

# Citizen Voice in a Globalized World

**Lawrence MacDonald, Bobby Fishkin, and David Witzel**

## Abstract

In today's world, the global economy is highly interconnected, but the global polity is weak, rudimentary, and fragmented. Market forces speak with a booming voice and get all the best lines, while nonmarket forces—especially citizen's preferences about global affairs—are typically ill informed, poorly articulated, and hard to hear. This paper explores options for uncovering and amplifying informed global public opinion as a means for improving the decisions of international bodies and of national and sub-national governments in regards to global issues. The paper examines problems in ascertaining citizen preferences and surveys

common approaches. It then makes the case for a specific approach—deliberative polling—and explores possibilities for using it to help address the comparative weakness of the global polity.

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## 1. Introduction

In his small 1970 book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Albert O. Hirschman deployed a theatrical metaphor to launch a disruptive foray into traditional economics. He wrote that “market and non-market forces—that is, economic and political mechanisms” were “two principal actors of equal rank and importance.” His goal, he said, was “to demonstrate to political scientists the usefulness of economic concepts and to economists the usefulness of political concepts” (Hirschman 1970, p. 19).

In today’s world, the global economy is highly interconnected, but the global polity is weak, rudimentary, and fragmented. Market forces speak with a booming voice and get all the best lines, while nonmarket forces—especially citizen’s preferences about global affairs—are typically ill informed, poorly articulated, and hard to hear.

Imagine bringing onto this stage representative, carefully considered, clearly articulated, and credible global public opinion. What would it look like, and how would it be expressed? What actions could be taken to amplify the voices of global citizens, so that they could be heard alongside the roar of the markets? How would the people we call global leaders—heads of nation-states, globalized firms, and the international institutions—respond to this new information? And, short of ascertaining truly global public opinion, what are the possibilities for systematically collecting and amplifying informed, deliberative public opinion on global issues at the national level?

This paper, adapted from a previous version prepared for Global Citizen Foundation (GCF), aims to answer these questions. We conclude that the GCF and like-minded organizations and individuals can help to prepare the way for informed global public opinion by defining the value of informed citizen voice on global issues, building awareness and support for idea of global citizenship within nation states, and pioneering the processes and tools through which global citizens can articulate a common vision of the policies and tradeoffs they believe would further their shared well-being.

We begin by considering two necessary criteria for the expression of legitimate, informed public opinion—representativeness and deliberation—and use them to briefly consider a range of techniques commonly used for understanding people’s preferences.

We then introduce the idea of deliberative polling, describe how it meets these two important criteria, and summarize experience in the use of this technique to ascertain public

preferences and change policies and outcomes in a wide variety of settings. We give an overview of the challenges of applying deliberative polling globally and ways to overcome these. Finally we conclude with a proposal for what we believe to be a highly compelling, practical alternative: a series of national deliberative polls on climate change, the planet's most intractable and urgent issue.

To be sure, deliberative polling is just one approach to strengthening citizen voice. While we argue that deliberative polling is particularly well suited to ascertaining informed citizen preferences on complex policy issues, we suggest that it complement, not replace, other approaches. Indeed, we assume that the approaches we survey in this paper (with the possible exception of SLOPS, about which more below) and others that we do not (such as participatory budgeting), each meet specific needs. Policy makers and ordinary citizens will continue to draw information about public opinion from many sources, as they should. We are hoping, however, that this paper will help to inform the reader of the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches and, for those in a position to decide what tools to deploy, will expand the range of possibilities to include deliberative polling, especially when there are complex and controversial public policy issues at stake.

## **2. Fueling and Frustrating the Demand for Greater Voice**

Cross-border problems like climate change, rising inequality, the collapse of fisheries, deforestation, pandemics, microbial drug resistance, accelerating species extinction, and international financial and economic crises all threaten the well-being of humanity—especially for the poorest and most vulnerable people. Yet as Nancy Birdsall and coauthors showed in their paper for the GCF inaugural conference, global institutions are too weak and fragmented to address these challenges in an effective manner.<sup>1</sup> Institutions of global governance, including international organizations and transnational civil society institutions, can be seen as parts of an emerging global public sphere. But the quality deliberation and the degree of representativeness leave much to be desired

Three megatrends associated with globalization—a shift from authoritarianism toward democracy, a shift from planned to market economies, and an information and data revolution that has given rise to a nearly ubiquitous international communications and knowledge-sharing network—seem to confirm the role of the individual as the primary

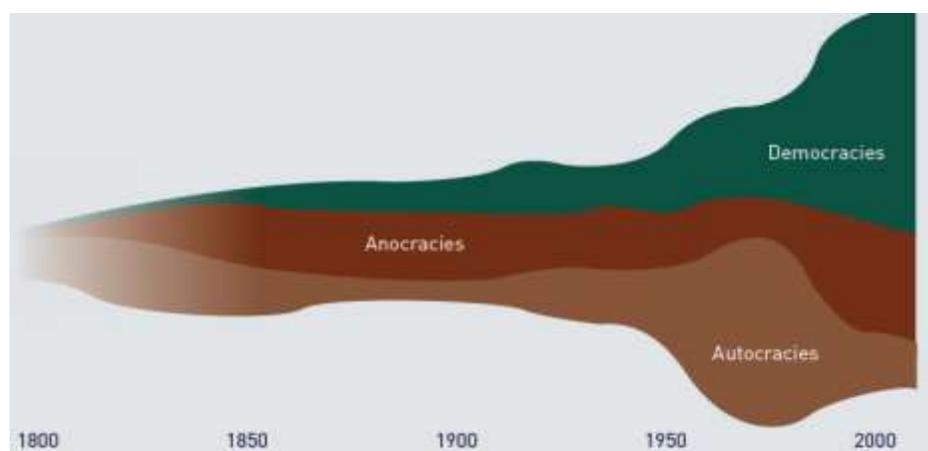
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<sup>1</sup> Birdsall, Meyer, and Sowa (2013)

economic and political actor. Yet at the same time, globalization renders individuals powerless in the face of vast forces that affect their well-being. Taken together these trends simultaneously fuel and frustrate the demand for voice.

Figure 3.1 shows a strong tendency toward democratic and away from authoritarian forms of government, as measured by a set of indicators covering the selection of the executive, constraints on executive authority, and political competition. The steady increase in democratization over the past 50 years has been particularly strong since 1990, following the fall of the Berlin Wall. To be sure, the shift towards democracy has not been smooth, and there is growing concern and political science scholarship about the reverse direction and the apparent sustainability of authoritarian regimes.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the broad direction over the past half century has been in the direction of greater democracy.

**Figure 3.1 Composite Index of Democratic Governance Indicators, 1946–2011**



Source: Sweijts, T., & Polchar, J. (2014)<sup>3</sup>

Note: Figure includes countries with populations of 500,000 and more.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Larry Diamond's *The Spirit of Democracy* (2009).

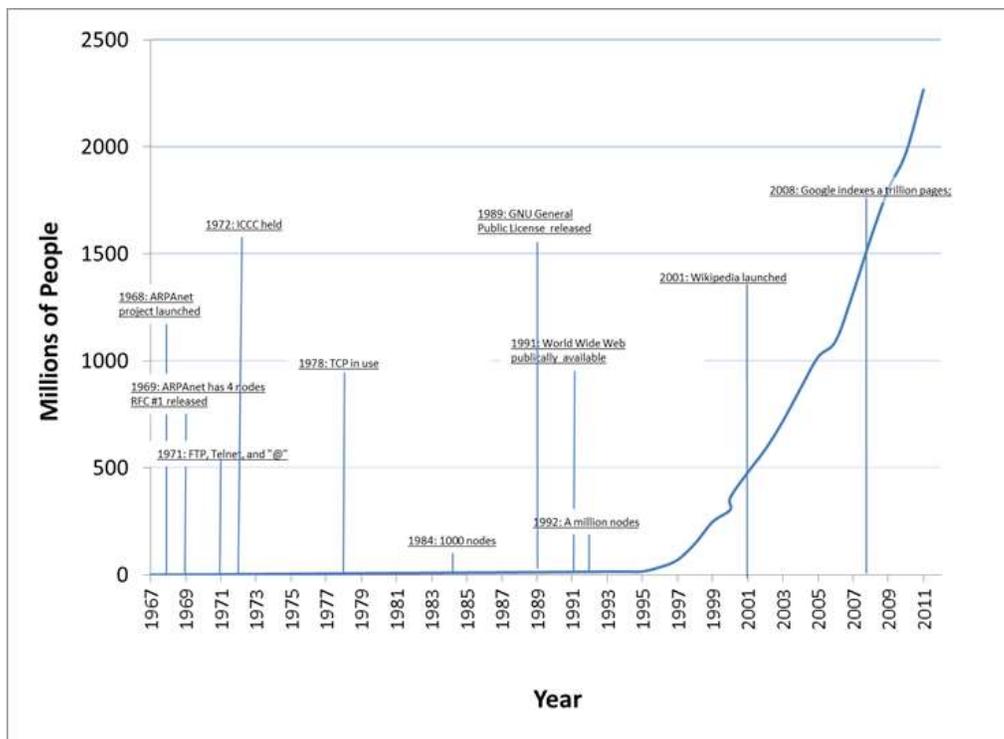
<sup>3</sup> Source: Sweijts, T., & Polchar, J. (2014). "Peace and Conflict Across Time - An Overview." HCSS Centre for Strategic Studies. <http://www.hcss.nl/news/peace-and-conflict-across-time/837/>

The authority characteristics of states measured using a revised combined polity score (Polity2) from the Polity IV project and expressed as a share of total regimes. The three regime types are: democracy, autocracy and anocracy. "A perfect democracy has institutionalized procedures for open, competitive, and deliberative political participation; chooses and replaces chief executives in open, competitive elections; and imposes substantial checks and balances on the discretionary powers of the chief executive. In a perfect autocracy citizens' participation is sharply restricted or suppressed; chief executives are selected according to clearly defined (usually hereditary) rules of succession from within the established political elite; and, once in office, chief executives exercise power with no meaningful checks from legislature, judicial, or civil society institutions. Anocracies are countries whose governments are neither fully democratic nor fully autocratic but, rather, combine an, often, incoherent mix of democratic and autocratic traits and practices."

The turn toward market-based economics can be seen most dramatically in the economic liberalization and subsequent boom in China and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in deregulation and accelerated growth in India. It is also evident in many smaller countries, from the wholehearted embrace of market-based systems in much of Central Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall to the growing number of stable, market-led democracies in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

Arvind Subramanian and Martin Kessler argue that we live in an era of hyperglobalization.<sup>4</sup> They focus on trade, but the statement is also true for finance, popular culture, and many other facets of life, especially the sharing of information and knowledge. As figure 3.2 shows, since the Internet was commercialized in 1975, the number of people with connections has grown at an ever-steeper rate, so that by 2011 almost 2.5 billion of the world's 7 billion people—more than 35 percent—had Internet access. Growth in mobile phone penetration is even more dramatic, with estimates projecting that the number of active mobile phones will exceed the world's population by 2014 (Pramis 2013).

**Figure 3.2 Growth in Reach of the Internet, 1967–2011**



Source: Witzel 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Subramanian and Kessler (2013)

The *US National Intelligence Council* expects the centrality of the individual to increase arguing “Individual empowerment will accelerate owing to poverty reduction, growth of the global middle class, greater educational attainment, widespread use of new communications and manufacturing technologies, and health care advances.”<sup>5</sup>

By seeming to confirm the importance of the individual and giving people greater access to information and communications tools than ever before, these trends raise expectations that individuals’ views and voice matter, only to frustrate these demands, because the opportunity for any one individual to influence global trends is vanishingly small.<sup>6</sup>

Hirschman (1970) identifies two broad categories of influence on organizations: voice, whereby customers or members “express their dissatisfaction directly to management or to some other authority to which management is subordinate or through general protest to anyone who cares to listen,” and exit, whereby “customers stop buying the firm’s products or some members leave the organization.”

Although exit from a particular firm or other specific social grouping is arguably easier now than ever before because of increased mobility, exit from globalization is increasingly difficult. If you don’t like global trade, finance, or culture, there are fewer and fewer places to go to escape them. In a thoroughly globalized world, exit may involve turning against dominant institutions: if I can’t abide and can’t avoid global culture, I am left with no choice but to fight it. Some writers have gone so far as to argue that globalization tends to create terrorists by limiting other options for escape.<sup>7</sup>

This is not to suggest that we should try to stop globalization. Rather, it highlights one of the many reasons why effective voice is perhaps more important in today’s globalized world than ever before.

