In the second decade of the twenty-first century, polarization in American politics is undermining civility in the public sphere (Jacobs 2014). Amid the acrimonious debates surrounding much policymaking, it is hard to sustain the core practices of our democracy: the ideal of engaging citizens and their representatives in articulating goals for government policies and programs. Public management practice has taken a turn toward market-based principles of performance measurement and competition (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004; Moynihan 2008; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011), thereby reinforcing a framework attending to customers who demand to be served rather than citizens working with their representatives to cocreate public policy (Dahl and Soss 2014).

Yet, as public affairs scholars, we take a different tack of studying public engagement initiatives as potential mechanisms for exercising and creating public value rather than customer service. Our notion is consistent with others (Alford 2008; Benington and Moore 2011b) in that we believe public value can be created by the actions of public affairs professionals, by what they do and how they do it. In this view, a central principle of modern democracy is citizens’ abilities to deliberate with each other about social values and public policy, a process described by Reich (1990) as the “civic discovery” of public interests. Capacity for and enactment of democracy through deliberation have inherent public value as expressions of a democratic state (Benhabib 1996; Young 2000; Cooke 2000; Dryzek 2002; Gutmann and Thompson 2004) and forms of public work (Boyte 2012). When public affairs professionals build deliberative capacity, they create public value in two ways: deliberative capacity both advances democratic participation in governance and provides a means to produce effective and efficient policy solutions.

Our arguments about the contribution of deliberative capacity to public value are grounded in the emerging construct of public value governance (Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg 2014). This idea emphasizes that deliberation and other forms of democratic participation are themselves public values, defined as inherently desirable features of good governance. Thus deliberative capacity can advance...
some of the particular public values identified by Bozeman (2007) relating to the rights and obligations of citizens to be accounted to and responsible for good governance. It also suggests that deliberative capacity supports the production of other kinds of public value in that these decision-making processes help to generate policy outcomes that more strongly reflect what it is that the public values. In this respect, deliberative capacity can advance what Moore (1995) means by creating public value—namely, that good governance produces policies and social outcomes that reflect values about justice, efficiency, or equity. Deliberative processes move citizens beyond a role as either consumers or recipients of policy decisions to being active partners in both defining public issues and developing strategies to solve shared problems.

Yet, to assure public engagement efforts contribute to creating public value by building deliberative capacity—and not merely add fuel to cynicism about public institutions—we must learn more about what occurs when deliberative democratic projects are implemented. Moore (1995) asserts that public managers, through their practices, influence whether and how public value is created. And, often, deliberation is advocated as a practice for engaging diverse perspectives in policymaking and bringing a variety of ways of knowing into policy decisions (Young 2000; Nabatchi et al. 2012). This chapter provides guidance on how public managers, other policymakers, and citizen activists might organize and use deliberative processes to create public value. We look at a wider domain of actors because there are many potential leaders and sites beyond the formal boundaries of government institutions (Bryson et al. 2014). Indeed, national groups have developed many formats for exercising and building deliberative capacity, such as citizen panels, national issue forums, polling, and twenty-first-century town meetings. However, there is wide variety among the consequences of these models and, as we point out in this chapter, significant differences among particular uses of any one model in actual implementation.

In this chapter we provide ethnographic analysis of facilitators applying an international body of engagement practice, the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter (hereafter, “Art of Hosting”; Block 2009; Holman 2010; Wheatley and Frieze 2011), which highlights the actual process of building deliberative capacity as a public value. Compared to common democratic participation measures, such as Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation, Robert’s (2004) typology of types of participation, or the spectrum of public participation developed by the International Association for Public Participation, the Art of Hosting approach is highly deliberative. Our examination of what facilitators actually say and do can shine new light on the ways in which deliberative processes both contribute to and/or deplete the creation of public value. The analysis highlights the dynamic and fluid process of public value creation, showcasing how the practicalities of public deliberation can enhance or reduce it in particular applications and settings. It is not an intervention guaranteed to deliver public value creation.

