our spiritual well-being. These are questions not of money but of meaning, metaphor, and motivation. Being invested entails commitment, time, attention, not taking for granted. Underlying the issues of policy design, administrative innovation, and public monies thus lurks the larger question that we can ask and answer only as citizens: Are we really invested in making our democracy work?

Research Methods and Plan of the Book

In this section, I discuss some methodological strategies employed in this book to understand how government can be a civic enabler and strategic investor. Those not wishing to be burdened by such issues at this point might jump ahead to chapter 2, which presents my conceptual approach, and then to the case study chapters, or even start with the case study narratives and later return to method and theory.

The research design of this book represents a hybrid of three elements: normatively grounded and empirically generated typological theory of collaborative governance, especially as this relates to questions of policy design and administrative practice; case study research on three relatively robust cases (also known as building-block studies) at different levels of the federal system in the United States that can throw light on the rich mix of potential components and configurations of collaborative governance, as well as

the processes of policy learning through which these emerged and for which case research is especially well suited; and policy proposals at the federal level that are informed by the theory and cases, as well as additional empirical research of my own and other colleagues concerned with similar questions. There are thus several modes of democratic inquiry at work here. The main policy proposals in the concluding chapter are oriented to working carefully within the limits of current knowledge and to enable energetic learning while doing, thereby helping generate positive movement forward amid genuine scholarly, as well as political, uncertainty.

Chapter 2 outlines core principles of policy design that can enhance civic capacities for self-government. I call the overall mix a typological theory of collaborative governance. My use of this term stresses collaboration among engaged and empowered citizens, not just organizational or interagency collaboration, though the latter are also essential. Others would use the closely related term *democratic network governance*. Since there is a growing literature in this field, and because a good number of the key actors from my case narratives are highly reflective practitioners who draw explicitly on various of these principles, I put the typological theory up front.[61]

I make no pretense to have discovered these all from my own empirical research but stand on the shoulders of other policy analysts, democratic theorists, social scientists, and civic practitioners in sketching certain fundamentals that have emerged in the relevant literature. Of course, I have selected and configured these principles in a way that I find most coherent and useful for empirical analysis and "policy design for democracy."[62] As I make clear, I do not see all policy in a vibrant civic democracy as requiring all of the core principles; rather, I encourage a pragmatic mix appropriate to specific kinds of policy problems and contexts while also attending to overall cumulative impacts of those tools of governance that do not directly enable civic engagement or, worse, may marginalize it. It is the mix that matters, not any one specific configuration or application on its own.

For the sake of a broad public and policy audience, I do not engage all the nuances one finds in the lively theoretical debates on these design principles, such as deliberative democracy, reciprocal accountability, or democratic network governance. Instead, I direct the reader to key bodies of literature, tease some issues out further in the case studies, and, in the concluding chapter, provide a policy design proposal that would productively lodge such debates in the heart of federal agency learning.

Case Studies

Chapters 3 to 5 examine three extended case studies of relatively robust policy and program designs and sets of public administration practices, to which I have alluded already. The two city-based cases, Seattle's neighborhood system and Hampton's youth civic engagement system, are widely recognized as among the best in their fields, and both have been winners of Innovations in American Government Awards, bestowed by Harvard University's Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation, in collaboration with the Council for Excellence in Government. Both models competed with the broadest range of types of government innovations. Both have various institutional and programmatic components and thus provide—a bit like Russian dolls—the opportunity to examine cases within cases, which is especially useful in case study research. Both have also benefited from federal programs and provide a window onto how various federal agencies might provide further support, especially for cities less favorably situated to innovate on their own. Both cities have also proved capable of sustaining their innovations and extending their reach over the years.

I have chosen the Environmental Protection Agency to explore how a major federal agency with strong command and control origins could, through successive changes in national administration, introduce increasingly coherent community-based program innovations and help build civic capacity through state and local agencies as well as various civic networks. My previous work in the 1990s with several other federal agencies, as well as more recent scans of their community-based work, convinced me that the EPA was probably the most robust case to study at this point, other than the one agency with an explicit civic mission, the Corporation for National and Community Service, to which I turn briefly in the last chapter. The Environmental Protection Agency, of course, has not been a prime mover. Rather, the agency has been responsive in various ways to local groups, state and local agency innovators, national intermediaries, and social movement leaders, though, as one might expect, it has often taken much pressure to elicit responsiveness. It will no doubt take more.