The demand for voice is growing, but the context in which global citizen’ preferences can be exercised is limited, complex, and confusing, for several reasons. First, there is no dominant decision-making entity, no single governance body (such as the United Nations or the World

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<sup>5</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2020: Alternate Worlds*, p. i

<sup>6</sup> There has been much discussion of how technology can give individual citizens a bigger microphone on issues they care about. These technology trends give people access to information, but as Eli Pariser shows in *The Filter Bubble* and as Cass Sunstein shows in *Republic.com 2.0*, access to information can accentuate people’s propensity to talk to people like themselves and access sources of information that are compatible with what they already believe.

<sup>7</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin (2002) writes, “The current wave of international terrorism... not only is a reaction to globalization but is facilitated by it.”

Trade Organization) that can “solve the problem” and that global citizen voice would therefore seek to influence.

Second, there is no consolidated body of academic work. The topic spans economics, political science, neuroscience, philosophy, and technology—and there is little common language and even less consensus across these fields. There is no uniquely influential voice, no global equivalent of Walter Cronkite in the United States in the 1960s, who enjoys widespread trust and thus has the authority to tell a global audience: “That’s the way it is.”

Third, despite the phenomenal rise of the Internet, there is only a rudimentary and fractured global public sphere in which such a voice could be heard. Relatively few people communicate across linguistic, economic, and other borders, and those who do often talk to people who already think as they do.

This problem represents a huge challenge for the GCF and other entities interested in the articulation of global citizens’ preferences. But it also provides many opportunities for creativity, leadership, innovation, and impact.

### **3. Problems Ascertaining Citizen Preferences**

Many techniques are available for ascertaining various aspects of what people want. Depending on the issue and the question being asked, these techniques work remarkably well or very badly. For simple questions of individual preference (“Under what circumstances are people willing to pay for bottled water when they could get much the same thing from the tap at a tiny fraction of the cost?”), price signals and the observation of consumer behavior work just fine. For complex trade-offs that require both knowledge and deliberation (“Under what circumstances would people be willing to pay more for gasoline to reduce the risk of runaway climate change?”), simple observation of prices is inadequate. Survey questions about a hypothetical willingness to pay are likely better, although many people are poorly informed about issues involving trade-offs and have given them little thought. Their answers may be different from what they would if they had a chance to learn more and consider the views of others.

Techniques for ascertaining citizen preferences tend to fail for two reasons: lack of representativeness and lack of thoughtful deliberation. Both problems are well known to us in our daily lives but easy to forget when attempting to ascertain something as complex as

global public opinion or even national public opinion on global issues. Each source of failure can be illustrated with a true story.

### **Lack of Representativeness**

In 1997, *TIME Magazine* conducted a global poll to identify the 100 most important people of the 20th century. According to a BBC report at the time:<sup>8</sup>

Shortly after *TIME Magazine* announced its poll...votes for Ataturk began to pour in from Turkey by letter, by fax and on the Internet. A campaign orchestrated by the Turkish press was encouraged by leading politicians—it seemed to be a matter of national honour. As giant billboard posters of Ataturk appeared all over the capital on Republic Day, it became clear that the campaign was producing unusual results. A quick check on *TIME*'s Internet site reveals that Mustafa Kemal Ataturk—a man who is hardly a household name outside his own country—is leading in every category as the century's most influential figure. As warrior and statesman, he's pulling ahead of Winston Churchill. As artist and entertainer, he's left Bob Dylan in second place. As scientist and healer, Albert Einstein is not even relatively close to the Ataturk bandwagon. And so the list goes on. Well over a million votes have already been cast and there seems no dampening of enthusiasm here for an Ataturk victory.

Nonrepresentative, self-selected samples are constantly being presented as legitimate expressions of public opinion. Even well-run elections lack true representativeness: although election results are typically seen as a legitimate expression of public will, only a subset of the people who will be affected by the outcome are eligible to vote, and a still smaller subset actually makes it to the polls, where results are often determined by a few percentage points. Rather than reflecting the views of the majority, even well-run elections merely reflect the views of a majority of a self-selected minority—those who voted. For almost any issue, there will be a subset of people whose interests are most directly affected who have a strong incentive to make their views known and attempt to shape outcomes. Without some mechanism to ensure that others' views are also included, the result may be as skewed as the *TIME* poll, just less obviously so.

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<sup>8</sup> (Morris 1997)

## Lack of Knowledge and Thoughtfulness

In 2004, the *Village Voice* reported the following story:<sup>9</sup>

Few people remember the Public Affairs Act of 1975. The legislation noiselessly received all the appropriate votes and knowing backslaps, skimming along with little fanfare until a group of University of Cincinnati researchers started asking questions.

Led by a political scientist named George Bishop, the researchers asked Americans across the country the same question: “Do you favor or oppose the Public Affairs Act of 1975?” For some reason, the act that nobody scrutinized yielded surprisingly divisive views now that it had been codified—the research team discovered that about one-third of respondents expressed a definitive preference one way or another on this heretofore uncontroversial legislative throw-away. Naturally, nothing happened.

The act lived unspectacularly for the next 20 years until a *Washington Post* poll asked a similar question: What did Americans think now that the act was poised for repeal? Did it matter that it was the “Republican Congress” that wanted to roll back the act’s obscure gains? What about President Clinton’s support of the repeal? Again, the public voiced a fierce split. Again, nothing happened.

The thing is, the Public Affairs Act of 1975 never existed. It was a fabrication of Bishop’s team designed to prove a point: People prefer feigning authority to admitting ignorance. Those who study polling call these phantom opinions “non-attitudes,” since they are the product of harried, on-the-spot guessing rather than actual deliberation.

Phantom opinions are just the most extreme manifestation of a wider problem that has been called “rational ignorance.”<sup>10</sup> For most people most of the time, it’s rational not to invest time and energy in understanding an issue on which their opinion will make no difference. If I am only one among a million voters, it matters little whether or not I take the trouble to become well informed.

Worse yet, unlike with the fictional Public Affairs Act of 1975, for real issues, people’s opinions and preferences are often shaped by ill-informed assumptions about the nature of a problem and the likely result of a specific policy path. People’s attitudes are shaped by the noise embedded in the very processes commonly used to assess their opinion. Politicians and news organizations conduct polls to learn what the public currently thinks about issues that

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<sup>9</sup> Hsu (2004)

<sup>10</sup> This term was famously coined by Anthony Downs (1957), in *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. For further information, including variations on this idea, see *When the People Speak* (Fishkin 2009, p. 2 and accompanying reference).

many respondents haven't thought about very much, and politicians then use these views to guide their actions.

For example, an opinion poll about immigration reform in the United States may find that some people are very strongly opposed to proposals to increase legal immigration. Some of them may hold this opinion because they assume that immigrants will compete for U.S. jobs. A politician reviewing these poll results might think that supporting increased legal immigration would be untenable. Although opposition to increased immigration might decline if people learned that evidence shows that immigrants boost the economy and help create new jobs, few people who are opposed to increased migration learn this. Polls matter, because in practice people won't take the time to learn the details of a policy issue—especially if the new evidence contradicts their views.

### **Other Problems in Knowing What People Want**

There are, of course, many other potential problems in discovering people's preferences, not only for groups but also at the individual level. Indeed, economists have spent much of the past 50 years challenging the traditional concept of the rational decision maker. Starting with Herbert Simon's (1957) exploration of bounded rationality and joined by the more recent work of Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (2000), Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein (2008), Dan Ariely (2010), Robert Frank (2011), Daniel McFadden (2013), and others, economics now offers a much more nuanced understanding of how and why people make choices.

Although rational ignorance implies that individuals could make good decisions if they had sufficient information and motivation to care, Kahneman, a renowned psychologist and winner of the 2002 Nobel Prize in economics, and others have been exploring why people so often make choices that are not in their best interest. In his international best-seller, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Kahneman (2011) contrasts two systems that he claims drive the way people decide. System 1 is fast, intuitive, and emotional; System 2 is slower, more deliberative, more logical, and lazy. People prefer System 1—it's quick and easy—and people are routinely overconfident in the conclusions they reach using it. Kahneman shows that the

conclusions we reach in this manner are often wrong and costly, and he suggests strategies for relying more on System 2 thinking.<sup>11</sup>

Working in a similar vein, Thaler and Sunstein (2008) have begun to define what they call “choice architecture” to help people make better decisions. As we shall see, most commonly used efforts to identify citizens’ preferences activate System 1, offering little or no opportunity for people to learn relevant information, reflect, and deliberate.

Another set of problems in ascertaining citizen preferences concerns collective action. Some of these are “prisoner’s dilemma” situations, where, if participants could cooperate, they would reach a higher level outcome than they can without cooperation. Others are relative position issues, where the individual’s preference as an individual may be different from his or her preference within a group.

A fuller discussion of the implications of behavioral economics and other literature on preferences and decision making is beyond the scope of this paper. It is clear, however, that efforts to ascertain and amplify global citizen preferences on key global issues will need to be informed by this work. Moreover, it is possible that influences could flow in both directions: efforts to discern and amplify the views of global citizens may offer a valuable opportunity to experiment with and better understand processes that support improved decision making.

#### **4. Common Methods for Ascertaining Citizen Preferences**

Most techniques for ascertaining citizen preferences are hindered to varying degrees by the problems of lack of representativeness and lack of thoughtfulness. This section describes some examples of commonly used techniques, the kinds of questions they can be useful for answering, and the ways in which they are subject to one or both of the problems described above.<sup>12</sup>

##### **Public Opinion Polls**

Carefully designed public opinion polls score well in terms of representativeness; when it comes to thoughtfulness, not so much. In a typical opinion poll, respondents are asked a

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<sup>11</sup> More recently, Jonathan Haidt argues in *The Righteous Mind* (2013) that moral decision-making is largely intuitive and based on preconceived ideas rather than rational deliberation.

<sup>12</sup> Conducting cost-benefit analysis on the activities listed in this section would be a complex and perhaps impossible endeavor and is in any event beyond the scope of this paper. Although cost data could likely be obtained, placing a value on the uncertain and widely varying benefits would be challenging indeed.

series of questions and respond on the spot. Sometimes respondents are provided with a relevant piece of information, usually as part of a follow-up question, to discover which pieces of information changes their minds. But they have little opportunity to assimilate this new information (and may not trust it), and they have no chance to ask questions or hear and reflect on the views of others.

The preferences thus elicited may be representative, but they are generally not thoughtful or deliberative. And, as we know from Kahneman's work, the resulting expressed preferences may frequently be at odds with the respondent's own best interests, not to mention the best interests of others whom the respondent may care about.

Despite these problems, opinion polls at the national level are crucial in shaping policies and election outcomes. Politicians rely on polling data in shaping positions to increase their chances of electoral success. Policy elites—and potential campaign donors—use opinion polls in determining whether a candidate or issue can attract sufficient support to win. Campaign managers use opinion polls to uncover initial opposition or support and to test messages, images, and other framing techniques to see which are effective in increasing or reducing support.

This type of opinion polling has been applied in a global context, on global issues, for more than a decade, usually by asking similar questions in a series of surveys across many countries. Gallup's worldwide polling is among the most extensive, with samples of about 1,000 people in 150 countries claiming to cover 95 percent of the world's adult population in representative samples. The Pew Research Center, a nonprofit based in Washington, DC, has been conducting interviews since 2001 through its Global Attitudes Project. Covering about 30 countries with about 30,000 interviews per period, Pew has reached more than 60 countries, conducting more than 330,000 interviews.

These surveys have yielded a fascinating composite picture of top-of-the-head global public opinion. The findings are broadly encouraging for people who hope to see the emergence of a sense of global citizenship. Summarizing the results of such polls, Birdsall and her coauthors write:

Worldwide surveys show that citizens everywhere are becoming more aware of and more active in seeking changes in the global norms and rules that could make the global system and the global economy fairer—in processes if not outcomes—and less environmentally harmful. Across the world more people, especially the more educated, see themselves as “global citizens,” aware that what happens inside their

own country matters for others outside and that what happens outside matters for them and for their children and grandchildren. Global citizenship is seen not in opposition but alongside national citizenship. This sense is highest among the young and better educated, suggesting that over time it will increase.

