Which statements best describe your view of the current quality of public discussion and debate? (choose up to three)

1. High quality, informed
2. Mean-spirited
3. Polarized
4. Involves a broad range of voices
5. Simplistic
6. Dominated by a few loud voices
7. Dominated by experts
8. Robust
9. Weak/limited, people are apathetic
10. (press 0) Productive

Answers from CML Board Retreat, Summer 2018
Applications to Municipalities

Multiple Levels of Communication
- Council Engagement
- City Manager/Staff and Council
- City Government and Community
- Community Engagement

Overview: Three Key Arguments

#1 – The Basic Reality
Most of the key problems we face are best understood through a wicked problems lens

#2 – The Bad News
Human nature and many of our primary institutions and processes are woefully ill-suited to address wicked problems

#3 – The Hopeful News
Once we realize #1 and #2, we can build capacity for the kinds of conversations, processes, and institutions that cultivate the wisdom so critical to addressing wicked problems, particularly at the local level

Wicked problems inherently involve competing underlying values, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that cannot be resolved by science.

Competing Values in Downtown Fort Collins
- Aesthetics/Beauty
- Compassion
- Diversity/Inclusivity
- Economic health/vitality
- Effective use of public resources
- Equality
- Excitement/fun
- Family
- Individual freedom
- Individual responsibility
- Individual rights
- Justice/Fairness
- Public health/environment
- Respect for law
- Respect for others
- Safety

Water in Northern Colorado as a Wicked Problem
Some things we care about:
- Healthy river with healthy ecosystems
- Recreational opportunities
- Open space and wildlife habitat
- Low cost of living
- Local food economy
- Freedom of choice of where to live

Key Deliberative Responses
1. Prioritizing
2. Balancing
3. Transcending

HEALTH CARE AS A WICKED PROBLEM
- High Quality
- Accessible
- Low cost
Capitalism or Sustainability as a Wicked Problem

- The “Triple Bottom Line” of
  - Profit (economics, also tied to jobs and taxes)
  - People (social justice, equality, fairness)
  - Planet (environment)

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Key American Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preamble</th>
<th>Current Phrasing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Tranquility/ Common defense</td>
<td>Security/Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Welfare</td>
<td>Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty to ourselves</td>
<td>Freedom (for us)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty for our posterity</td>
<td>Freedom (for future generations)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which is **most** important to you? (choose only one)

1. Justice
2. Security/safety
3. Equality
4. Freedom (for us)
5. Freedom (future generations)

Which is **least** important to you? (choose only one)

1. Justice
2. Security/safety
3. Equality
4. Freedom (for us)
5. Freedom (future generations)
**Inherent Democratic Tensions**
- Freedom and Equality (and between equality and equity)
- Our Freedom and Freedom of Future generations
- Freedom and Security
- Justice is a tension within itself (justice as the ideal between too much and too little credit or punishment)

**Some others**
- Democracy and expertise
- Short term and long term
- Individual rights and community good
- Unity and diversity
- Cooperation and competition
- Structure and agency (or opportunity and individual responsibility)
- Best use of resources (money, time, people)

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**Wicked problems** inherently involve competing underlying values, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that cannot be resolved by science.
They call for ongoing high quality communication, creativity, and broad collaborative action to manage well.

**What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?**

**The Problematic**
- We crave certainty and consistency
- We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative
- We are “groupish” (prefer to gather with like-minded)
- We filter & cherry pick evidence to support our views
What We Are Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

**Stages of motivated reasoning**

| What and who we expose ourselves to | selective exposure / echo chambers / filter or media bubbles |

| How we interpret new evidence       | confirmation bias, backfire effect, cognitive dissonance |

How we interpret new evidence

*when we want to believe something, we ask ourselves, ‘Can I believe it?’* Then…we search for supporting evidence, and if we find even a single piece of pseudo-evidence, we can stop thinking…. In contrast, *when we don't want to believe something, we ask ourselves, ‘Must I believe it?’* Then we search for contrary evidence, and if we find a single reason to doubt the claim, we can dismiss it*

• Jonathan Haidt and Tom Gilovich

Bush: 'Too often we judge other groups by their worst examples, while judging ourselves by our best intentions'
**What We Are Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of motivated reasoning</th>
<th>What and who we expose ourselves to</th>
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<td>How we interpret new evidence</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How we make attributions and tell stories</td>
<td>egotism, illusory correlation, negativity bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How we make decisions</td>
<td>heuristics, self-serving bias, social proof</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What We Are Learning from Brain Science**

**The Problematic**

- We crave certainty and consistency
- We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative
- We strongly prefer to gather with the like minded
- We filter & cherry pick evidence to support our views
- We avoid values dilemmas, tensions, and tough choices