Within the EPA, I have selected three program areas and two cross-agency initiatives. I have chosen the three program areas (watersheds, Superfund, and environmental justice) not only because they have been important innovators on community engagement but also because they

have had important differences among themselves (statutory basis, levels of funding, degrees of contentiousness at the community and movement levels). In addition to these three program areas within the EPA, I examine the two major cross-program culture change initiatives within the agency to understand how deeper agency culture change and broader civic and policy learning take place and how networks in the larger field of civic environmentalism have been part of this process. The first initiative, Community Based Environmental Protection (CBEP), began in 1994. Although its organizational home, the Office of Sustainable Ecosystems and Communities, disbanded in 1999, CBEP networks across headquarters and regional EPA offices, state programs, and civic associations, as well as CBEP's cognitive framing, have continued to reverberate ever since.

The second initiative, currently ongoing, is the Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program, which grew directly out of CBEP networks but has been designed to avoid problems faced by the Office of Sustainable Ecosystems and Communities as well as to integrate other programmatic staff (and their various tools) into its network. In addition, CARE has partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry; this promises fruitful interagency collaboration on building capacities for disease prevention and community health promotion. Staff from CBEP and CARE have also been leaders within broader federal networks.

As political scientists Alexander George and Andrew Bennett argue in *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences,* and as other methodologists also show, case study research has a variety of advantages but also clear limits. Among the strengths of case study research is its ability to generate high levels of conceptual validity, especially on core concepts such as "democracy, power, political culture . . . [that] are notoriously difficult to measure."[63] When adding, as in the present context, *network* to "democracy," *relational* to "power," and *collaborative* to "political culture," the need for rich case study analysis only increases.[64] Similarly, process tracing in case study research permits a nuanced understanding of complex causal relationships and causal chains—or multiple conjunctural causation, in University of Arizona sociologist Charles Ragin's terminology—as well as insight into policy learning and diffusion, which are central to my analysis.[65]

In Seattle, collaborative approaches emerged over two decades from the complex interplay of local neighborhood activism and environmentally sustainable city planning, mandated by state law (chapter 3), which find important complements through the design of the Puget Sound National

Estuary Program and various collaborative salmon, shellfish, and other restoration projects and networks. These, in turn, helped shape the design of a new state office with a broad civic structure and strategy (chapter 5). I am interested in each piece of this causal puzzle, and exploring them expands the range of cases and "causal lumpiness" along the way. "The constitution of [case] populations is a theory-laden, concept-intensive process," as Ragin notes.[66] Case study research is well suited to the diversity and complexity of social life, with multiple interaction effects, as many researchers and methodologists recognize. It is especially suited to studying those forms of civic policy design and governance that emerge in direct response to increasing complexity and diversity.

Case study research also addresses the issue of "equifinality," or identifying different causal paths that lead to a similar outcome in different cases. Diana Schor and I have addressed this specifically in our more strictly comparative case study analysis of the youth civic engagement systems in Hampton and San Francisco, where city agency culture change, enabling more robust engagement and collaborative problem solving among youth and adults, emerged through two distinct pathways—reinventing government and social movement, respectively—reflecting the very different political cultures of the two cities.[67] Equifinality is an especially important issue for federal policy design, as I take up in chapter 6, if policy would seek to enable actors located in diverse communities, networks, agencies, and policy arenas to move along paths that might strengthen their capacities for collaborative governance and problem solving. This does not entail "multiple convergence" at an exactly similar point, to be sure, but within a range of appropriate possibilities that are complementary and mutually reinforcing for the nation's overall capacities for democratic self-government—a theory-laden issue if there ever was one.