This is good news, especially as the survey methodology means respondents usually haven't thought much about what they are being asked, may know little or nothing about the topics being covered, and have no opportunity to hear and reflect on the views of others before making up their minds. For these reasons, such surveys, although a useful measure of people's values, are often ill suited for complex policy issues that involve difficult trade-offs. As the opinion surveys on the nonexistent Public Affairs Act of 1975 remind us, even when they are well designed with scientifically representative samples, standard public opinion polls can reveal only what people say they think about things that they have often hardly thought about at all.

### **Self-Selected Listener Opinion Polls (SLOPs)**

Careful public opinion surveys with randomized selection of respondents may reliably represent the top-of-the-head views of a given population. But many activities that are called polls, especially those run by broadcasters, newspapers, and various online entities, fail the representativeness test as well as the thoughtfulness standard. Norman Bradburn, a Senior Fellow at NORC at the University of Chicago, coined the term SLOP (Self-selected Listener Opinion Poll) for this all-too-common category of unrepresentative polling.

SLOPs can lead to comic results. In 2010, the U.S. Republican Party invited all Americans to submit their public policy recommendations in an online exercise called "Americans Speaking Out," asking citizens to rate which ideas they liked best. The fourth-most popular idea for improving national security was to get "some of those invincible black knights from Monty Python and the Holy Grail."<sup>13</sup> As it is unlikely that participants actually believed this to be a viable approach to national security, this result could be seen as a protest vote ("You aren't going to do what I say anyway. Why should I take this poll seriously?"). In any event, it was clear that the SLOP failed to produce useful information about Americans' true preferences. *TIME Magazine's* effort to identify the top 100 people of the 20th century was a huge global SLOP.

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<sup>13</sup> (Terkel 2010)

## Social Media

The past decade has witnessed an explosion in the use of online social media tools that make it possible for Internet users to broadcast opinions; find and connect with like-minded people; create and share materials; and communicate, coordinate, and even collaborate on the creation of new ideas, content, and products. These tools—including Facebook; Twitter; Wordpress; Skype; Tumblr; Google Groups, Hangouts, and YouTube; and China’s Tencent QQ messaging service and Weibo—are universally commercial, for-profit platforms.

Many of these services have tremendous reach. The largest social media site, Facebook, claims to have more than 1 billion active users; YouTube claims to have more than 1 billion unique users each month, watching more than 6 billion hours of video and uploading another 100 hours of video every minute. By contrast, the *Wall Street Journal*, the newspaper with the largest circulation in the United States, distributes about 2.4 million copies a day and the most watched television show (“The Bachelorette”!?) reaches about 8 million viewers on a good night (Alliance for Audited Media 2013).

Although it is far too early to know how these tools will alter society and politics (an argument rages), there is already evidence that social media, writ large, are having important impacts on governance and power. Philip Howard, author of *Democracy’s Fourth Wave? Digital Media and the Arab Spring*, argues that the presence of digital media was “consistently one of the most important sufficient and necessary conditions” for the Arab Spring movements.

During unrest in Turkey in 2013, Prime Minister Tayyip Recep Erdogan was outraged over the influence of social media, announcing “there is now a menace which is called Twitter.... The best examples of lies can be found there. To me, social media is the worst menace to society” (Al Arabiya 2013). The role of social media underpinned the comments of Erdogan’s education minister when he lamented that the government “succeeded in five days in doing something that the opposition wouldn’t have been able to do in years.... made very different segments, groups and fractions meet each other under the dust, who would never have gotten together under normal conditions” (Hemish 2013).

Governments around the world have reacted to social media by attempting to restrict citizen access, with only mixed success at best. Countries involved in the suppression and control of social media for political reasons include China, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and many countries in North Africa.

Nonetheless, the ability of social media to give voice to representative and deliberative opinion remains to be seen. Social media can build momentum for nascent movements, aggregating interest in a problem and in some cases changing the national or international conversation. They may prove to be particularly useful in situations like the Arab Spring (and perhaps in the unfolding situation in Turkey), where they link critics of a deeply unpopular regime. In this way social media perhaps more closely resemble traditional, pre-digital social networks, such as the pamphlets and street criers that helped propel the American Revolution than they resemble deliberative democratic bodies.<sup>14</sup>

Social media movements make it possible for millions of people to exchange views. But they are not representative (because participants are self-selected) or deliberative (because there is no mechanism for ensuring that participants are exposed to relevant information and encounter views different from their own). Thus, so far at least, social media have been of limited use in identifying citizen preferences on issues that involve difficult trade-offs. For all the excitement about the role of Facebook and Twitter during the revolution that toppled Hosni Mubarak, social media have not fostered a public consensus about how to address the difficult problems facing Egypt.

## **Petitions**

Petitions have a long, storied history. In Imperial China, they were sent to the court, where multiple copies were made and stored before the original was read to the emperor, who then gave instructions to redress the grievance. In 13th century England, petitions to the king acted as a trigger for the creation of laws. In 1774, a petition from the American colonies set out the complaints that would soon underpin the revolution. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution forbids Congress from abridging the right “to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

The Internet and online activism have given new life to the old approach, with social media and websites like Change.org, Care2.com, and petitions.com providing infrastructure to collect millions of virtual signatures. Governments in Australia, England, Germany, and Scotland all provide petition tools to their constituents.

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<sup>14</sup> These online platforms continue to evolve, however, including through discussion about how participants can have voice and a role in making decisions that concern governance of the platforms themselves. See, for example, Post, Johnson, and Rotenberg (2013).

The Obama Administration joined this group in 2011 with the launch of its petition service “We the People,” an open-source software and data platform, promising a response to any petition that received more than 25,000 signatures in the first 30 days. When a petition calling for the administration to build a death star (as seen in *Star Wars* movies) topped that number, the administration’s tongue-in-cheek response managed to build support for the petition tool at the same time that it advanced discussion of national investments in technology and space exploration (Shawcross n.d.). The administration then raised the signature threshold for a response to 100,000.

The death star story points out one potential problem with petitions. As with the GOP national security SLOP, people who sign petitions are self-selected and may have little inclination or incentive to think carefully about their response. Worse, some petitions may not even reflect the views of the people who sign them but rather the views of people with the money to hire people to collect signatures. Before reforms in California, for example, interest groups regularly hired professional signature gatherers to garner the signatures needed to push initiatives onto the state ballot. (TIME 2010).

### **Citizen Activism**

Like petitions, activism and organizing are traditional approaches to expressing citizen voice in politics that have received a big boost from the spread of social media platforms and the Internet. Cause-oriented activist groups engage with and motivate anywhere from a few dozen to many millions of people using Websites, email, and social media tools to help their groups connect, organize, and communicate and take action.

An early and oft-cited example of citizen activists using new communications tools to good effect was the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a citizen group that successfully pushed for a global treaty and, in 1997, won the Nobel Peace Prize, jointly with Jody Williams, the group’s leader. However, the Internet played only a minor role, late in the campaign, according to Kenneth Rutherford, who lost both legs to a landmine while doing humanitarian relief work in Somalia and became an anti-landmine activist and eventually a political scientist who studied the movement. Rutherford writes that in the early stages of the campaign, the ICBL used only basic communications technologies, such as the telephone and fax, adopting email and Web technologies only when the campaign was well advanced. In an early, unpublished paper about the movement, he expressed the hope that “as communication technologies continue to develop and come on-line, and increasingly

become available to the public, the result for international policymaking will be profound.” But it is difficult to think of a grassroots effort that has achieved similar success in the nearly 15 years since he wrote.

What happened? One possibility is that people who favor the status quo and therefore want to resist change have become more adept at using the Internet themselves. Such would seem to be the case, for example, with the fossil fuel industry’s quiet encouragement of so-called climate change skeptics—Internet “trolls” who, judging from the ubiquity of their comment spam, spend their days posting blog comments that call into question the scientific consensus on climate change (National Geographic Science Blogs 2012).

Another possible explanation was put forward by Malcolm Gladwell, in an influential 2010 *New Yorker* essay entitled “[Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted.](#)” He contrasts the “weak ties” of Internet networks with the much stronger ties built by those who organized the 1960s civil rights lunch counter sit-ins. Although the Arab Spring has since shown that revolutions can, indeed, sometimes be Tweeted, such instances have generally been accompanied by large, real-world gatherings, such as the crowds in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, where participants are pressed into close proximity, creating opportunities to learn about others’ experiences and perspectives and build strong ties of trust.

There is no shortage of tools for online activists. Websites like Causes.com and Avaaz.org provide infrastructure for multiple activist groups with overlapping interests to find and connect supporters, raise money, and generate attention using tools like petitions, pledges, fundraisers, and email alerts. Some of these groups provide professional advice to organizers, attempting to identify and advance particularly high-potential initiatives. Many individual-cause groups, including the National Rifle Association (NRA), Moveon.org, the Human Rights Campaign, and ONE.org (the U.S. group that campaigns against global poverty), have developed sophisticated social media platforms and communities of their own.

Activist groups focus on gathering people with similar worldviews. Their efforts are sometimes dismissed as “clicktivism” or “slacktivism” that encourages people to take small, unimportant actions that make them feel better but have no lasting effect. The Kony 2012 viral video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5Sqc>), the core of an online campaign against a Ugandan warlord who conscripts child soldiers, is an example of such problems. The video, which was viewed more than 100 million times in six days, has been

faulted for presenting misleading cultural characterizations and questionable policy guidance (Al Jazeera 2012a, 2012b).

Activist expressions of will can be further contaminated by “astroturf organizations” that try to look as if they reflect grassroots opinions and represent citizen preference but actually do neither. *Campaigns & Elections* magazine defines the term *astroturf* as a “grassroots program that involves the instant manufacturing of public support for a point of view in which either uninformed activists are recruited or means of deception are used to recruit them.” These organizations are often supported by directed research efforts, what Tim Karr (2009) described as “coin-operated think tanks” that help “fertilize the astroturf.” Astroturf organizations recognize the potential fluidity of citizen preferences and manipulate the apparent structure of choices to lead citizens to adopt manufactured “preferences” as their own.

### **Meta-Analysis**

*New York Times* polling analyst Nate Silver earned his slot as Fast Company’s “Most Creative Person in Business” by aggregating and analyzing electoral polls and surveys from a variety of sources. His approach allowed him to correctly call 49 of 50 states results in the U.S. presidential election in 2008 and all 50 in 2012. Silver’s strategy is not unlike meta-analysis of research that contrasts and combines results from different studies. He aggregates, weighs, adjusts, and then simulates to get his results. Meta-analysis can be a powerful tool for predicting what may happen in the near future or analyzing a large volume of seemingly self-contradictory studies (“Does eating high-cholesterol foods really cause heart attacks?”). It is also possible that meta-analysis of the potential outcomes of a given policy alternative could serve as a valuable input to a deliberative policy process (“Will restricting credit to reduce the risk of inflation stall a fragile economic recovery?”). However, until there are a large number of studies of what people would think about an issue if they had a chance to learn about it, reflect on others’ views, and think about it, meta-analysis cannot reveal the informed preferences of any given group.

### **Think Tanks and Other Approaches**

Although think tanks are not generally thought of as a means of expressing citizen voice on global issues, they are worth a brief consideration in this list because they play an important role in formulating policy choices, creating policy materials used by activists groups, and

amplifying citizen preferences that are in line with their policy views. Polling randomized samples of respondents scores well in terms of representativeness but poorly in terms of thoughtfulness. Good think tanks are the opposite: they are highly deliberative, absorbing new ideas and examining all relevant evidence, but they cannot claim to be representative.

In addition, not all think tanks are created equal. Although many disdain ideology and encourage their researchers to approach problem solving with open minds, many others exist specifically to promote a predetermined political agenda. As mainstream media—traditionally the intermediary between think tanks and the public—decline, think tanks increasingly offer their intellectual wares directly to the public. Sophisticated consumers of think tank outputs—policymakers, academics, and other think tankers—understand these distinctions and discount think tank outputs accordingly. But many ordinary citizens lack the inclination or incentives to learn to distinguish among think tanks hawking competing policy proposals. This makes think tanks’ general lack of representativeness more problematic, as the policy proposals they produce, while often the results of careful deliberation, may be seen as lacking in legitimacy.

