

Leading Civic Engagement

Three Cases

Educator Guide

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Overview

This Educator Guide is designed to assist instructors in teaching this set of three short cases to students and practitioners. It is based on [case pedagogy](#), which invites participants to put themselves in the shoes of the protagonist(s) of the cases and consider how they responded to the circumstances and choices they faced. Participants should read the three cases in advance and identify key issues as a preliminary step toward meeting the learning objectives. Instructors may then use the time in the classroom to guide participants in exploring the issues and examining the challenges in the case; to introduce key concepts, tools, and frameworks; and to assist participants in applying their learning to their own environments and challenges.

This guide includes learning objectives, a synopsis, key questions, a roadmap for discussion, and appendices with additional pedagogical information and theoretical applications. The roadmap and appendices are offered to initiate meaningful conversation but are by no means the only way to teach the case. Each educator or facilitator should feel free to design their own teaching plans; both the structure and the time allotted for each component are suggestions.

Learning Objectives

This set of cases aims to help students and city leaders:

- Understand when and why civic engagement is helpful for solving a particular public problem.
- Understand that different public problems call for different kinds of civic engagement.
- See the breadth of options for civic engagement and make strategic choices about how to structure civic engagement efforts.
- Engage and support individual co-production in pursuit of desired outcomes.

Case Synopses

These three cases are stories of city officials leading civic engagement and public participation in pursuit of public goals. From various positions in city government, the protagonists in each case departed from typical bureaucratic processes to reach out directly to the public, using unexpected methods to solicit input, raise awareness, and effect behavioral change in their communities.

In the first case, the new director of the Seattle Solid Waste Utility, Diana Gale, implemented sweeping changes to the city's solid waste collection practices. To secure compliance with new rules and regulations and tolerance for inevitable stumbles along the way, she developed a public relations capacity, became the public face of her agency, and embraced an ethos of humility and accountability.

In the second case, Antanas Mockus, the eccentric mayor of Bogotá, sought to improve public safety—focusing particularly on the unregulated and lethal use of fireworks around the Christmas holiday. He tried at first to effect change through persuasion, offering citizens alternatives to fireworks and engaging vendors in the effort to reduce fireworks-related injuries and deaths. When a child suffered severe burns, however, Mockus followed through on a threat to ban firework sales and use in the city.

In the third case, David Boesch, city manager of Menlo Park, California, decided to engage residents in setting priorities around cost reduction as a major budget shortfall loomed for the coming fiscal year. He hired a local firm to plan and execute a comprehensive participatory budgeting process. In a city with a sharp divide between haves and have-nots, Boesch and his partners had to take special care to ensure that everyone's interests were heard and represented in budgetary decision-making.

Key Questions

1. What objectives did these city officials pursue and why?
2. How did they design their interventions?
3. Whose knowledge, ideas, and resources did they put to work?
4. How did members of the public change their understandings, attitudes, and behaviors to become “part of the solution”?
5. How did the officials succeed in engaging individuals? How did they fall short?

Roadmap for Discussion (See Appendix 1.)

Introduction (5 minutes): Briefly state the goal of the session in reference to the case, cite specific major conflicts facing the protagonist, and foreshadow broader learning objectives.

Exploration (30-60 minutes): Use class discussion, “buzz groups,” and board work to examine the issues and options confronting the protagonist.

Diagnosis (15-20 minutes): Introduce key concepts, frameworks, and tools to help participants pinpoint possible solutions to major conflicts in the case.

Application (15 minutes, optional): Ask participants to relate the concepts and frameworks to their own organizations’ challenges.

Wrap-Up and Takeaways (5 minutes): Review the learning objectives and discuss insights most relevant to the participants’ organizations’ challenges.

Introduction (5 minutes)

In your introductory remarks, briefly review the cases and frame the primary subject of the session: understanding what problems lend themselves to civic engagement as (part of) the solution, why civic engagement can help (and in what form), how to engage citizens in public problem solving, and who needs to do the work.

Exploration (30-60 minutes)

For each case, take 10-20 minutes to explore the following four questions:

- *What was the **problem** to which civic engagement was the solution? (And is there a non-participatory solution?)*
- ***What** did members of the public need to do?*
- ***How** did the protagonist engage members of the public to help solve the problem?*
- ***Who** did the work of engagement—from the city and from the community?*

Seattle Solid Waste

Enter answers on the board as shown in Appendix 2.