**The Vicious Cycle of Exaggerated Polarization**

- Individually developed subconscious biases
- Negative interaction effects

**Negative Interaction Effects**

Kathryn Shultz – *Being Wrong*

- First step: Ignorance assumption
- Second step: Idiot assumption
- Third Step: Evil assumption
Overview: Three Key Arguments

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Drawbacks of an Overly-Adversarial Political System

- Plays into flaws of human nature
- Often focuses on “winning” vs. solving problems
- Zero-sum game incentivizes “bad” communication, strategic research, and problematizes implementation
- Often focuses on blaming (them) vs. taking accountability (us)
- Relies on narrow value frames (thus avoids tensions)
- Attracts/privileges organized, entrenched voices
- Negative side effects like polarization, cynicism, and apathy (which then cause even worse communication)
- Assumes a narrow role for citizens (citizens as voters, consumers, or spectators)

Key Problems with our Typical Public Processes

- Engage too late in the process when issues are simply framed as “yes” or “no”
- Primarily provide opportunities for individual or group expression
- Caters to entrenched and organized voices
- Little to no effective interaction or learning/refinement of opinion

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Key Problems with our Typical Public Processes

- Engage too late in the process when issues are simply framed as “yes” or “no”
- Primarily provide opportunities for individual or group expression

Traditional Forms of Public Participation

- Citizens → Government → Citizens
- Input from Citizens

The Vicious Cycle of Exaggerated Polarization

- Media focus on conflict
- Overly adversarial political system
- Individually developed subconscious biases
- Negative interaction effects
- The Russell effect
- Impact of the internet
Why Experts Can’t Save Us (though they can certainly help when used well)
- Good data is undermined in a polarized environment
- Facts don’t change minds or behavior
- Experts by definition are focused on a specific, narrow aspect of the problem (i.e. they struggle with wicked problems).
- Experts often focus on being “value free” (they tell us what is or what could be, not what should be)
- Expert perspectives can overemphasize what can be measured and underemphasize what cannot
- Expert dominated processes shut out the public

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Key Steps for Local Communities
- Adopting a wicked problems mindset

The Wicked Problems Mindset
- Presume wicked problems, not wicked people
- Become more comfortable with uncertainty
- Focus on elevating the conversation not just winning the argument

Traditional v. Facilitative Leadership
Traditional
- Strong opinion
- Charisma
- Public speaking skills
- Mobilization of the like-minded

Facilitative
- Strong on process
- Trust and respect
- Facilitation skills
- Collaboration between broad perspectives
The Wicked Problems Mindset

• Presume wicked problems, not wicked people
• Become more comfortable with uncertainty
• Focus on elevating the conversation not just winning the argument
• Put your energy toward identifying, engaging, and negotiating inherent tensions

Inherent Democratic Tensions

• Freedom and Equality (and between equality and equity)
• Our Freedom and Freedom of Future generations
• Freedom and Security
• Justice is a tension within itself (justice as the ideal between too much and too little credit or punishment)

Some others

• Democracy and expertise
• Short term and long term
• Individual rights and community good
• Unity and diversity
• Cooperation and competition
• Structure and agency (or opportunity and individual responsibility)
• Flexibility/innovation and Consistency/Tradition
• Best use of resources (money, time, people)

The Wicked Problems Mindset

• Presume wicked problems, not wicked people
• Become more comfortable with uncertainty
• Focus on elevating the conversation not just winning the argument
• Put your energy toward identifying, engaging, and negotiating inherent tensions
• Work toward creating a learning community

Key Steps for Local Communities

• Adopting a wicked problems mindset
• Better processes - tap into different aspects of human nature

What We Are Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology

The Problematic
- We crave certainty and consistency
- We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative
- We strongly prefer to gather with the like minded
- We filter & cherry pick evidence to support our views
- We avoid values dilemmas, tensions, and tough choices

What We Are Learning from Social Psychology and Brain Science

The Good
- We are inherently social and seek purpose and community
- We are inherently empathetic
- We are inherently pragmatic and creative
- We can overcome our bad tendencies and build better habits
What We Are Learning from Social Psychology and Brain Science

Bottom line: The most powerful thing to help people overcome their biases and tackle wicked problems well is genuine conversation with people they respect.

The Four Key Shifts of Deliberative Engagement

- From wicked people \(\rightarrow\) to wicked problems
- From adversaries \(\rightarrow\) to collaborators
- From inciting the worst of human nature \(\rightarrow\) to bringing out the best of human nature
- From facts as cherry picked ammunition or "fake news" \(\rightarrow\) to facts as tools for addressing problems together

Key Steps for Local Communities

- Adopting a wicked problems mindset
- Better processes - tap into different aspects of human nature
- Build local capacity for deliberative engagement

What is Deliberative Engagement?