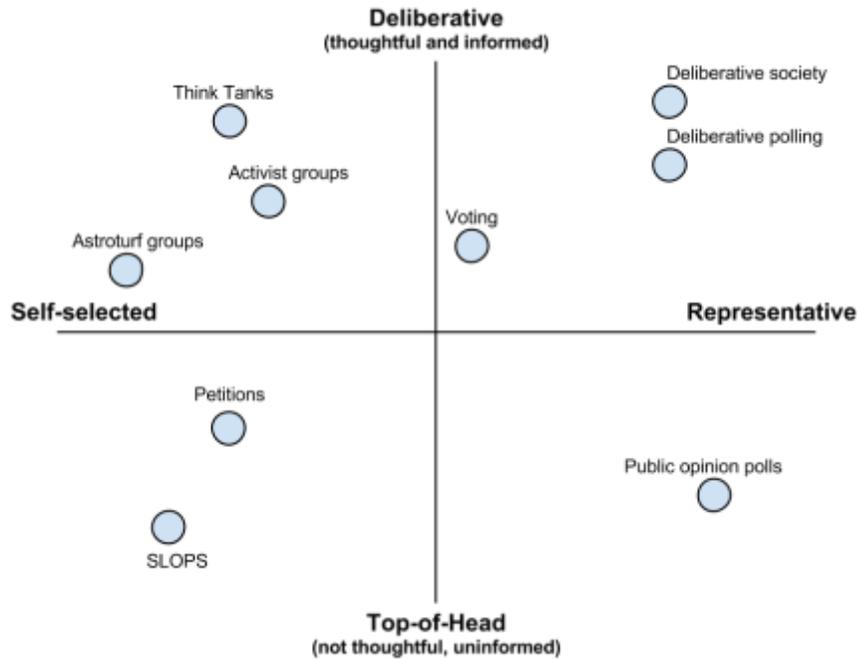
Other approaches for ascertaining public preferences may solve one or the other of the two problems; they rarely solve both. Focus groups can measure what a small group of people think in depth, offering nuanced, rich detail. But they are not representative of what a broader community would think about the same issues.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of discussions in newspapers, magazines, blog comments, and Tweets can provide insight into what a range of people who may or may not have thought about an issue are thinking. But because the sources are unrepresentative, it is hard to ascertain how widespread the views expressed are in the larger population.

Citizen juries are an attempt to model public policy evaluation on the jury process (see Smith and Wales 1999). Although they are deliberative, like focus groups they are too small to be statistically representative.

Figure 5.1 shows how several of the examples discussed here measure up when tested against the dual criteria of representativeness and deliberation. Deliberative polling, in the upper-right-hand quadrant, may offer a better approach. We turn to it shortly but first take a look at a newer approach that has attracted a great deal more attention: big data.

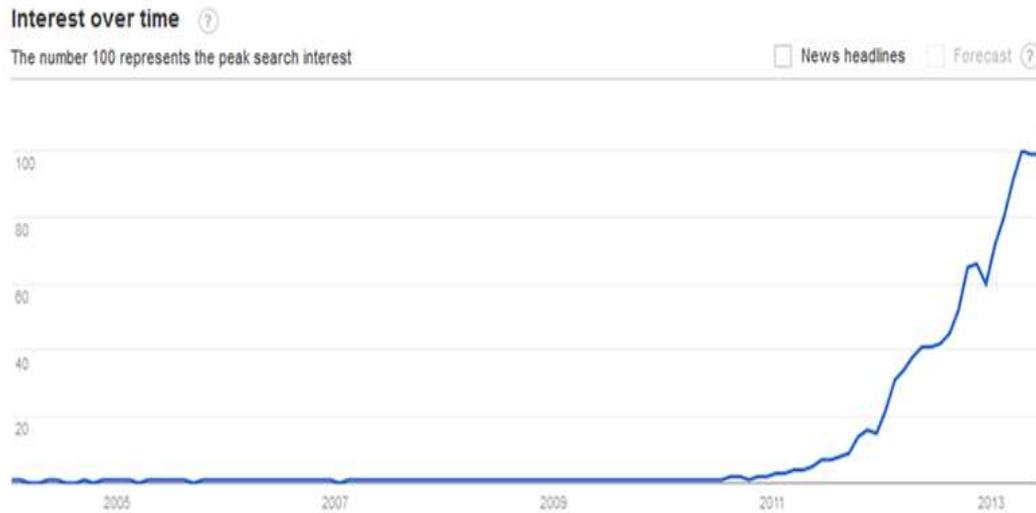
Figure 5.1 Assessing Citizen Preferences in Terms of Representation and Thoughtfulness



## 5. The Promise and Limitations of Big Data

Interest in “big data” has increased dramatically in the last few years (figure 6.1). The term has been popularized by businesses like IBM and McKinsey and the promises of books like *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think*, by Viktor Mayer-Schonberger and Kenneth Cukier. Can big data offer insights into citizen’s policy preferences? Can big data be mined on a global scale, to identify the preferences of global citizens on global issues?

Figure 6.1 Google Searches of Term “Big Data,” 2004–13



Source: Google Trends.

Note: Self-referentially, Google Trends relies on big data from user searches to report on the growth of the term *big data*.

The authors of *Big Data* identify three shifts in the way information is analyzed that they claim will “transform how we understand and organize society”:

- “More.” With an ever-growing number of devices (mobile phones, online shopping, automated video cameras, thermostats, electricity meters, automatic teller machines) recording vast amounts of data, more data are available than ever before. And thanks to the same computer-driven revolution that is driving data collection, the cost of storing, retrieving, and analyzing these vast datasets is already lower than ever imaginable and still falling fast. Frequently, the secondary uses of the data turn out to be more valuable than the initial intended use.
- “Messy.” Because it is now often possible to capture and analyze the entire dataset on some questions (“Which consumer demographic is willing to pay more for fair trade coffee?”), the need for exactitude that arises when using small samples is increasingly a thing of the past. Large datasets tend to be messy, but that’s okay. “In return for using much more comprehensive datasets we can shed some of the rigid exactitude in a big data world” (Mayer-Schonberger and Cukier 2013, p. 13).

- Correlation (not causation). “Big data,” the authors write, “is about what not why.” If big data can save you money by showing you the best time to buy an airline ticket, it doesn’t matter why prices are usually lowest on Tuesdays. Causality mattered more when collecting data was expensive and time consuming and forming a new hypothesis involved another costly data collection exercise. In the big data era, spotting correlations is cheap, fun, and profitable, causation be damned.

Businesses like department stores have been developing applications of big data for some time. Nordstrom’s was recently revealed to be using data from its customers’ mobile phone wifi connections to track their movement through its stores (ABC News 2013). The *New York Times* reported in 2012 that data analysts at Target were able to predict whether a customer was pregnant and other life events (Duhigg 2012). Wal-Mart famously discovered a highly profitable correlation between hurricanes and PopTart sales and now stocks piles of the sugary treats at the check-out counters when tropical storms threaten (New York Times, 2004).

Big data not only reveal previously hidden patterns in what people do. They can also uncover what many people say they feel. Sentiment analysis—tracking the frequency of emotion-laden words in Twitter and other social media—offers stores, brands, and other commercial and noncommercial entities previously unavailable information on what large groups of people say they feel in connection with an organization, event, or other topic.<sup>15</sup>

## **Big Data and Public Policy**

Big data techniques are slowly making their way into public policy, often with worthwhile results:

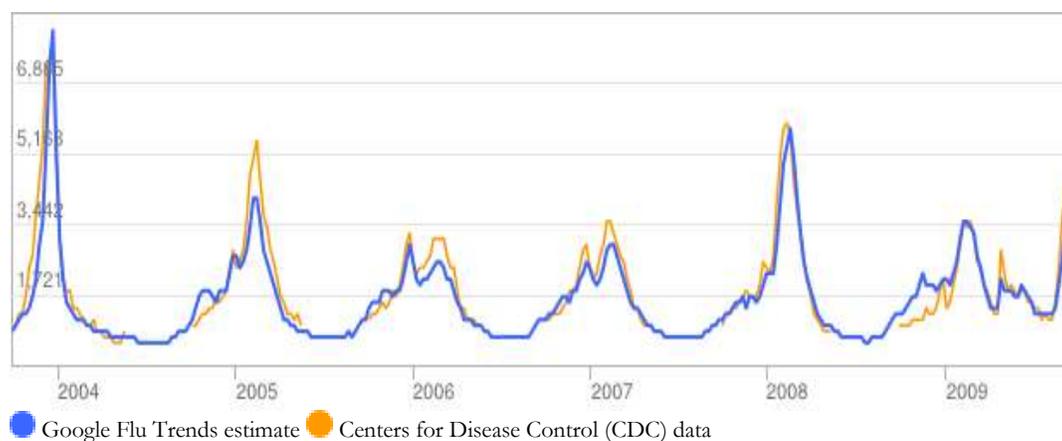
- *Redrawing bus routes in Côte d’Ivoire*. IBM researchers redrew bus routes in Côte d’Ivoire based on mobile phone data collected from millions of users. The new routes are estimated to reduce the average travel time by 10 percent (Solon 2013).

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<sup>15</sup> [www.sentiment140.com](http://www.sentiment140.com) offers a simple version of sentiment tracking using emotion-linked words. The risks of such an approach are quickly apparent in a search for sentiment on “Obama,” which yielded 59 percent “positives” and 41 percent “negatives” when conducted July 1. A quick look at the sample Tweets suggests that the algorithms used can’t discern sarcasm.

- *Synchronizing traffic lights in Los Angeles:* Los Angeles synchronized 4,500 traffic signals across 469 square miles using data from magnetic sensors in the road that measure traffic flow, hundreds of cameras, and a computer system that constantly adjusts traffic signals. The LA Transportation Department says the average speed of traffic is 16 percent faster as a result. (Lovett 2013).
- *Finding potholes in Boston:* Boston is using big data to find an estimated 20,000 potholes that need fixing each year. The city offers a free smartphone app, StreetBump, that uses accelerometer and GPS data to detect potholes and instantly report them. But StreetBump has a signal problem: poorer people and older residents often don't have smartphones. This means that datasets are missing inputs from significant parts of the population—often those who have the fewest resources.
- *Tracking flu and dengue fever outbreaks:* Google mines data from users' search activity to estimate and track flu activity around the world in real time; it is now using a similar approach to try to track dengue fever (Google.org 2013). Its results, in early years were very similar to that of the U.S. Center for Disease Control (figure 6.2) but more recently have diverged (FT Magazine, 2014).
- *Winning the 2012 presidential election:* Barack Obama's 2012 victory was widely hailed as a victory for data analytics. The campaign invested \$100 million in technology, wielded by some of the brightest data minds around, to discover which voters were likely to support the president and get those voters to the polls. (Tufekci 2012). The campaign's success arguably rested more on identifying voters predisposed toward Obama and getting them to the polls than on changing the minds of others.
- *Tracking and monitoring the impacts of global and local socioeconomic crises:* The United Nations' big data initiative, UN Global Pulse, uses online data, data from private partners and physical sensors, and data from contributors to better understand issues like hunger, poverty, and disease.
- *Measuring public happiness:* Scientists use data from Twitter to measure changes in happiness based on people's online expressions. They claim that the "hedonometer" is able to measure the happiness of large populations in real time.

**Figure 6.2 Flu Activity in the United States as Estimated by Google Flu Trends and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, 2004–09**



Source: Google.org n.d.

As these examples make clear, the use of big data has huge potential to improve our understanding of the world and to change outcomes. So far, however, it has not been used to measure representative, informed public opinion on issues on which difficult trade-offs are required, especially trade-offs among options that are not currently available.<sup>16</sup> Although ways may be discovered to do so, we were unable to find any examples. Moreover, it is hard to imagine applications of big data that would overcome the problem of rational ignorance, the fact that people do not want to invest time in understanding a problem when their views will have no discernible impact on the solution.

### **What Big Data Can't Do**

For all its many exciting applications, mining big data remains primarily a method of aggregating people's revealed preferences—preferences that can be observed from a person's actions, as distinct from avowed preferences, such as those stated in a poll. For example, people may say that they plan to take the bus to work when in fact they

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<sup>16</sup> As discussed later in this paper, methodologies that seek to measure representative and informed public opinion can make use of big data analysis. For example, deliberative polls on climate change have presented facts about policy options based on simulations that rely on big data. But big data alone do not give citizens a path to agency. Citizens need to discuss the implications of big data simulations in a structured way for these data to have bearing on their attitudes.

consistently drive. Data on the daily transportation choices of many thousands of people, perhaps generated as a byproduct of their mobile phone use, can help transportation planners learn what combination of incentives (parking fees, bus ticket prices, bus schedules, and so forth) would persuade people to take the bus. But these data cannot tell us if car-bound commuters might have happily traded in their wheels for a (currently nonexistent) subway, work-site child care, or permission to telecommute. Big data can help indicate how well policies are working to achieve previously identified goals. But data on revealed preferences cannot tell a political leader whether spending that achieves health goals is more or less important to people than spending that improves public safety or education.