- **What *problem* did Gale face?**
 - Every problem has a potential non-participatory solution.
 - *What would a non-participatory response have looked like?*
 - Send everything to incinerators?
 - Raise rates across the board and have a third-party sort recyclables?
 - *Was engaging the public in the solution a better choice? Why?*

If civic engagement was (part of) the solution, ask the class:

- **What did Gale need city residents to do?**
 - This case is about shifting city residents from a consumer/client role to a coproducing role.
 - *If you were in Gale's position, trying to engage her clients in the coproduction of solid waste management, what would have kept you up at night?*
 - Citizens confused?
 - Citizens refusing or revolting?
 - Media criticism?
- **How did Gale do this work?**
 - Careful pacing was key, beginning with a voluntary, popular change.
 - She utilized a broad communications strategy and public relations campaign.
 - They made it about the people and the city working together against the solid waste problem rather than the city and solid waste problem working against the people.
- **Whose combined efforts accomplished the changes?**
 - Response required a transformation of operational capacity at an organizational and city level.
 - Communications strategy engaged:
 - Local media
 - Key stakeholders, including city staff and utility employees
 - Clients/ratepayers

Bogotá

Enter answers on the board as shown in Appendix 2.

- **What *problem* did Mockus face?**
 - Consider Mockus's interest in the nexus of law, culture, and morality.
 - *How did these realms come together in the case? Did the problem lie more with one than another?*
 - *Was there a non-participatory alternative?*

- **What did Mockus need citizens to do to help solve the problem?**
 - Mockus needed citizens to embrace new civic culture norms, and to change their individual behaviors.
 - Analogy: It used to be socially acceptable to smoke in most public places.
 - *What do you think may have kept Mockus up at night?*
 - Injuries before establishing the ban?
 - Vendors or citizens revolting?

- **How did Mockus approach the challenge of engaging the public in solving the problem?**
 - He began with voluntary change (like Gale); let the vendors educate the users.
 - He created the "salient moment": the first injury to a child of the season.
 - He planned follow-up actions:
 - Establishing alternatives
 - Reimbursement plan
 - Community service as punishment

- **Who did the work?**
 - Mockus created an administrative capacity for innovative problem solving.
 - He needed to engage media, stakeholders, and the public.

Menlo Park

Enter answers on the board as shown in Appendix 2.

- **What was the *problem* in Menlo Park?**
 - Closing the budget gap meant either cutting services or increasing taxes and fees—never popular options.
 - *Was there a non-participatory alternative?*
 - Yes, the city's normal budget process!

- **What (if anything) did Boesch need citizens to do to help solve the problem?**
 - Simply tolerate cuts to services or increases in taxes and fees?
 - *Was Boesch addressing a problem other than closing a budget shortfall?*
 - Passive recipients of policy became policy makers.
 - Citizens grappled with hard choices and trade-offs under the same constraints as city council.
 - *What may have kept Boesch up at night?*
 - Low participation?
 - Errors in the design of the process?
 - Distortions in feedback?

- **How did the city government engage the public?**
 - Their survey functioned by simultaneously generating feedback and educating residents.
 - The outreach effort was essential for a representative pool of respondents.
 - They threatened to eliminate something of value to a community that was harder to engage.
 - Whether it was a deliberate tactic or not, it proved effective!

- **Who needed to participate to achieve the desired results?**
 - The process required an engaged, representative cross-section of citizens.

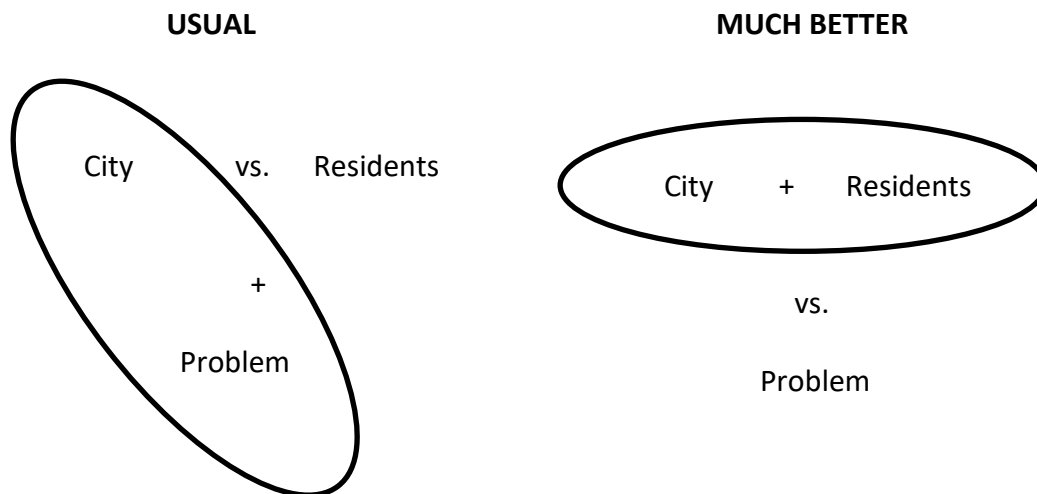
Diagnosis (15-20 minutes)