Deliberative democracy
Community problem-solving
Collaborative problem-solving
Participatory decision-making
Slow democracy
Strong democracy
Multi-stakeholder dispute resolution
Public participation
Organic or community politics
Consensus building or seeking processes

Key Components of Deliberative Engagement

- Overall deliberative framing
  - Wicked problem, multiple approaches, broad range of actors, starting discussion "upstream" (before polarization)
- Discussion guides/backgrounders
  - Base of information, something to react to, framed for deliberation, not persuasion
- Small, diverse, representative groups
- Processes designed for interaction and learning
- Deliberative facilitators
Key Steps for Local Communities

- Adopting a wicked problems mindset
- Better processes - tap into different aspects of human nature
- Build local capacity for deliberative engagement
- Reinvigorate or create new key bridging institutions

Institutional Troubles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bridging</th>
<th>More polarizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political parties/elections</td>
<td>Advocacy groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy groups</td>
<td>Internet / Social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet / Social media</td>
<td>Media/Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media/Press</td>
<td>Experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>School districts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actions to address wicked problems come from multiple levels

- Public Policy
- National, state, local laws
- Community
- Relationships among organizations
- Organizational
- Organizations, social institutions
- Interpersonal
- Family, friends, social networks
- Individual
- Knowledge, attitudes, skills

**Institutional Troubles**

**Bridging v. Polarizing Institutions**

- Political parties/elections
- Advocacy groups
- Internet / Social media
- Media/Press
- Experts
- School districts
- Universities

**More polarizing**

**More bridging**

---

**Key Steps for Local Communities**

- Adopting a wicked problems mindset
- Better processes - tap into different aspects of human nature
- Build local capacity for deliberative engagement
- Reinvigorate or create new key bridging institutions
- **Cultivate citizens as wise collaborators**

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**Brennan’s Against Democracy**

Three types of citizens:

- **Hobbits**
- **Hooligans**
- **Vulcans**

Wise collaborators

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**In the End, We Must Elevate the Conversations in our Communities**

- Build capacity for **collaborative action** and co-creation
- Spark **collaborative learning** and the refinement (not just expression) of opinion
- Help differentiate good and weak arguments
- Positively manage conflict, build mutual understanding, and develop respect
- Support listening and genuine interaction
- Provide opportunities for voice and public input

---

**Three Key Tools for Deliberative Engagement**

- NCDD Engagement Streams
- Kaner’s Diamond of Participatory Decision Making
- Polarity Management
Sam Kaner, Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making

Kaner’s Diamond of Participatory Decision-Making

Not allowing enough divergent opinion leads to False consensus (dissent not heard, wishful thinking supported, decisions likely either faulty or unsustainable, often attracting strong opposition)

To avoid false consensus: Communities need better processes to insure adequate divergent thinking and that voices are heard.

Exiting groan zone too early leads to False polarization (sparks misunderstanding, distrust, unsustainable one-sided solutions, fact wars develop, spirals of conflict)

To avoid false polarization: Communities need better processes to help them work through tough choices.

Getting stuck in groan zone leads to Paralysis by Analysis (no decisions, frustrations with process, chilling effect for future engagement)

To avoid paralysis by analysis: Communities need better processes for collaboration and moving from talk to action.

Inherent Democratic Tensions
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- Justice is a tension within itself (justice as the ideal between too much and too little credit or punishment)
- Some others
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  - Unity and diversity
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  - Structure and agency (or opportunity and individual responsibility)
  - Flexibility/Innovation and Consistency/Tradition
  - Best use of resources (money, time, people)

Polarity Management

Polarity Management: Identifying and Managing Unsuitable Problems

Barry Johnson PhD
Addressing Key Tensions

Freedom        Security

Polarized:        “I am for security, you are anti-security (i.e. pro-terrorism)”

vs.

“I am for freedom, you are anti-freedom (i.e. pro-long lines)”

Aristotle’s Theory of Virtues

Aristotle defined a virtue as “a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect…virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate”

Aristotle’s Virtues

Cowardice ← --------Courage-------------→ Recklessness

Lack of ambition ← --------(Ideal ambition)-------------→ Excess of ambition

Apathy ← --------------Gentleness----------------------→ Short temper

Grouchiness ← ------------Friendliness----------------> Flattery

Self-deprecation ← ------------Truthfulness-------------→ Boastfulness

Injustice ← ---------------Justice----------------------> Injustice

(gives more and receives less) (gives less and than one’s due) (receives more than one’s due)