When the data are “big enough,” they are often assumed to be representative—after all, one of the major appeals of big data is that the low costs of collection, storage, and analysis make it possible to use massive datasets that may correspond to the entire universe of the question being asked. Often, however, this is not the case. Visa’s credit card transactions database is huge, but it captures the behavior only of people who have Visa cards. And even if the dataset is widened to include people with other credit cards, it still excludes people who lack them.

Far from solving the problem of lack of informed deliberation, big data may be making it worse. In the United States and perhaps elsewhere, big data are being used to redraw political boundaries in ways that protect incumbents. As a result, a dwindling number of seats are competitive, and Congress has become increasingly polarized. Big data are being used by groups that support and oppose tighter restrictions on gun sales and by partisans on both sides of the abortion debate. One shudders to think what uses a future hate-mongering demagogue might find for big data, such as identifying people with latent racist sentiments and targeting them with messages that accentuate their fears or persecuting people who hold different opinions.

Indeed, enthusiasm for big data is tempered by growing concerns about a “surveillance society” and the recently discovered threat of “dataveillance” (Perez and Gorman 2013). We wrote this paper as news of the National Security Agency’s Prism data collection and data-mining system was breaking, shortly after revelations of U.S. government collection of phone records from millions of Verizon customers. A 2009 example of using phone and social media data to track a German politician’s activities is an impressive (and perhaps frightening) demonstration of the potential of these approaches (Zeit Online 2009).

In short, societies need to find mechanisms to ensure that data are collected and used through processes and for purposes that align with widely held values. As David Brooks wrote in the *New York Times* in 2013, there is no such thing as “raw” data. “Data is never raw. It’s always structured according to somebody’s predispositions and values. The end result looks disinterested, but, in reality, there are value choices all the way through, from construction to interpretation.” Google’s Flu Trends may be an example of the importance of context, as it dramatically overestimated actual flu levels in 2012, ignoring the impact of media coverage on people’s behavior (Bilton 2013).

The values one would hope to see honored in the expression of public voice—indeed, the values without which public voice ceases to be legitimate and loses meaning—are representativeness, balanced information, egalitarian participation, and fair opportunity for opposing views to be heard. Data gathered with these values in mind will necessarily use processes that are very different from big data and the other means of uncovering citizen preferences discussed above.

## **6. Deliberative Polling**

Current methods of assessing public preferences often fail the tests of representativeness and thoughtfulness. Deliberative polling—a technique with roots in ancient Athens that has been revived, refined, and applied in a wide variety of settings since the mid-1990s—has the potential to satisfy both criteria. It does so by revealing what a scientific, random sample of people think about an issue when provided an opportunity to learn about it and discuss it with others under good conditions.

Professor James Fishkin, director of the Stanford Center for Deliberative Democracy, in collaboration with Professor Robert Luskin of the University of Texas at Austin, has shepherded the Deliberative Polling® methodology into its modern form.<sup>17</sup> Figure 7.1 lists the poll locations and topics covered since 1994.

Deliberative polls change minds, frequently based on a more informed choice among relevant tradeoffs. Across dozens of deliberative polls on a wide variety of issues, about 70 percent of questions show a statistically significant change of opinion between a survey before deliberation and a similar survey afterward.

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<sup>17</sup> For a thorough account of Deliberative Polling®, see Fishkin (2009). For additional information, see the Center for Deliberative Democracy (<http://cdd.stanford.edu/>).

With surprising frequency, deliberative polls have catalyzed real-world changes on issues of social and economic importance, including the massive expansion of wind power in Texas, the building of sewage treatment plants in China, and the integration of Roma children into the educational system in Bulgaria.<sup>18</sup> When deliberative polls have not led directly to policy change, they have often transformed the political debate through video broadcasts; reporting and analysis about the process and results; and the experience that observers, who are sometimes senior officials, have had watching a deliberative poll.

This section of the paper describes how deliberative polling works. It draws on the rapidly growing body of national and subnational experience and the two international deliberative polls conducted to date, both in the European Union. We then consider whether and how this technique can be applied in the context of global citizenship and steps that the GCF and other potential funders and supporters of such activities could take to advance this work.

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<sup>18</sup> See <http://cdd.stanford.edu/research/>.

Figure 7.1 Deliberative Polling Conducted 1994–2013



Source: Center for Deliberative Democracy (<http://cdd.stanford.edu/>).

Note: C: City; N: National; P: Province; R: Region; S: State; T: Township.

## How Deliberative Polling Works

The core methodology of deliberative polling is straightforward, although it involves more steps and greater logistical challenges—and substantially higher costs—than a traditional random sample public opinion poll. First, an advisory group that represents a broad spectrum of views on an issue oversees the creation of briefing materials to ensure balance and accuracy. These materials, which are usually written but can also take the form of videos for populations with limited literacy (box 7.1), provide the basis for a first-round questionnaire.

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### Box 7.1 Conducting Deliberative Polling in Low-Literacy Settings

In 2008, Thailand’s Ministry of Health commissioned a deliberative poll that included participants with an average of only a few years of education and low levels of literacy. To ensure that everyone included in the randomized sample could participate fairly, regardless of literacy level, the ministry provided video briefing materials and personal assistants to help people complete the surveys.

The government subsequently adjusted its policies on the prioritization of healthcare based on the results of the deliberative poll. Ensuring that people with low literacy can participate raises costs, but the money is well spent if the issue being studied is one on which their voices ought to be counted.

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The questionnaire is then administered to a large, random, representative sample of the population—typically hundreds of people—to provide a baseline measure of preferences. Next a randomly selected subset of the initial sample, ranging from 150 to several hundred people, is recruited to gather for a day or weekend at the polling location; the remainder of the initial sample serves as a control group. All costs of participation are fully covered, and an incentive is usually offered to ensure that participation is attractive and affordable to everyone in the sample.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In the first deliberative poll conducted in the United States, a woman with a small farm said she was unable to attend because there would be no one to milk her cow. Researchers arranged for her cow to be milked so that she could fly to Austin, Texas.

On arrival at the venue, participants meet briefly as a group. They are then divided into smaller randomly selected groups of about 15 people, among whom a trained moderator guides a discussion. The moderator ensures that the discussion does not become polarized and that differences in race, class, gender, education, and language do not result in some people talking more than others and thus having undue influence. Participants in the small groups then exchange views on the issues covered in the briefing materials and decide on questions that they will pose to experts during plenary sessions.

The small groups—and official and media attention to the poll result—give participants a strong incentive to learn about the issue and carefully consider their views. Moreover, in such a setting, learning about an issue is much less costly than in other settings: the material is readily at hand, and time has already been set aside to do review it, at someone else's expense. The problem of rational ignorance is thus greatly reduced.

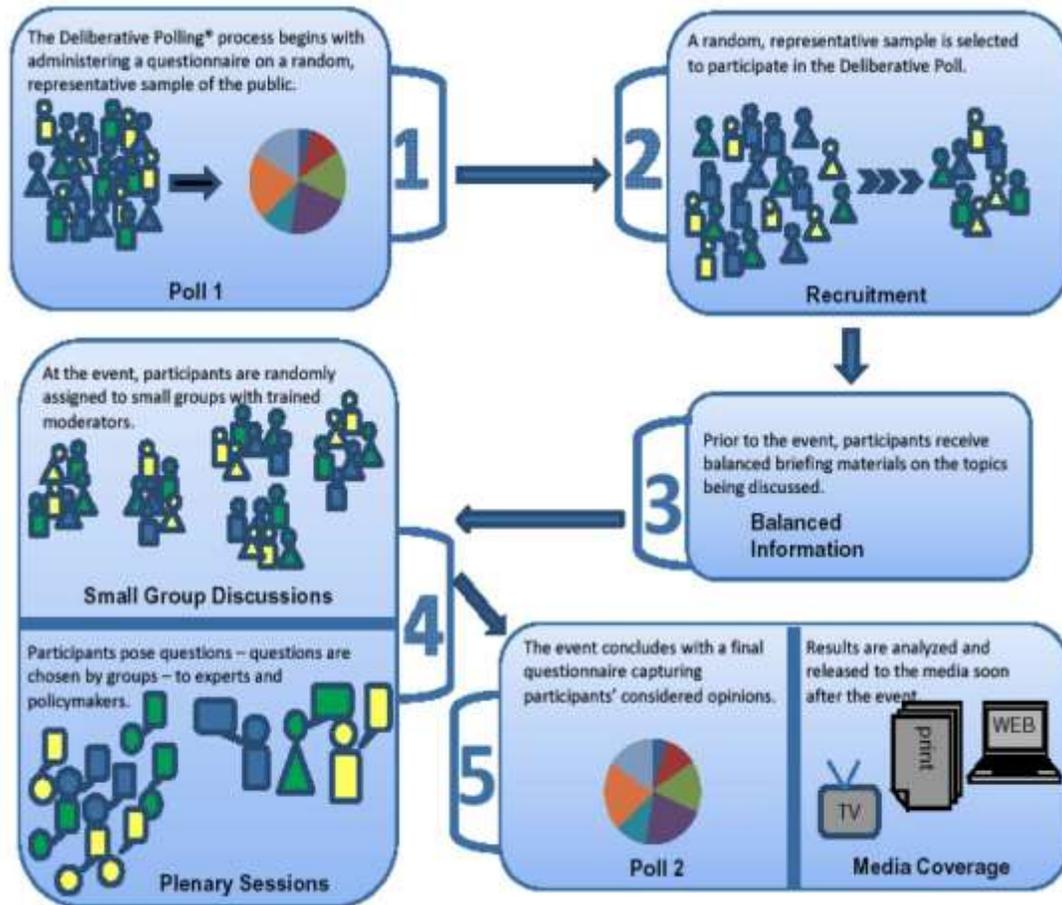
James Fishkin identifies five characteristics of the deliberative polling process that open the way for people to learn from the briefing materials and each other and thus to change their minds:

- *Information*: Accurate and relevant data is made available to all participants.
- *Substantive balance*: Different positions are compared based on arguments for and against each alternative.
- *Diversity*: All major positions relevant to the matter at hand and held by the public are considered.
- *Conscientiousness*: Participants sincerely weigh all arguments.
- *Equal consideration*: Views are weighed based on evidence, not on who is advocating a particular view.

The process alternates with small group and plenary sessions. At the end, participants complete the same questionnaire they answered at the start, plus additional questions about their views on the process.

Figure 7.2 provides an overview of how deliberative polling works.

Figure 7.2 The Deliberative Polling Process



### Linking Deliberative Polling Results to Real-World Outcomes

Deliberative polling results have led to real-world changes in a surprisingly large number of instances. These changes may come about directly (for example, if the poll sponsor is a government or other entity, such as a public utility commission, that has the power to implement changes and commits in advance to abide by the poll results). More commonly, however, deliberative polls change the terms of a public debate, opening the way for future changes in policy.

Observers have frequently been an important part of this process. For example, in the Texas deliberative poll on a renewable energy portfolio standard described below, observers included elected officials, members of the public utility commission, and executives from the power companies. Follow-up interviews revealed that in addition to the quantitative

information included in the poll results, the qualitative experience of watching and listening to the deliberation were an important factor in changing the attitudes of decision makers.

James Fishkin (2009, p. 51) describes how the legitimacy derived from a representative, deliberative process endows the collective preferences of those who have participated in a deliberative poll with considerable persuasive power: “Once the microcosm was seen as a legitimate representation of the views of ordinary citizens and once its process was seen as transparent and balanced, the conclusions acquired a recommending force.”

This “recommending force” can lead to real-world changes, most frequently by changing the terms of the political debate. Politicians and policy makers who previously understood that a particular course of action was in the public interest but did not pursue it because of perceived political costs may use the deliberative poll result as justification or political cover for proceeding. Alternatively, advocacy groups may use poll results as ammunition in an ongoing campaign. Actions that previously seemed sensible but off-the-table politically may gain plausibility and visibility through the process of the deliberative poll.