RESOURCING PUBLIC VALUE THROUGH DELIBERATIVE PROCESSES

Deliberative theorists and pragmatists argue that communication is the fabric of democratic life (Forester 1998; Innes and Booher 2010). By talking together, citizens learn about opposing views and develop shared understanding of issues, building
what Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini (2009) term “discursive capital.” Such capital can be invested in the development and deployment of civil society organizations and increased motivations to engage in electoral politics. Yet deliberation is a distinct form of political participation. Through conversations that examine a range of problems and solutions, people learn how to participate in a polis (Dewey 1927). This conception sees democracy—and by extension, public value creation—as a never-ending project accomplished through the process of engaging with others (Young 2000; Dryzek 2002).

Deliberative theory scholars also articulate certain ideal conditions that must be met to realize deliberation’s potential to invigorate authentic democracy. Processes must be inclusive and involve people being affected by decisions, assuring that all voices can be heard (Young 2000). Additionally, they must support the engagement of reason and the consideration of various forms of evidence in coming to conclusions (Mendelberg 2002; Gastil and Dillard 2006; Rosenberg 2007). Finally, the overall process should ultimately yield shared understandings and enable broader political engagement (Fischer and Forester 1993). Carried out in these ways, deliberative processes influence both how citizens understand substantive issues and how they understand their agency in developing or acting on solutions (Sirianni and Friedland 2001; Gutmann and Thompson 2004; Fung 2004, 2006).

Amid a general recognition that these ideals are desirable, many scholars challenge the prevalence and potential of their implementation in practice. Pragmatists suggest the emphasis on reason is artificial, stressing the social construction of problems and solutions (Briggs 2008). Others worry about ideological capture and stress the importance of content-neutral process experts to facilitate deliberation (Schwarz 2002; Nabatchi et al. 2012). At the same time, there is concern that public and nonprofit managers frequently do not possess the skills necessary to foster authentic engagement in practice (Escobar 2011). However, this literature has a tendency to valorize facilitators, expecting them to wade into knotty and complex community settings and render miracles through the exercise of process expertise. Ironically, this frame centralizes responsibility for deliberation not in the participants but in the facilitator of dialogue, thereby decreasing the experience of practicing deliberation among equal citizens in a polis.

All democratic processes do not inherently produce public value; it is a resource that must be generated and activated.¹ There are many choices available for designing and implementing deliberation (Bryson et al. 2014). Depending on how and how well they are organized, ostensibly democratic processes may enhance or reduce public value. Public participation processes may endogenously create results, such as improved understanding of problems, discovery of innovative solutions, or improved connections and commitments for implementation (Feldman and Quick 2009). They may also create the opposite dynamic—diminishing capacity and willingness to deliberate—if the public feels the invitation to participate is inauthentic or the outcomes have been predetermined (Arnstein 1969; Flyvberg 1998). The extant literature suggests choices are highly consequential for public value, as they generate or diminish the individual and collective capacity of the participants to deliberate and articulate public interests and goals (Reich 1990;
Mansbridge 1999; Quick and Feldman 2011; Nabatchi et al. 2012). Yet, few studies enable controlled comparison across cases.

RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHOD

To systematically explore the ways in which deliberative processes are designed and implemented, we exploit facilitators’ common training in a particular facilitation method and natural variation in project implementation in a statewide, foundation-supported initiative, InCommons (Sandfort and Bloomberg 2012). The InCommons project focused on building opportunities for community engagement that addresses complex problems across diverse geographic areas, socioeconomic groups, and topical issues in the state of Minnesota. While the initiative deployed a range of strategies, early on its managers identified a need to enhance citizens’ capacity to effectively facilitate challenging community conversations. As its name suggests, InCommons was explicitly focused on public value creation across diverse communities.