Because case study research has various limits, especially when not strictly comparing cases (and even then), it is important to draw upon other kinds of research whenever possible. Jeffrey Berry, Kent Portney, and Ken Thomson's now classic study, *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy* (1993)*, uses quantitative and comparative data across many cities (and then a smaller subsample of five) to demonstrate the relatively more robust democratic impacts of citywide and city-supported systems of neighborhood participation, in comparison with those cities with more selective or different modes of engaging residents.[68] Their work has inspired my own in specific ways, though neither I nor other researchers have since developed a large-*N* sample of this sort for city models today. Chapter 5 draws upon

the National River Restoration Science Synthesis, which provides a very large-*N* sample of watershed restoration projects. Its findings clearly support civic engagement in watershed projects as the most important factor in generating accountability for results, but its central focus is the natural science side of evaluating ecological impacts.[69] Paul Sabatier, Will Focht, Mark Lubell, and their colleagues bring what they call second-generation methodological tools to studying collaborative watershed management in a relatively large sample of cases, and I draw upon their important findings, when relevant.[70] Other studies that I use, such as those of AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve, employ quantitative analysis and control groups to measure biographical and institutional impacts.

While case study research is certainly limited, the policy design proposed in the concluding chapter provides much room—indeed, I argue, the necessity—for the use of many different methods of analysis and evaluation to refine and advance workable, appropriate, and diverse forms of collaborative governance and network capacities. Two other methodological strategies immediately come to mind here. The first entails using "fuzzy set" tools that combine qualitative and quantitative assessment linked to set-theoretic relationships, especially as developed by Ragin. Building upon a configurational approach to complex relationships and causal pathways, "this approach searches for heterogeneity within 'given' or preconstituted [case] populations and conceives of 'difference' in terms of kinds and types of cases, replacing the conventional view of difference as variation (i.e. as deviation from the mean)."[71] Since fuzzy sets allow degrees of membership in types of cases (for example, collaborative watershed governance, neighborhood planning, community policing), they can be especially useful to policymakers and administrators, who invariably face a diversity of possible configurations of civic design and must make choices on whether to promote some over others and under what specific enabling and constraining conditions. Analytic types and degrees of membership reflect multiple and conjunctural causality, rooted in such factors as local political and agency culture, preexisting civic capacities and partnerships, demographic size and geographic scope, and specific policy challenges. Administrators must also make judgments based on expectations of probable pathways of development and relative likelihood of success and evaluate programs in a policy universe of relatively large numbers.

The second methodological strategy would combine typically qualitative (policy network analysis) with typically quantitative and formal (social network analysis) methods of specific policy fields and subfields, along with

the rich mix of qualitative, quantitative, and cultural methods that have become increasingly common in recent social movement network analysis. As I note in chapter 5, for instance, elaborating a watershed policy frame to guide collaborative governance and field building has been a highly interactive process among grassroots movement networks, agency officials, academic scientists, policy analysts, legal theorists, and others. Indeed, this cognitive framing has been essential to constituting the broader watershed movement as a network of meanings that run the gamut from the economic value of ecosystem functions to the cultural symbolism of "totem salmon," which has been so powerful in motivating civic action in the Northwest and beyond.[72] Combining these methodological approaches and moving beyond previous "analytical cliquishness" in network analysis would facilitate building fields more strategically, a core principle of collaborative governance that I discuss in the following chapter and return to in the policy proposals of chapter 6.[73]

Interviews with Agency Staff and Partners

I have used a variety of data collection methods for the case studies, especially formal interviews, field observations, and documentary sources. First, I conducted semistructured (or focused) interviews, in person and by telephone, with 271 public administrators, staff from local, state, regional, and national intermediaries who partnered with government for training and other forms of capacity building, and local citizens and youth leaders engaged in civic action. Most interviews lasted approximately one hour, though some were as long as three hours, and interviews with youth leaders tended to be less than a full hour. In some cases, I interviewed individuals multiple times and over a period of years during the course of my field research (2000–08), though I have drawn upon a few interviews from an earlier research project as well.

Multiple interviews with some key informants and their successors (for example, successive agency directors, chairs of city council land-use committees, youth planners) have permitted me to follow developments over several phases, to interrogate some further on the basis of diverse perspectives elicited from interviews with others, and to explore unanticipated consequences and unforeseen opportunities or constraints that emerged. My interviewees included some who have played roles in successive iterations of a program and others who performed what, in retrospect, one might see as a string of complementary roles in various government agencies and civic organizations over the course of one or more decades, sometimes shifting

the main focus of their work from one sector to another or from one level of government to another.