Examples of changes precipitated by deliberative polls include the following:

- In Zeguo, China, a city of about 250,000 inhabitants, deliberative polls shaped public investment decisions, channeling money to projects like a sewage treatment plant. Leaders were surprised by what the people wanted once they understood the issues involved. The party chief for the area endorsed the poll results saying: “I thought I gave up power, but found I had more.” When people trust a process, it can create legitimacy that extends to other matters.
- In Bulgaria, a deliberative poll conducted on behalf of the prime minister on issues affecting the well-being of the Roma community led to reforms including the closing all of the country’s Roma-only schools.
- In Italy’s Regione Lazio, the political district that includes Rome, a deliberative poll on health policy opened the way for politicians to address a longstanding problem of too many hospital beds and not enough walk-in clinics. Politicians there said the poll result “provided cover to do the right thing.”

In Texas, deliberative polling led to the creation of a renewable energy portfolio standard that brought Texas from second-to-last in the United States for wind power to first. The

Texas utility commissioner said that the change was a direct result of deliberative polls shaping state policy and utility company investment policies. Further information about these and other cases, including detailed case studies, is available from the Center for Deliberative Democracy, housed in the Department of Communications at Stanford University (<http://cdd.stanford.edu>). Additional examples of the impact of deliberative polls are shown in the graphic below and in annex A.

The cost of a deliberative poll is clearly much higher than other methods of attempting to ascertain public preferences. Mobilizing the necessary financial support is not easy and may at times be impossible. However, the proper comparison may not be between deliberative polling and traditional polls or big data but rather between deliberative polling and other methods of attempting to achieve political and social changes, or even between deliberative polling and other large gatherings (such as conferences and mass events) that aim to promote a desired change. When the comparisons are framed in this way, deliberative polls aren't dramatically more expensive.

### **Extending Participation through Online Tools: The Deliberative Society Process**

One of the key strengths of deliberative polling—reliance on a scientific, random sample—is also a potential Achilles' heel: people not selected to participate in the random sample can participate only as observers. Is it possible to use online tools and other mechanisms so that people not included in the random sample can meaningfully participate, without compromising the scientific integrity of the process? Episodes from the history of the Internet offer tantalizing suggestions that this may be possible.

Political scientist Robert Dahl asserted in 1999 that international organizations, institutions, and processes cannot be democratic “because the opportunities available to the ordinary citizen to participate effectively in the decisions of a world government would diminish to the vanishing point” (p. 22). Wikipedia was created two years later and has since involved many thousands of editors making many millions of edits to millions of articles. In another example of mass participation online, over 10,000 volunteers around the world have contributed to the computer operating system Linux.

The deliberative society process, a proposed addition to a deliberative poll, was inspired by these and other mass, online collaborative efforts. A deliberative society approach would

begin when the results of a deliberative poll are posted online and opened to annotation and commentary by everyone in the relevant community. Participants in the initial deliberation would then rate these comments (by voting a comment up or down, for example), providing a measure of protection against SLOP-like mobilization of special interests. Highly rated comments could then feed into revised options for a second deliberative poll.<sup>20</sup>

The proposed deliberative society process combines scientific data on informed and representative opinion with an opportunity for everyone to comment creatively to help improve the options. The process is designed to broaden participation while avoiding the SLOP(y) missteps of the GOP's "America Speaking Out" exercise and *TIME Magazine's* online poll to identify the 100 most important people of the 20th century. The attempt to make hiring Monty Python's knights a U.S. national defense priority and the effort to make Turkey's national hero the world's leader in nearly every category of human endeavor were the work of relatively small, highly mobilized groups. Such efforts to capture an online deliberation can be neutralized by empowering members of the random sample that previously participated in a deliberative poll to filter and prioritize commentary from the broader public.

Although the proposed process has yet to be applied in a public setting, it was used successfully inside a Fortune 500 company to strengthen collective intelligence, creativity, and decision making among employees. Individuals suggested revisions to deliberative poll proposals and identified additional questions that could be answered online by experts.

In September 2013 the Knight Foundation announced a grant to Reframe It, the company that has pioneered online applications of deliberative polling, to conduct two online deliberative polls related to technology policy issues in partnership with TechCrunch, an online IT industry magazine. The Knight money will go in part toward paying citizens to take time to learn about issues from a panel of experts and deliberate with their peers.<sup>21</sup> The experiment may yield further lessons in the use of deliberative polling practices on-line.

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<sup>20</sup> Created by a coauthor of this paper, Bobby Fishkin, and his father, James Fishkin, the co-inventor of deliberative polling, the Deliberative Society Process won the 2011 McKinsey/Harvard Business Review Management 2.0 Challenge for a proposed application of the approach within a corporate setting (see <http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/deliberative-corporation>).

<sup>21</sup> TechCrunch <http://techcrunch.com/2013/09/11/refram-it-techcrunch-will-use-knight-grant-to-develop-deliberative-polling-for-tech-policy/> Bobby Fishkin, a co-author of this paper, is the co-founder of Reframe It.

## **7. “Global” Citizen Voice?**

The preceding sections have identified the shortcomings of common methods of ascertaining the popular will and the potential advantages of deliberative polling in addressing these problems. But with two notable exceptions in the European Union, applications of deliberative polling to date have all been within a single country, often at subnational levels, such as cities and provinces. Hearing the carefully considered, representative voice of global citizens would be substantially more complex. This section explores these dimensions and suggests some criteria for consideration by those who would like to experiment in this exciting new area.

Before considering potential difficulties, it is worth reflecting on the immense value that could be created in ascertaining what ordinary people would think about global issues if they had the opportunity to think and deliberate about them in good conditions. Globalization means that the welfare of ordinary people is increasingly shaped by forces beyond the borders of the country in which they live. Yet any given individual’s opportunity to shape these forces is even smaller than the opportunity to shape local, provincial, or national policy. It is no wonder that rational ignorance—the decision not to invest time or energy learning about something one cannot influence—is even more widespread when it comes to international issues than to concerns closer to home. As a result, global issues are typically the realm of highly educated urban elites and vested interests—especially globalized corporations—that have strong incentives to pay attention, participate in global dialogues, and exercise influence to shape outcomes to their own advantage.

In such a vacuum, legitimate, representative information about ordinary people’s preferences, fostered and shared in a manner to generate wide attention, would have powerful standing. Fishkin’s observation that “legitimate representation of the views of ordinary citizens” acquire “a recommending force” may prove to be especially true in a global context, where such information has never before been available.

### **Challenges of Hearing Global Citizen Voice**

Gathering the carefully considered opinions of a representative sample of global citizens would pose substantial, though perhaps not insurmountable, difficulties. Here are a few notable difficulties to be addressed.

### *Lack of a global public sphere*

The most fundamental barrier—and one that a global deliberative poll could itself help remedy—is the lack of a global public sphere, a universally shared public commons for ideas. Most discussions of the public sphere are based on the ideas expressed by Jürgen Habermas, the German sociologist and philosopher, who, inspired by such real-world “discursive arenas” as Britain’s coffee houses, France’s salons, and Germany’s *Tischgesellschaften*, argued for the importance of a virtual space where the citizens of a country exchange ideas and discuss issues, in order to reach agreement about matters of general interest. Nancy Fraser has further elaborated on the public sphere as “not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations, a theater for debating and deliberating rather than for buying and selling.”

The Internet, of course, is a virtual space that facilitates market and discursive relations, but across national borders its buying and selling aspects are arguably more developed than those for debating and deliberating. Sean Jacobs argues in *African Futures* that “what is defined as the global public sphere by most observers and scholars is still very much limited to the industrial north (especially the United States and United Kingdom) and their public and private broadcasting systems, Twitter handlers, and blogs.” However, when it comes to understanding global citizen voice, the lack of a global public sphere appears to be a classic chicken-egg problem, which could best be cracked by working on projects to understand global voice, thereby helping give rise to the missing global public sphere.

### *Difficulty obtaining a random sample*

A more practical problem is the difficulty in creating a random global sample. Even at the national level, creating a random sample is not always as easy as it might appear. One common method is to use voter registration lists, but doing so has the obvious disadvantage of excluding people who are not registered to vote. Some pollsters use random-digit dialing of people with listed phone numbers, thus excluding people who do not have a phone or are unlisted. In some regions, individuals are contacted by mail or in person. The response rates for some methodologies are sometimes too low to yield a sample that is scientifically accurate.

At a global level, these challenges increase markedly. Some countries have polling firms with established methodologies for constructing random samples. Global survey firms like Gallup have such methodologies for many but not all countries.

Assuming a scientifically random global sample could be recruited, how big a sample would be necessary? The answer depends on the goal. If the idea is to represent public opinion on a global scale, a random sample of 1,000 individuals could yield information on global views and even differentiate how South Americans or Europeans or Catholics or Muslims think about a global issue.

A random sample of 10,000 would make it possible to break out opinion further, by individual countries, but would greatly raise costs and present a host of practical difficulties. Such a large sample may not be necessary, as a sense of what the people of the world as a whole prefer is exactly what is missing most. There are, however, complex political considerations to keep in mind. Even if a deliberative poll of 500 people is representative of the world's opinion as a whole, people in Israel or Denmark might not view it as representative of them if no Israeli or Dane were included in the sample.

#### *Too many languages*

Language—especially the need for simultaneous interpretation in plenary and smaller break-out sessions during the deliberation—could be a major stumbling block. The two EU-wide deliberative polls held in Brussels offered simultaneous interpretation for 23 languages (to make it manageable, each small group was constructed to include no more than three languages).

A global-scale deliberation would require the ability to handle many more languages. Ethnologue identifies more than 300 languages that have more than a million native speakers; with randomized selection of participants, it is easily possible that the sample would include people who speak many dozens of languages. Simultaneous interpretation of spoken language—a requirement for face-to-face deliberation—could prove extremely difficult. There might not be anyone on the planet who knows a specific pair of two of the needed languages, let alone someone available to provide interpretation services. Interpreters get around these problems by relying on “bridge languages,” switching to a common language, such as English. Doing so risks making discussions halting and unwieldy, however.

#### *Extreme poverty of some participants*

Nancy Birdsall and her coauthors point out that half the people in the world have a daily income of \$3 or less. (Birdsall) Many of these people face other severe disadvantages as well, including lack of education, poor health and nutrition, and social exclusion that makes them

feel powerless and even fearful in the face of others with higher incomes and social standing, even if that person is merely the village school teacher. Many of these people have never spoken to a foreigner or travelled outside their home districts.

In a random global sample, half of the participants would face at least some of these disadvantages. Is it reasonable to expect that they would be able and willing to travel to a distant land and then interact as equals with people with much higher education levels; richer life experiences; stronger verbal, quantitative, and analytical skills; and incomes that are many orders of magnitude higher than their own?

Such problems, while daunting, are perhaps not insurmountable. Despite the many disadvantages poor people face, their voices can be uniquely powerful when they have the opportunity to speak on their own behalf. Indeed, there are numerous instances in which people from extremely deprived backgrounds have, largely through happenstance, come to the attention of an international audience and spoken out powerfully about their preferences. In 2012, for example, Sahur Gul, an Afghan girl held prisoner and tortured by her in-laws, was rescued and spoke against them at a trial and on CNN International. More recently, Malala Yousafzai, a teenage girl from a remote rural area of northern Pakistan, became a highly effective global advocate for girls' education after she was shot in the head in what appears to have been a botched Taliban assassination attempt. These examples suggest that with sufficient support it could be possible to include the voices of the poor in a global deliberation. Doing so would make for compelling media coverage, and the legitimacy conferred on such an exercise would give the results, in James Fishkin's phrase, unusually powerful "recommending force."

### **How about Online?**

Deliberative polls have been conducted online for topics for which the universe of people concerned has Internet connectivity. Such polls cannot measure what people who are not connected to the Internet think, however. Online deliberative polls may be considered representative for issues such as global Internet governance, but they would not be representative for climate change or inequality, issues on which the views of people who lack connectivity need to be included. Nonetheless, given the large logistical challenges of a face-to-face global deliberative poll, online deliberative polling is attractive as a useful, lower-cost alternative.

Deliberative polls change the minds of participants whether conducted face-to-face or online, but the magnitude of the opinion change has been greater with in-person deliberation. A 2004 paper by Robert Luskin, James Fishkin, and Shanto Iyengar comparing face-to-face and online deliberative polling on foreign policy attitudes in the United States finds that deliberation affects many policy attitudes on both modes. “Both face-to-face and online deliberation increased support for democratization, global development, and protecting human rights. Face-to-face but not online deliberation significantly increased support for anti-terrorism measures and multilateralism. Online but not face-to-face deliberation increased support for environmental protectionism and free trade” (Luskin, Fishkin, and Iyengar 2004).