The Art of Hosting was identified as a potent tool for building capacity to facilitate uncommon conversations. The Art of Hosting is an international community of practitioners working in diverse contexts, focusing on youth employment, economic development, indigenous people’s rights, and governance in the European Commission. For example, Columbus, Ohio, is using Art of Hosting practices to reenvision health care, higher education, business networks, and social services in that community (Wheatley and Frieze 2011). The Art of Hosting training workshop functions as an immersive practicum in the hosting approach, concentrating on a number of engagement techniques, theories, and practical design frameworks. All enable facilitators to coproduce participatory engagement processes within complex social systems (Holman 2010; Wheatley 2006; Success Works 2011). While the Art of Hosting resembles other approaches to whole systems change (Holman, Devane, and Cady 2007; Wheatley and Frieze 2011) and deliberative democracy (Creighton 2005; Kaner 2007; Escobar 2011), there are several distinctive features that are relevant to our discussion of its potential for generating public value.

First, the Art of Hosting brings together a range of engagement techniques that were developed and are used by others outside the Art of Hosting into an overall collection. Peer circle process (Baldwin and Linnea 2010; Baldwin 1998), Open Space Technology (Owen 1997), the World Café (Brown and Isaacs 2005), and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987) are taught as techniques for enabling deep dialogue and high-quality conversations, spurring collective analysis of external trends, and motivating action planning. As the Art of Hosting website (www.artofhosting.org) explains, “The Art of hosting training is an experience for deepening competency and confidence in hosting group processes—Circle, World Café, Open Space, and other forms. Each of these processes generates connection and releases wisdom within groups of people.” The training workshop also focuses on a set of practical frameworks to support implementation of these techniques in community engagement processes. Some frameworks—such as one for understanding divergence and convergence in group processes—assist with design, helping facilitators systematically explore how various techniques can
be applied to particular issues. Additionally, the workshop showcases “harvesting,” a word that transforms conventional note taking into creating artifacts that allow meeting participants to make meaning and share it with others. In the workshop, trainers stress that harvesting can take many forms: personal journal writing, visual artifacts (such as photographs and drawings), video, song, or more conventional formal proceedings. As we will see, attention to creating and using artifacts is significant, as in the cases we examine they seem to fuel or deplete public value creation.

Second, the engagement techniques and practical frameworks embody a frequently asserted normative public value (Bozeman 2007)—namely that they are public: they are freely available and accessible to anyone who would like to use them. What is presented in the training workshop is not owned by an institution or copyrighted but, like code shared by open-source computer programmers, seen as a public resource by the international Art of Hosting community. Through application, members in the community of practitioners make additional refinements to both techniques and frameworks that they subsequently share online, in training workshops, or in reference workbooks. For example, in the course of this research, two new engagement techniques—Pro Action Café (which combines other techniques and enables more refined action planning) and Storytelling Harvest (which uses the age-old power of storytelling and focused listening to impart insight)—were developed, refined, and incorporated into the Art of Hosting suite of techniques.

Third, the workshop itself produces public value as an experience in deliberation and opportunity to build the trainees’ deliberative capacities. It is an experiential practicum in which trainers and participants just being introduced to the Art of Hosting are encouraged to “practice” the techniques and to “colearn.” One dimension of this is deepening relationships among the diverse participants; satisfaction surveys of those who have participated in the training in Minnesota, found 99 percent (n = 89) agreed they had formed deeper relationships during the training. Yet, more fundamentally, learning to host—acquiring the skill to convene meaningful conversations that situate knowledge in context-appropriate ways—involves devolving authority from a centralized, heroic facilitator role to coproducing the means and ends of deliberative processes with the people being hosted (Quick and Sandfort 2014). Coproduction, in which authority for content and process is shared (Bovaird 2007; Quick and Feldman 2011), happens in the workshop. The experience teaches people to facilitate by practicing—namely, by facilitating their own workshop (Sandfort, Stuber, and Quick 2012). Thus the workshop is not a simulation of deliberation or merely a way to build participants’ capacities to support public value creation in other venues. Rather, it is itself an emergent democratic space and a project of building community (Quick and Sandfort 2014). The training reflects the deep commitment of the hosting model’s ongoing collective learning through practice, making it a potentially powerful means and ends of generating public value.