Polarity Management

Barry Johnson
**Polarity Management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Case for Consistency</th>
<th>The Case for Flexibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependable, Clarity, Allowing comparisons, Tradition, Principled, Fair, Just, Reliable, Steady, Standards, Measurability</td>
<td>Innovation, Adaption, Individuality, Creativity, Outside the Box thinking, Pragmatic, Thinking on your feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When Consistency dominates Flexibility ...</th>
<th>When Flexibility dominates Consistency ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dogmatic, Stubborn, Unaccommodating, Stiff, Simplistic, Stuck in the past, Uninspired, Rigid, Soul-sucking, Obstinate</td>
<td>Wishy-washy, Ambiguous, Inconsistent, Erratic, Untrustworthy, Irregular, Unreliable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Steps in the Basic Exercise**

- Polarity or tension is identified and named
- In groups, brainstorm the positives for each end of the polarity one at a time, making the best possible case
- Groups then complete the out of balance problematic alternatives
- Groups can then potentially combine or compare their work
- Conversation can then focus on responding to the tension

**Responding to Key Tensions**

- Recognize tension, still **prefer** one side while accepting the tradeoffs. That preference may be purposefully short-term, with a corresponding focus on nimbleness
- Recognize tension, seek **balance** (which may mean moving in one direction or the other, seeking compromise)
- Recognize tension, seek to **transcend or integrate** tension through innovation (seeking win-win)
- Recognize tension, allow **different groups** to seek alternative ends
- **Disagree** with tension

**PM and CPD processes**

- Superintendent search (strong leader and collaborator)
- Local food cluster (top down and bottom up)
- Neighborhood associations (formal and informal)
- Local church on gay rights issue (truth and grace)
- Elementary school – flexibility and consistency
- Mathews House (non-profit working with children exiting out of foster care) - self care and client care, individual responsibility and opportunity (agency and structure)
An effective leader is:

- People focused and Task focused
- Visionary and Practical
- Authentic and Energetic
- Adaptable and Stable
### Conflict Transformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Purpose</th>
<th>Name of Engagement Stream</th>
<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Important When...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To resolve conflicts, to foster personal healing and growth, and to improve relations among groups</td>
<td>Conflict Transformation</td>
<td>Creating a safe space, hearing from everyone, building trust, sharing personal stories and values.</td>
<td>Relationships among participants are poor or not yet established. People may not feel safe to express their feelings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples of Issues**
- Political polarization, social unrest, crime, value-based conflicts, healing after crisis or trauma

**Organizer’s Strategy**
- To create a safe space for people with different views to talk about their personal experiences and feel heard. Often, to set the groundwork for deliberation and action.

**Appropriate D&O Processes**
- Sustained Dialogue, Intergroup Dialogue, Communication, Ethnography, Mindfulness Meditation, PC, Dialogue, Compromise, Leverage

**Key Design Questions for Organizers**
- How can the issues be framed so that all sides are heard — and feel welcomed — in the table? What are the key issues that divide this group, and how can they develop a process of finding, engaging, and building a relationship?

### Decision Making

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Important When...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence public decisions and public policy and improve public knowledge</td>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Naming and framing the issue fully, weighing all options, considering different positions (i.e., deliberations, weighing public values, brainstorming solutions)</td>
<td>The issue is within government’s or any single entity’s sphere of influence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples of Issues**
- Budgeting, land use, health care, social security

**Organizer’s Strategy**
- To involve a representational group of citizens in a thorough deliberation process and policy analysis. Making this process is linked to policy making.

**Appropriate D&O Processes**
- Ruthwell Issues, Renew, Citizens Jury, Collaborative Decision Making, Deliberative Workshop, Deliberative Dialogue, Compromise, Consensus Conference

**Key Design Questions for Organizers**
- How can we best represent the public (battleground selection, stakeholder representation)? How do we ensure that key stakeholders are represented? How can we ensure that the process influences policy? |

### Collaborative Action

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Important When...</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To empower people and groups to solve complicated problems and take collective action for the solution</td>
<td>Collaborative Action</td>
<td>Using dialogue and deliberation to generate ideas for community action; developing and implementing plans collaboratively</td>
<td>The issue dispute requires intervention across multiple public and private entities, and anyone community activist is important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples of Issues**
- Regional issues, international conflicts, climate change, violence, responding to crises

**Organizer’s Strategy**
- To encourage integrated efforts among diverse groups, such as community organizations, neighbors, and industries in the area.

**Appropriate D&O Processes**
- Study Circles, Future Search, Appreciative Inquiry

**Key Design Questions for Organizers**
- Who needs to be at the table? What kinds of power dynamics exist already? What groups/leaders/ communities will be affected? What kind of changes are needed? Who needs to be engaged? What is the role of the facilitator? What group need not to be at the table, although they’re affected? |