One possible explanation for the smaller magnitude of changed opinion in online deliberations is that participants remain in their usual surroundings, with many competing distractions, and therefore experience less change in the incentives that underpin rational ignorance. A potential disadvantage of an online deliberative poll relative to a face-to-face deliberation is that it would likely attract much less media attention, making it harder to generate the interest and excitement that have often helped deliberative polls catalyze real-world changes.

An alternative way to use the Internet in a global context is after a face-to-face deliberation. Assuming an in-person global deliberative poll could be organized, many people around the world would want to participate in some fashion. One avenue could be a global deliberative society process based on the methodology described above, starting with an in-person global deliberative poll, then widening participation through online comments and annotations filtered and ranked by the original deliberative poll participants.

### **Global Voice in a Decision-Making Context**

The difficulties in ascertaining and amplifying truly global public opinion means that it is important to consider carefully ahead of time the decision-making context that the information generated by a global deliberative poll would seek to inform. Put more simply: who would be the intended audience of such an exercise? While few decisions are made at the global level, there are many situations where it would be useful to have better information on global public opinion. For example:

- Global climate negotiations conducted under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Formulation of international development goals
- The policies of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF
- The policies and priorities of the G-20 and other groups of nations

Depending upon the intended decision-making context, deliberative polling exercises on global issues that fall well short of being globally representative may still be very useful. For example, poll sponsors could pose the same or similar questions about one or more global issues across a set of country deliberative polls, in much the same fashion that Pew and Gallup currently measure global public opinion using approaches that are representative but not deliberative.

Another alternative would be to conduct a series of deliberative polls on public preferences for national or subnational policies that affect global problems. For issues such as climate change or inequality, there are many policy paths that a municipal, provincial, or national government could undertake that have global implications. For example, cities may decide to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions or offer housing and job training for low-income immigrants. Increasing adoption of deliberative democracy at the local level on issues of global significance could be an important component of an overall strategy. It could also create early opportunities to build capacity in supporting and initiating processes to understand the informed preferences of the world's citizens.

A deliberative poll on global citizenship issues in an especially powerful country (we are thinking here of our own country, the United States) could advance the cause of global citizenship in that country and far beyond—provided, of course, that the results turned out to be favorable in terms of global citizenship. Experience with deliberative polls suggests that this is likely to be the case, though the uncertainty of the outcome is a crucial component of what makes deliberative polls compelling.

## **A Deliberative Poll of G20 Citizens**

One promising approach that stops short of a global exercise is a deliberative poll of the citizens of the G20 member nations on global issues. The G20 is an appealing group for this activity for the same reasons that this collection of countries has emerged as the world's premier forum for global economic policy: the G20 member countries represent two-thirds of the world's population, account for 80 percent of fossil fuel emissions, and produce 90 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP). A G20 deliberative poll could provide a ready means of connecting the preferences of a representative sample of a large portion of the world's population to a leadership group that includes the heads of the world's largest and most powerful nations. Logistically, it would greatly simplify the task of creating and amplifying global citizen voice, not least because the number of potential languages would be significantly reduced.

Moreover, the annual G20 summit, with its annually changing presidency and globe-trotting summits, affords valuable opportunities for the sponsors of a deliberative poll to attract global attention and widely disseminate the results via the news media. Australia, which currently holds the G-20 presidency, will host the 2014 summit in Canberra. In 2015 Turkey will assume the presidency and host duties. To maximize attention, a G20 deliberative poll could be held in the host city several months ahead of the summit, with broadcasters from each of the G20 countries recruited as partners to cover their citizens' participation in the event.

An G20 deliberative poll could become a powerful means for making representative, carefully considered, and clearly articulated citizen voice audible to the finance ministers who meet before the summits and to the leaders themselves. It could be repeated annually, like the summits themselves, on various topics, gathering interest and attention through repetition, and serving as a much-needed citizens' counterpoint to official communiqués. Over time, such an exercise could be expanded to include full global participation.

## **Deliberative Polling and the Olympics**

Another potential tie-in for deliberative polling is the Olympics, which will be held in Brazil in 2016. Two powerful symbols associated with the Olympics—ancient Greece and a global community of nations—lend themselves to the concept of a global deliberative poll held in the host nation. Olympic host cities and countries, which often sponsor ancillary events in

an effort to prolong the period during which they enjoy the international spotlight, may prove to be eager partners, willing to shoulder a substantial portion of the costs.

The 2016 Olympics in Brazil offers a particularly appealing potential partnership. Porto Alegre, the city that sponsored the first Social Summit (an alternative gathering to the Davos World Economic Forum) and has pioneered and championed open budgeting, could be a potential partner and host for a global deliberative poll. City officials have recently decided to incorporate a deliberative poll into their open budget exercise and, if it goes as expected, to promote deliberative polling within the global network of cities that use participatory budgeting.

Quite apart from any direct connection to the Olympic Games, the model that the Olympics has developed of having media from each country follow and profile their own athletes suggests ways in which a global deliberative poll could work, with public and private national broadcast media to gain broad public interest.

One potential challenge for a deliberative poll tied to the Olympics is the difficulty of identifying a subset of nations to participate if a truly global poll proves impractical. It would be possible to limit participation to the G20 countries, for example, but doing so would be at odds with a cherished Olympic ideal of universal participation by all nations of the world. The contrast and ensuing controversy could jeopardize the perceived legitimacy of the results.

An alternative to a global poll could be to conduct single-country deliberative polls on global issues with citizens of the host nation, utilizing global interest in the Olympics to widely publicize the results. What do Brazilians think about trade, migration, illicit financial flows, inequality, climate change? Answers from a Brazilian deliberative poll on global issues a few months ahead of the Olympics would attract wide interest and strengthen Brazil's presence on the international stage.

Other possible locations with symbolic power include Athens, where a deliberative poll could be celebrated as a return home to the birthplace of democracy, where this methodology began, and Switzerland, whose historic neutrality provides a ready platform to think through global challenges.

## Selecting Issues on Which to Deliberate

Which issues are important and compelling as possible topics for deliberation by global citizens? The selection of topics will be a crucial decision from which all else will proceed. Although this choice could itself be the subject of a deliberative poll exercise, experience from the 70 deliberative polls conducted so far suggests that identifying the topic first is reasonable and efficient.

Several criteria can help guide such decisions. Issues on which the preferences of global citizen are not already obvious (poverty is bad, jobs are good) and the political capital created by a deliberative poll is badly needed would presumably go to the front of the line. Several of the issues addressed in the papers prepared for the GCFare strong possibilities, as each links to a set of global policy issues where clearly articulated, representative citizen preferences are sorely lacking. Issues for which there is in addition a corresponding global policy process already underway would be especially strong contenders. Possibilities include the following:

- *Global trade*: Most economists believe that lower trade barriers increase growth and incomes. But top-of-the head public opinion is often at odds with these views, and the World Trade Organization's Doha Development Round is moving so slowly that some experts advocate declaring it dead and moving on to other issues. Meanwhile, high-income countries are focused on the creation of two giant trade blocs: the Trans-Pacific Partnership, linking countries in the Americas and Asia, and the recently proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, joining the United States and the European Union. Both would exclude smaller, poorer countries from potential benefits. What would representative, deliberative global opinion have to say about these trends? Would this information have sufficient recommending force to change the course of trade negotiations?
- *Financial sector regulation and illicit financial flows*: Debate rages among economists on the advantages and disadvantages of open capital accounts. Efforts to strengthen financial sector regulation in the wake of the 2007–08 global financial crisis, while making progress, are widely seen as inadequate. Many experts believe that the International Monetary Fund and other institutions responsible for overseeing the health of the global financial system are undercapitalized and lack authority. Efforts to reduce illicit

financial flows, which hit developing countries especially hard, have recently gained momentum, but the flows themselves continue unabated. What are global citizen preferences on such issues? Would making their preferences known help support international efforts to prevent the next global financial crisis and reduce illicit flows?

- *Inequality*: High and rising inequality within and across countries is becoming a topic of increasing concern among economists and within international organizations and nongovernmental organizations: lower inequality may be included in the post-2015 development goals being hashed out by the United Nations. Although optimal levels are clear for other goals (less maternal mortality is better than more maternal mortality, more education is preferable to less), there is no single standard by which to judge how much inequality is too much. What are the preferences of global citizens when it comes to inequality? It seems likely that a representative global sample, in which half of the participants would have daily incomes of \$3 or less, would favor dramatic reductions in inequality, including through a dramatic redistribution from the affluent to the poor. Some higher-income participants in such an exercise who came to understand the depth of deprivation among the world's poor might agree. What would be the impact of such a finding on global development strategies? On international diplomacy? On aid, trade, investment, and a host of other policies that affect development outcomes?
- *Climate change*: Climate change is the most difficult and contentious of the policy areas considered in the papers prepared for the inaugural conference of the GCF. Complex and difficult trade-offs need to be considered. Studies such as the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change have shown that inaction is by far the costlier course over time. But the size and timing of the benefits to the climate of action to reduce emissions will become apparent only over the very long run, after massive investments and changes in people's consumption and investment behavior everywhere (however, some benefits, such as a reduction in conventional pollution and environmental damage from reduced reliance on fossil fuels, will be evident very quickly).

Climate scientists have attempted to sound the alarm with increasing urgency, yet public understanding of such basic concepts as feedback loops and tipping points remains extremely limited. Because of these complexities, and the power and influence of firms and other interests that benefit from an unsustainable status quo, the political capital necessary to take common sense precautions has been in short supply. For all these reasons, using deliberative polling techniques to identify global citizens' preferences on possible policy responses to the climate change threat seems especially worthwhile. . We explore this option at greater length below.

### **Global Deliberative Polling and Climate Change**

Why has deliberative polling so often led to real-world changes? One explanation is that representative and thoughtful public voice creates political capital. If leaders learn what people prefer when they have the opportunity to think under good conditions, the leaders are fortified in their willingness to do the right thing, even if it appears to lack broad political appeal based on conventional polling.

Such political capital is in desperately short supply for many global issues; none is more pressing and profound than the rapid heating of the planet. Scientists are clear about the magnitude and severity of the threat: the planet is on the brink of surpassing an average increase of 2°C, a likely tipping point beyond which feedback loops, such as the thawing of the tundra and the melting of the polar ice caps, will kick in, making it impossible to avoid rapid, irreversible heating of the planet.

Conventional opinion polls show that a growing number of people around the world understand this risk and favor action to reduce it; but for many others, rational ignorance holds sway. Meanwhile, powerful interests that benefit from the status quo actively oppose policy changes, such as carbon pollution fees, that could spark the technological revolution necessary to create the low-carbon energy needed to address the problem.

A series of national deliberative polls on climate change, perhaps culminating in a global deliberative poll, each accompanied by an online deliberative society process, could be transformative in raising public understanding of the urgency of the threat and identifying which trade-offs people are willing to make to address it. Specially prepared background materials, based on the findings of the Nobel Prize-winning UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), could provide a shared knowledge base that would likely attract

wide attention (and debate!), leading to increased global understanding of the depth and breadth of the scientific consensus on the urgency of the problem. These materials themselves, made available in multiple languages, would be an important global public good, as the scientists on the IPCC have had great difficulty communicating the magnitude of the threat.

We cannot know what the results of a global deliberative poll on climate change would be. We do know the results of the European Union's 2011 Europolis, the second European Union deliberative poll. Respondents were asked to choose between two views: "We should do everything possible to combat climate change even if that hurts the economy" and "We should do everything possible to maximize economic growth, even if that hurts efforts to combat climate change." Before they deliberated, 49 percent of respondents wanted to maximize efforts to combat climate change. After deliberation, 61 percent wanted to maximize efforts to combat climate change. Participants also became more enthusiastic about the use of an emissions trading system, with support increasing from 39 percent to 49 percent (Fishkin, Luskin, and Siu 2011).

Because deliberative polls also identify what people need to learn to change their beliefs, this information could be used to help galvanize public enthusiasm and support for the results. All citizens and institutions of the world could then be equipped with basic information of what the people of the world would think about this most pressing of global issues, if they were thinking.

How would such an exercise be funded? Even if the very substantial resources necessary were available from one entity, which seems unlikely, the goals will best be accomplished by a global network of players, each contributing based on its own comparative advantage. Annex B gives examples of the many different types of organizations that have worked together in past deliberative polls and the nature of their contributions. Annex C lists organizations that have been involved with deliberative polling or related aspects of ascertaining and amplifying citizen voice. We hope that organizations that are interested in applying deliberative polling in the context of global issues and global citizenship will use these lists as a starting point for their own investigation of possible partnerships and approaches.