In sum, the Art of Hosting model is ambitious about generating public value. There are now enough people trained in it to begin to analyze whether or how it accomplishes the outcomes it claims, a project we take on through studying the population of individuals trained in Minnesota. Previously analyzed data is
promising, but speaks primarily to the quality of the training and what participants learned. Herein we analyze whether or how the workshops and Art of Hosting model have produced public value as the model is carried out in community settings. InCommons created and supported the expectation that Art of Hosting training participants would use this approach to facilitate deliberative processes in various contexts. After participating in the free workshop, participants were asked to devote an equivalent of three days, pro bono, to designing and implementing projects focused on enhancing public value. The data is drawn from these projects.

We particularly focus on three cases to delve into the means and results of purposeful attempts to engage in public value creation. Each of these cases highlights instances in which professionals and citizens from diverse regions and points of view were invited into a deliberative process about significant public services redesign. Each involved a team of hosts trained in the Art of Hosting to design and implement the engagement efforts. Each drew upon public or philanthropic resources to support the project costs. Each had sponsors willing to enter into a deliberative process that did not have predetermined outcomes but instead focused on improving both substantive content issues and relationships among participants. As described in table 3.1, however, the cases varied in terms of their intensity and size; hosting team configuration; intent of involving participants in defining the problem, process, and outcomes; and primary sources of participant diversity.

We utilized multi-sited ethnographic methods (Marcus 1995; Gupta and Ferguson 1997) for data collection and analysis. Extended participant observation has

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allowed us to learn the practices and become members of the community of practice (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002). We were participant observers in the InCommons-sponsored training and in two of the subsequent engagement cases we analyze here. In the third case, we reviewed videotapes taken of community gatherings. In addition, we conducted and analyzed semistructured interviews with sixty-nine people, comprising 100 percent of the participants in January and April 2011 Art of Hosting training cohorts and members of the training team in the InCommons project. We interviewed them six to eight months after the workshops. To analyze the three engagement cases, we conducted thirty additional interviews with their core hosts, sponsors of community sessions, and participants. In these interviews we probed the nature of the engagement design and implementation. For each interview we consulted materials developed before, during, and after the engagement processes. We analyzed all of these data inductively with qualitative analysis software, Nvivo, using iterative rounds of data collection, data analysis, and thematic coding in a grounded theory development process (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

HOSTING AS A METHOD OF BUILDING DELIBERATIVE CAPACITY FOR CREATING PUBLIC VALUE

In our interviews we explicitly asked training participants, as well as the sponsors and participants involved in the cases, to consider how the use of the Art of Hosting approach creates results, particularly when compared to traditional meetings and conferences. Facilitators believe the approach has impact. The training workshop acquaints people with techniques and conceptual frameworks side by side in a complete package that enables them to understand the strengths and limitations of each particular tool and provide theories and language that describe otherwise ambiguous group dynamics. The workshop also describes the development of the Art of Hosting approach and its use around the world. Invoking the reach and impact of the approach increases its legitimacy with workshop participants and sponsors. Overall, interviewees believed these dimensions improved the efficiency and effectiveness of planning and implementing deliberative events.