Residents can be vital partners in producing vibrant cities. They can also be self-interested, resistant to compromise, and ignorant of government constraints. Cities consistently rate citizen engagement among their top concerns, but what is the right way to do it, and how will you know if you are doing it “right”?

Four Questions for Citizen Engagement: Review

- *What is the concrete **problem** to which citizen engagement is the answer?*
A successful civic engagement effort focuses on a practical problem to be solved, not engagement for its own sake.
- *What do citizens need to do to help?*
There is always a non-participation path. If citizen engagement is (part of) the solution, what kind of capacity lies with them?
- *How can we engage citizens to help solve the problem?*
Effective engagement typically requires communication, facilitation, mutual accountability, and follow-up actions.
- *Who, from the city and the community, is going to do the work of engagement?*
The inclusiveness of the process and the authority and credibility of the entity managing the engagement are critical considerations.

Any successful citizen engagement effort begins with a reorientation of attitudes within city government; a shift from viewing residents as adversaries to viewing them as allies.



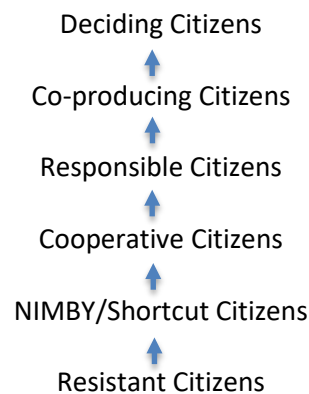
- *Did this happen in all three cases? What makes the cases distinct?*

Review responses in column two of each of the three tables in your board work and in Appendix 2:

- Three kinds of engagement
 - Co-production (Seattle)
 - Responsibility (Bogotá)
 - Decision-making (Menlo Park)

The ideal of citizen engagement is to move residents who cannot see past their own backyards (NIMBYism) up the ladder of engagement, creating increasingly collaborative, empowered citizens.

Fung's Ladder of Citizen Engagement



Additional Frameworks

You may also consider structuring a conversation about this case using the Strategic Triangle. (See Appendix 3.)

Application (optional, 15 minutes)

Have participants break into small groups to discuss their own citizen engagement efforts or those they would like to undertake. Discuss whether what they learned in these cases changed how they understand the problem and their response to it.

Wrap-up and Takeaways (5 minutes)

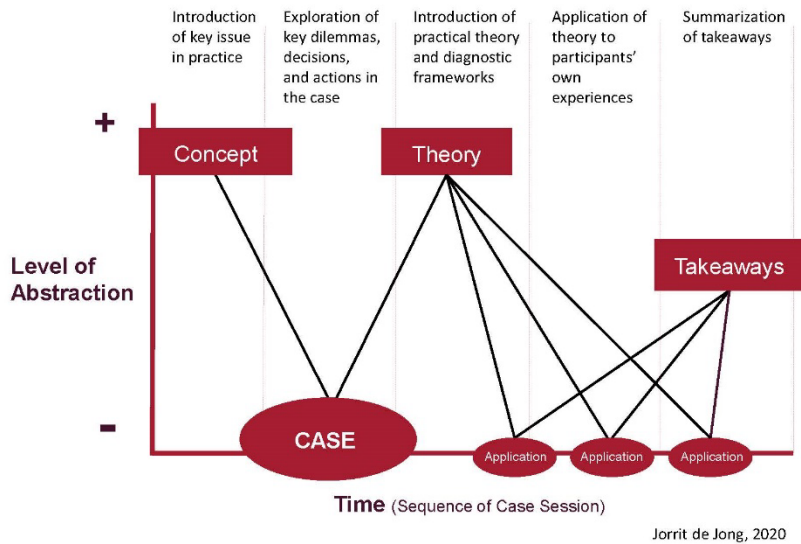
Review the learning objectives and discuss insights most relevant to participants' own challenges.