## Laying the Groundwork for Global Deliberative Polling

The following categories of activity may be useful to organizations interested in deliberative polling in a global context as they consider possible roles:

- *Build awareness.* The concepts of global citizen voice and global civic sphere are very important but not well understood. Interested organizations could build awareness and support through a combination of research and communications activities.
- *Strengthen networks.* Although this area of thought and action is underdeveloped, it is not empty. Many individual and organizations—activist groups, universities, students, government agencies, civic clubs, and other groups (some of them listed in annex C)—are willing to support and advance these objectives. To leverage their energy, an organization could invest in improving what might be called a “citizens’ voice supporters network,” making it easier for people who share this interest to find one another, communicate, and collaborate.
- *Co-create.* Interested organizations could catalyze the creation of deliberative activities on a variety of topics and in various settings, for example, by supporting the development of infrastructure that would leverage the interest of others in promoting citizen voice. Other possibilities include encouraging the development and improvement of tools to assist in deliberation, improving sampling methodologies, developing training materials for facilitators, sharing benchmark data, funding experiments in deliberative sense making, and sponsoring innovators and leaders around the world.
- *Learn and share.* Deliberative polling is just one approach to strengthening citizen voice. Organizations can help advance the state of knowledge regarding which tools to use in which situations, how best to use them, what results to expect, and more. This learning need not be the exclusive responsibility of any one entity, it can be generated and shared throughout the supporters’ network.

The authors hope that the GCF and other organizations and funders that seek to make the world a fairer and less dangerous place will consider using some of their resources to catalyze these and related activities, thereby transforming the ways in which global issues are

debated and decided. The results would reinforce the central role of global citizens, build legitimacy for collective decisions, and improve the quality of policy choices—win, win, win.

## Annex A Results of Selected Deliberative Polls

Table A.1 provides a partial list of deliberative polls that have been conducted around the world, changes in preferences expressed by the participants, and subsequent changes in real-world outcomes.

**Table A.1 Results of Selected Deliberative Polls**

| Place                               | Initiative  | Year       | Issue  | Support before and after poll (percent) |          |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------|--|---|----------|
|                                     |   |            |  | Before                                  | After    |
| Asia                                |   |            |  |   |          |
| Wenling City, Zeguo Township, China | Budget prioritization   | 2005, 2008 | Support for “Wenchang Park” declined after participants considered its opportunity cost; support for environmental projects, such as sewage treatment plants, rose.  | 51                                      | 35       |
| Japan                               | Nuclear power options   | 2012       | For first time, the central government introduced deliberative polling to better reflect public opinion in compiling basic policies for nuclear power and other energy sources. The government Committee on Energy and the Environment developed three scenarios it found acceptable. Support for the zero-nuclear power option by 2030 increased. | 60                                      | 67       |
| Europe                              |   |            |  |   |          |
| Bulgaria                            | Integration of the Roma into Bulgarian society, Bulgarian Prime Minister’s Office | 2007       | Agreement with the statement “Roma schools should be closed and all children should be transported by buses to their school” rose, from 42 to 66 percent. Agreement with the statement “Roma schools should be preserved” fell, from 46 to 24 percent. Roma-only schools have now been closed and schools integrated.                              | 42<br>46                                | 66<br>24 |

|                           |  |      |  | Support before and after poll (percent) |       |
|---------------------------|--|------|--|---|-------|
| Place                     | Initiative                                   | Year | Issue  | Before                                  | After |
| European Union            | Tomorrow's Europe                            | 2007 | Percentage of participants strongly opposing increasing taxes on imported products fell.   | 20.2                                    | 10.4  |
| European Union            | Europolis                                    | 2009 | Support for statement "We should do everything possible to combat climate change even if that hurts the economy" rose.   | 49                                      | 61    |
| Lazio, Italy              | Hospital reform                              | 2007 | Support for "converting hospital beds in order to improve the efficiency of the structures" rose.  | 45                                      | 62    |
| Northern Ireland          | Cross-cutting long-term educational planning | 2007 | Agreement among Catholics with the statement "most Protestants are open to reason" increased. Similar changes were observed among Protestants. Project focused on educational reforms that would allow Protestant and Catholic schools to cooperate. | 36                                      | 52    |
| Poznan, Poland            | Reuse of stadium after Euro 2012             | 2009 | Support for having an independent operator manage the stadium's commercial spaces and space for public use increased.  | 28                                      | 48    |
| Turin, Italy              | Right of immigrants to vote                  | 2007 | Percentage of participants strongly opposed to making it easier for immigrants to acquire citizenship (after five years' residence in Italy, for example) fell.  | 26                                      | 15    |
| Latin America             |  |      |  |   |       |
| La Plata, Argentina       | Transportation                               | 2009 | Support for implementing new bike lanes rather than a new bus terminal to deal with traffic congestion rose.   | 56                                      | 45    |
| Rio Grande do Sol, Brazil | Civil service reform                         | 2009 | Support for using years of service as the basis for pay increases declined.  | 66                                      | 49    |
| United States             |  |      |  |   |       |

|            |  |         |  | Support before and after poll (percent) |       |
|------------|--|---------|--|---|-------|
| Place      | Initiative   | Year    | Issue  | Before                                  | After |
| 11 regions | Rethinking the role of citizens in our democracy   | 2007    | Support for a requirement that broadcasters air more public affairs programming increased.   | 51                                      | 69    |
| 18 regions | American Association of State Colleges and Universities and Deliberative Polling Project | 2008    | Support for sales tax on gasoline to deal with growing maintenance and expansion demands increased.  | 47                                      | 67    |
| California | What's Next California   | 2011    | Support for lengthening Assembly terms from two years to four and Senate terms from four years to six rose.  | 42                                      | 77    |
| Michigan   | Hard Times, Hard Choices   | 2010    | Support for a modest rise in the income tax rose.  | 23                                      | 39    |
| Texas      | Energy Choices   | 1996–98 | Willingness to pay extra for increased wind and solar power rose. Results led to decisions on integrated resource plans by Public Utility Commission that helped take Texas from second-to-last to first of 50 states in wind power in 2007. | 52                                      | 84    |
| Vermont    | Energy Choices, Department of Public Services  | 2008    | Support for continuing to buy from Quebec Hydro increased.   | 64                                      | 82    |
| Nationwide | By the People  | 2005    | Support for idea that there is too much emphasis on standardized testing in community schools increased.   | 58                                      | 65    |
|            |  |         | Percentage of people willing to pay more to reduce need for electricity (demand-side management) rose.   | 43                                      | 73    |

*Source:* Center for Deliberative Democracy ([cdd.stanford.edu](http://cdd.stanford.edu)).

## Annex B Deliberative Poll Partnerships

The costs of a deliberative poll can vary widely. Working with partners not only helps defray these costs, it also creates a network that builds interest in the poll results and may ultimately help facilitate policy changes based on the poll outcome. Table B.1 shows examples of ways in which partners have provided key ingredients for deliberative polls around the world.

**Table B.1 Roles Played by Partners in Deliberative Polling**

| Partner   | Form of participation  |
|---|--|
| Allianz-AGF   | Provided financial support for Tomorrow's Europe, the first deliberative poll commissioned by the European Union   |
| American Airlines                                     | Flew all participants from across the United States to the National Issues Convention in Austin, Texas   |
| BBC Channel 4   | Organized overall deliberative poll and broadcast multiple deliberative polls in the United Kingdom  |
| European Parliament Building                          | Provided ideal venue from both logistical and symbolic standpoints   |
| European Union Parliament's official translation team | Translated briefing materials, surveys, and logistical information; provided live interpretation in plenary sessions in 23 languages and in small group sessions between each set of three languages |
| Japan's Prime Minister's Office                       | Overall sponsor  |
| The Australian  | Supported broad exposure for deliberative polls they co-sponsored  |
| NORC  | Conducted "before" survey and recruited random sample to participate in National Issues Convention, YouGov for Power 2010  |
| Notre Europe (think tank)                             | Coordinated the Tomorrow's Europe deliberative poll  |
| Open Society Institute (foundation)                   | Provided financial support to Tomorrow's Europe  |
| PBS MacNeil/Lehrer Productions                        | Aired special broadcast of the deliberative poll plus a summary broadcast on the News Hour; collaborated on polls in California and Michigan and on the National Issues Convention                   |

## Annex C Organizations and Projects of Interests

Many organizations in civil society and academia, as well as a few in the private sector, are exploring mechanisms and supporting activities to encourage policy outcomes that better reflect citizen preferences. Groups like the ones shown in table C.1 are potential allies for any organization interested in pushing forward the application of deliberative polling in a global context.

**Table C.1 Selected Organizations Working to Reflect Citizen Preferences**

| Organization  | Description  | Website   |
|---|--|---|
| Center for Deliberative Democracy   | Devoted to research about democracy and public opinion obtained through deliberative polling   | <a href="http://cdd.stanford.edu/">http://cdd.stanford.edu/</a>                               |
| Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government                              | Brings together e-democracy, e-participation and open government specialists working in academia, politics, government, and business to critically analyze the innovations, issues, ideas, and challenges in the networked societies of the digital age.                             | <a href="http://www.cedem-conference.org/cedem13">http://www.cedem-conference.org/cedem13</a> |
| Datakind  | Brings together leading data scientists with high-impact social organizations through a comprehensive, collaborative approach that leads to shared insights, greater understanding, and positive action through data in the service of humanity.                                     | <a href="http://datakind.org">http://datakind.org</a>   |
| Deliberative Democracy Consortium   | Network of practitioners and researchers representing more than 50 organizations and universities, collaborating to strengthen field of deliberative democracy   | <a href="http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/">http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/</a>   |
| Govlab@NYU  | Works to improve people's lives by changing governance. Seeks new ways to solve public problems using advances in technology and science.  | <a href="http://www.thegovlab.org/">http://www.thegovlab.org/</a>                             |
| International Working Group on Online Consultation and Public Policy Making | Focuses on (a) how to evaluate policy and other social impacts of online citizen consultation initiatives aimed at influencing actual government decision making and (b) how the optimal design of such initiatives is affected by cultural, social, legal and institutional context | <a href="http://www.reconnectingdemocracy.org/">http://www.reconnectingdemocracy.org/</a>     |
| National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation                              | Promotes use of dialogue, deliberation, and other innovative group processes to help people come together to tackle the most challenging problems  | <a href="http://ncdd.org/">http://ncdd.org/</a>   |
| New Economics Institute   | Seeks to build a new economy that prioritizes the well-being of people and the planet  | <a href="http://neweconomicsinstitute.org/">http://neweconomicsinstitute.org/</a>             |

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|------------------------------|--|--|
| OpenGov Foundation           | Dedicated to developing and deploying technologies that support all citizens' ability to participate in their government and hold it accountable   | <a href="http://www.opengovfoundation.org/">http://www.opengovfoundation.org/</a>  |
| UK Behavioural Insights Team | Applies insights from academic research in behavioral economics and psychology to public policy and services (often called the Nudge Unit)   | <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/behavioural-insights-team">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/behavioural-insights-team</a>  |
| UN Global Pulse              | Explores how new digital data sources and real-time analytics technologies can help policymakers understand well-being and emerging vulnerabilities in real time, in order to better protect populations from shocks                       | <a href="http://www.unglobalpulse.org/">http://www.unglobalpulse.org/</a>  |
| UN My World Survey           | Seeks to shape post-Millennium Development Goals framework. Offered in 10 languages, the survey asks citizens from all over the world to share their thoughts on which priorities to include in the global development agenda beyond 2015. | <a href="https://www.devex.com/en/news/blogs/now-you-too-can-vote-on-post-2015-goals">https://www.devex.com/en/news/blogs/now-you-too-can-vote-on-post-2015-goals</a>  |
| United Americans             | Seeks to bring the United States together through more respectful and civil dialogues by understanding and seeing other people's points of view without people having to shout   | <a href="http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/united-americans--6">http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/united-americans--6</a><br><a href="http://www.ksl.com/index.php?nid=1194&amp;sid=25203925">http://www.ksl.com/index.php?nid=1194&amp;sid=25203925</a> |
| World Public Opinion         | International collaborative project that seeks to give voice to public opinion around the world on international issues  | <a href="http://www.worldpublicopinion.org">http://www.worldpublicopinion.org</a>  |
| World Values Survey          | Worldwide network of social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life  | <a href="http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/">http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/</a>  |

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