My interviews ranged across various topics, depending on the interviewee, including the development of programs, tools, funding, frames, trust, and networks; opportunities and obstacles to policy and network learning and agency culture change; and relevant political context, such as changes in elected leaders and appointed administrators, conflicts between city council and mayor, and grassroots community and social movement mobilization. The titles of those interviewed, as well as the ages of youth leaders, are those at the time of the interview, unless otherwise stated. Interviewees were provided the opportunity to speak off the record at any point in the interview or to request anonymity. One agency office preferred that no staff be cited by name (probably because of a delicate change in leadership at the time). Otherwise, real people appear in the case narratives of policy learning and program development in the hope that readers will recognize that government staff, and not just community activists or movement leaders, can act as flesh-and-blood agents of civic change and partnership building to enhance democracy. I have yet to encounter a faceless bureaucrat in my research, even among those with serious reservations about various aspects of civic policy design.[74]

The great majority of those interviewed, both within and outside of government, were quite free with criticisms and shortfalls they perceived in design and practice. One state agency official, for instance, noted more than halfway through the interview that "your question makes me nervous," at which point I expected him to close down; instead, he indicated that the following remarks were off the record and added that he still was not sure whether the new policy design was "just rhetoric." He had already been surprisingly blunt on the record and had been referred by someone who also was initially quite hesitant, agreeing to a fairly limited amount of time but then prompting me to ask far more, well beyond the agreed-upon forty minutes.

Before, during, and after my interviews, I used similar snowballing techniques to solicit other potential interviewees, both those who could corroborate, refine, or expand on evidence or perspective and those who might have divergent and more critical views. When seeking lists of potential interviewees from key informants, I was explicit about seeking diverse views, including those that were quite critical, at least of some parts of programs or implementation. Indeed, I factored key informants' willingness to

suggest the names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of critics—in some cases, even before I asked for them and including critics of their own actions—into my overall judgment of the balance and reliability of the information and perspectives they offered. While I certainly did not survey the full universe of potential types of critics in any given city, program, or agency, I did get a fairly broad range of critical views and triangulated these through documentary evidence and secondary studies whenever possible.[75]

I took extensive, sometimes near-verbatim, notes during my formal interviews and recorded most of my informal conversations shortly after they occurred. I did not tape-record the interviews, having been taught a subtle lesson some years earlier, during a tape-recorded interview with relational organizer par excellence Ernie Cortes, of the Industrial Areas Foundation, that if one wishes to learn about organizing while building trust, one does not turn on a tape recorder. At least that is the lesson I drew when, midway in the interview, Cortes walked to the opposite side of the large room so that his responses could no longer be picked up clearly by the recorder. I hit the off button, and the interview continued productively.

Field and Participant Observation

Second, to collect further data I conducted direct field observation as well as participant observation as an engaged scholar.[76] I conducted, or was accompanied on, a variety of tours of neighborhoods, government agency and civic association offices, and physical projects accomplished by a variety of initiatives. In some cases, I got drawn into spontaneous conversations among those present, such as during an evening barbecue among neighborhood leaders after a hard day's work at one of Seattle's community gardens. I took extensive field notes of various training and strategy conferences, staff meetings, and public as well as closed meetings of civic activists and stakeholders.

As academic adviser to the CARE program at the EPA, I participated in on-site and teleconference trainings of the CARE staff, on-site national CARE grantee trainings, staff-only strategy and planning meetings, and annual EPA agency-wide community involvement conferences. Another EPA team that developed the new train-the-trainer collaboration curriculum for middle managers included me in the feedback process before piloting the program in May 2008. I also had the opportunity to present and discuss a paper on the civic mission of federal agencies at a conference of officials from various federal agencies in 2006 and to continue discussions

through conference calls over the next year. The paper, later published in the *National Civic Review,* was circulated through CARE networks agency-wide, and I received much useful feedback.[77]

In Hampton, I observed an array of meetings of the youth commission, youth planners, the school superintendent's advisory group, and the neighborhood youth advisory group as well as meetings with adult agency staff and the city's major youth leadership intermediary, Alternatives Inc. In addition, I participated in the four-day national conference and related activities, organized jointly by the City of Hampton and Alternatives, with teams of innovators from ten other cities designed to facilitate network and policy learning and diffusion. I followed up with telephone interviews for a comparative analysis of youth commissions and other citywide strategies for youth civic engagement as well as for a potential federal policy design that might help build the capacity of various intermediaries and networks within the field. This conference, funded by Hampton's Innovations in American Government Award, also included representatives of several national youth engagement and development intermediaries. On an earlier occasion, I observed a conference in Hampton of the BEST (Building Exemplary Systems of Training for Youth Workers) Initiative, a national training program to upgrade the professional skills of youth workers, including their capacities to facilitate youth participation. The program is housed at the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, D.C., and Hampton innovators serve as core partners at the local, regional, and national level.