What did you learn? How will you use it?

Appendices

Appendix 1 Designing a Case Session

A case session aims to increase participants’ ability to use theory and frameworks to guide their thought and action in practical circumstances. To train the mental muscle and integrate theory and practice, a case session moves up and down in level of abstraction frequently, testing and refining abstract theory through practical application.



Appendix 2 Board Plan

As you explore and diagnose the case, for each of the three cities, create a table like the one shown below. (Suggested responses included for reference.)

Board 1: Seattle

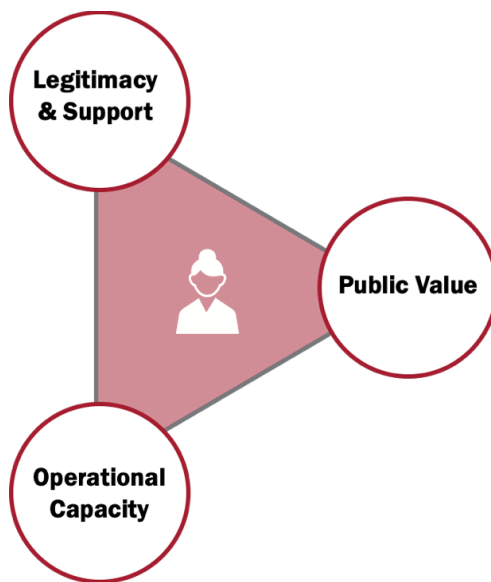
PROBLEM	WHAT did citizens need to do?	HOW were citizens engaged?	WHO acted to engage citizens? Which citizens/communities were being engaged?
Solid waste infrastructure was overloaded, and citizens took waste services for granted.	Be patient. Pay more. Choose service levels. Participate in recycling. Understand: - solid waste process - Gale’s logic - their options	Voluntary opportunities were communicated. Choices were presented. Avenues for questions and complaints were provided. Transparency and humility were used to make citizens into allies, not enemies?	Diana Gale, the public face of the utility Solid Waste Utility communications and service staff Media Early adopters Mainstream users

Board 2: Bogotá

PROBLEM	WHAT did citizens need to do?	HOW were citizens engaged?	WHO acted to engage citizens? Which citizens/communities were being engaged?
Public safety was at risk with fireworks injuries and deaths as well as vehicular homicides.	Behave in pro-social ways: <i>Understand the need for culture shift.</i> <i>Embrace</i> culture shift. <i>Adhere</i> to new norms. <i>Enforce</i> new norms with friends and neighbors.	The ban hinging on safety of children brought motivation. Vendors were given responsibility. The execution of the ban involved citizens: compensation for vendors, community service for violations.	Mayor Antanas Mockus Institute for Urban Culture Fireworks vendors (losing stakeholders) Citizens celebrating the holidays Citizens using fireworks (violators)

Board 3: Menlo Park

PROBLEM	WHAT did citizens need to do?	HOW were citizens engaged?	WHO acted to engage citizens? Which citizens/communities were being engaged?
The city faced a looming budget crisis.	Understand priorities, trade-offs, and options. Form and express realistic preferences regarding options and trade-offs. Live with consequences of cutting budget and increasing taxes and fees.	They completed the survey. They participated in the Sim City Council.	City manager, David Boesch Community Focus Media Survey participants Workshop Participants Other residents

Appendix 3 Public Value Theory and the Strategic TrianglePublic Value

- *What dimensions of public value were at stake in these leaders' choices?*
- *What were possible (intended and unintended) outcomes of the choices they made?*

Legitimacy and Support

- *What sources of legitimacy and support did these leaders rely on in their citizen engagement efforts?*
- *How did the choices they made affect legitimacy and support for the actions they were taking?*

Operational Capacity

- *Whose co-productive capacity did these leaders need to achieve the desired outcomes (dimensions of public value)?*
- *What steps did they take to harness and steer co-producers toward the desired outcomes?*

Did the choices these leaders made balance the points of the triangle effectively?