I convened four three-day national strategy and research conferences on youth civic engagement, at which I took extensive field notes, and had access to all audiotapes of session presentations and discussions. Each conference was preceded and followed by personal and telephone interviews. These conferences included adult and youth innovators across a variety of youth civic engagement fields and projects, including city-sponsored and independently organized citywide projects and partnerships, university-based ones, and national youth engagement organizations and intermediaries. One of my undergraduate research assistants served as co-organizer (with Campus Compact staff) of the National Student Summit at the Wingspread Conference Center in September 2002, at which I also took extensive field notes. In addition, I conducted field observations and interviews among several major grantees of the Corporation for National and Community Service (City Year, Corps Network, YouthBuild USA, Campus Compact, American Association of State Colleges and Universities,

Portland State University, National Network for Youth) and served as a "thought leader" for City Year during the planning and rollout of its civic leadership curriculum. I also took field notes at a conference sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the grantees of its Community Outreach Partnership Centers program.

These various trainings, meetings, and conferences provided much opportunity for formal dialogue, as well as numerous hours of informal conversation, and enabled qualitative insight into various civic engagement networks, including their partners in local, state, and federal agencies. As anyone who has done this kind of research knows, the informal conversations and ongoing follow-up dialogue by e-mail and phone often provide some of the most important information and insight, especially with government agency staff, funded intermediaries, and local partners, who are understandably concerned with issues of trust in their own networks, as well as with researchers who would study them. Such informal exchanges are too numerous to cite in the footnotes and in some cases, even when not explicitly off the record, deserve to remain confidential.

In Seattle, my research was enriched by the public dialogue that occurred around the draft of my article on neighborhood planning for the *Journal of the American Planning Association* in 2007. The draft circulated among various department offices, city council, the mayor's office, and neighborhood activists, especially those serving on the city neighborhood council, at a point when the city was in the midst of redesigning the process of neighborhood plan updates and implementation. A good deal of disagreement had emerged around the mayor's proposed approach, on display especially at the neighborhood council's meetings and city council committee hearings. The city council commissioned the Office of the City Auditor to do a formal audit of plan implementation, to which I was asked to contribute extensive written comments and a telephone interview after conducting a further round of my own interviews and viewing live hearings and webcasts.

When the revised *Journal of the American Planning Association* article appeared in print, it was posted on the website of city councilor Sally Clark, head of the Planning, Land Use, and Neighborhoods Committee, as well as the website of the city neighborhood council. As the city attempted to design a way to bridge differences, I was then asked by former mayor Norm Rice, under whom neighborhood planning had been initiated in 1994 and who had been informally charged with trying to bring various parties

together, to keynote the citywide forum on neighborhood planning in March 2008. At this forum, I had the chance to further observe and understand different perspectives, as well as the process by which the city was attempting to move toward consensus.

While I also helped frame the debate in terms of broad lessons, I assumed a multiperspectival presentation style, so that (for instance) neighborhood leaders would make the effort to understand the perspectives and constraints of the planning department and its professionals and city councilors (including the chair of the budget committee) would make the effort to understand neighborhood leaders' perspectives on the relative importance of continuing to invest in civic capacity. This rhetorical strategy removed me substantially, though probably not fully, from the underlying political debate and internal administration tug-of-war over new policy design. This forum also led to a further series of interviews, informal conversations, and detailed minutes of all the break-out sessions. Although at times I felt caught in a maelstrom of competing views and proposals, or as if I were trying to catch a moving train, while being sent a steady barrage of e-mails and agency documents—some records of internal discussions wrenched from city departments through Freedom of Information Act efforts by local activists—my engagement with this process in 2007–08 provided me with new and diverse sources of data and perspectives. I was most impressed by the integrity of the key actors I dealt with in this process and their efforts to recognize my role as a scholar seeking to understand all perspectives of what is most certainly a complex set of issues in planning and governing a dynamic and diverse world-class city, while engaging its citizens in consequential ways.[78]

Indeed, were I to admit revelation, or at least revelatory moments, in the research process, I would have to say that I learned some of the deepest truths about collaborative governance culture by the way in which various parties in Seattle, often in the midst of intense disagreement and representing different roles and histories of engagement, talked about one another both on and off the record in my interviews. My own research ethos and implicit ground rules undoubtedly elicited some of the mutual respect and willingness to entertain other perspectives. But much of the profoundly democratic, communicative ethos of the conversations that emerged, not just in Seattle but in my other cases, was the product of interview subjects themselves, acting as highly sophisticated and reflective civic agents and civil servants with multiple perspectives engaged in a research process that was more than simply academic to them.

Documentary Sources

Third, I gathered data from a wide variety of documentary sources for each case. For data on program design, funding, implementation, and evaluation, I examined agency strategic planning and framework documents; mission statements and visioning reports; neighborhood plans and updates; internal and external evaluations; reports of EPA's Office of Inspector General and the U.S. Government Accountability Office; reports of National Academy of Public Administration and National Research Council panels; federal advisory committee and local planning commission reports; official program reports and participant surveys; annual program guidance documents and budgets; webcasts of trainings, meetings, and hearings; regional and national EPA program newsletters; city and neighborhood news coverage; unpublished memos, timelines, and lists of coordinators; and official minutes and summaries of meetings.

For documentary data on intermediary organizations, networks, and local civic groups, I examined membership and partner lists; sponsor and participant lists and affiliations from conferences and trainings; annual reports, budgets, and financial audits; project evaluations; and conference proceedings and reports. I also reviewed various tools (neighborhood planning, youth commission, volunteer watershed monitoring, community organizing and visioning manuals; environmental education and service-learning curriculums; online data, geographic information systems, and planning toolkits, templates, and portals) developed by intermediaries and field-tested with local groups, typically with funding from agencies or, when developed by agencies themselves, with collaboration from intermediaries and local groups. My interviews gave me added insight into the network processes through which such tools were developed, including the negotiated back-and-forth among agency professionals and civic activists, representing different mixes of professional expertise and local knowledge.

In addition to getting feedback on various presentations and articles along the way, I shared drafts of the case study chapters with several key informants in each. In some instances, they read the entire manuscript. They helped refine and correct specific details and set me along still other paths of inquiry, interview, or interpretation. Only one individual asked me to omit a short sentence from a quotation, not because it was inaccurate but because it might convey an overly flippant response that was not intended and that some citizens might misinterpret. Reflecting on the importance of

the civic trust at stake in the city, I agreed to the request, without altering the substance of what had been said.

In the concluding chapter 6, I reprise my findings and present a set of major proposals for the federal government, if it is to act more vigorously as a civic enabler and strategic investor. I draw upon further interviews and documents beyond my case study chapters, especially from several other federal agencies, national service programs, and White House offices.[79] Of course, state and local governments, and many other independent civic actors, need to join in this work—indeed, to take the lead in many areas. But the federal government is in a position to play an especially strategic and catalytic role among state and local partners—hence the focus of the last chapter. Developing a policy agenda can hardly be based upon three extended case studies, to be sure. But these cases, and much scholarly literature on other cases, fields, and levels of government, are suggestive of what we might do at the federal level.

My proposals are designed to proceed within the limits of what we know reasonably well and to build capacity for learning while doing—iterative, reflexive learning and self-correction. Unlike some of the big and provocative proposals that have been offered in recent years to revitalize American democracy,[80] the ones I develop do not rely upon deliberation among randomly selected groups of citizens but remain rooted in the everyday public work, relationship building, embedded deliberation, and network learning among citizens, organized associations, and public agency staff. Such work, of course, must find more creative ways to inform policy deliberation and agenda setting among elected officials and advocacy coalitions.

The agenda I propose is far from a complete one. Others have pointed to democratic deficits that would not be directly addressed by the forms of collaborative and network governance that are the focus here. But the proposals in chapter 6 are intended to provide a handle for energetic, yet careful and incremental, federal action, should we get the kind of elected leadership that recognizes the challenges of a democracy at risk as well as the opportunities available for finding ways to engage citizens productively and collaboratively.