When interviewed, facilitators and participants also stated that—compared to traditional formats for meeting—people experiencing these deliberative processes are more satisfied. They describe this partly in terms of cocreation. As one facilitator said about her use of these techniques, “People always say, ‘That is the best meeting I’ve ever had.’ When I ask them to say more, they tell me, ‘The [way you organize it] provides a space for everyone in the room to be heard. There are people who have gone to fifteen meetings and have not been able to say anything. To be heard and seen, through the Post-it notes and graphics around the room, is to be honored.’” Another seasoned facilitator explained, “By participating in the process, they own what comes out of the process. It is cocreation. What comes out is a result of what they brought . . . and what they are willing to do together.” In other words, the people we interviewed saw participation as the first step to enthusiasm, buy-in, and ownership for decisions. The hosting approach ideally provides a way for participants to “own” what develops, even if it not necessarily what they—as individuals—would have created or planned.
Art of Hosting gatherings also create opportunities for people to develop relationships based on unpredictable connections. Because these connections arise from sharing and listening to stories, many participants saw this learning, and potential new relationships, as a unique result of the Art of Hosting approach. Our interviewees also believe deliberative techniques lead to higher-quality decision outcomes. Some stressed that engaging people more deeply and removing any excuses for detachment generate a pool of ideas that are both of higher quality and more comprehensive. Art of Hosting techniques can help a group confronting a “big thorny issue” to explore significant questions that get to the heart of the matter. Through delving more deeply, participants better understand the challenge and see a range of potential solutions better than mere content experts’ presentations.

These interviews suggest potential in the Art of Hosting model for creating efficiency and effectiveness in project implementation, and a number of potential mechanisms through which public value might be created. As we will see through our in-depth analysis of cases, however, there is variation in how this possibility is realized in practice.

REALIZING DELIBERATIVE CAPACITY: AN ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION

We now turn our analytical eye to three cases of community engagement undertaken by teams of hosts trained in this approach. Before delving into what we can learn across these cases, we first describe the origins and ambitions of each. At the beginning of this chapter we asserted that process design and implementation create the capacity for public value creation. We now focus our account and analysis on certain hosting frameworks and artifacts to showcase how this capacity is or is not realized in these particular projects.

The Local Government Innovation Process

Our first case engaged local elected officials from counties, cities, and school districts to consider government services redesign. Undertaken during significant state-level budget shortfalls, facilitators trained in the Art of Hosting designed and implemented meetings to spark dialogue and engagement around promising solutions to operational problems. State legislators had come together to create the bipartisan Redesign Caucus, a volunteer body charged to solicit, review, and support implementation of innovative changes in public service redesign. One of the strategies they identified was to bring together local government officials in “listening sessions” for legislators traveling around the state to hear from local constituents. The Redesign Caucus cochair secured funding from a local foundation interested in using deliberative forums to inspire public-sector redesign and engaged three membership associations: the state’s League of Cities, the school boards association, and the counties association. Together the groups identified several goals for the proposed meetings: enabling the exchange of ideas among grassroots managers; generating political momentum for local government funding from the state; and strengthening relationships and trust among elected officials from all kinds of local government.

The planning group began to hear about a growing number of local facilitators being trained in the Art of Hosting approach. They engaged one, who led a
design that incorporated extensive outreach to invite participants, a shared meal, a brief informational presentation, and what was initially described as an “adapted World Café.” In the end, six meetings were held throughout the state in November 2011, bringing out more than four hundred agency staff and elected officials. Participants attended a single meeting that lasted about three hours. Each meeting followed the same agenda. After a welcome and brief presentation about economic and demographic changes, people were encouraged to introduce themselves by describing their own pathway to public service to highlight the urgency and significance of the evening’s work. The groups then began dialogues in small groups. A facilitator supported each table. Because of time and logistic constraints, several typical features of the World Café engagement technique were modified for these small group discussions. Participants were preassigned to tables and stayed in one group for the whole session. They first brainstormed services or programs that could be redesigned and then explored opportunities for implementing change. Each table assigned a note taker to document the conversation using written templates provided by the hosting team, although participants were also encouraged to informally jot down or draw on large paper with markers. A representative from each table reported a short overview of what was discussed.

The major output of the forums was the final, glossy summary report, which provided an overview of the process, summarized the need for significant changes in local government, and shared key principles offered at the forums for effective redesign and high-level lessons learned about barriers to change and innovation ideas. The report’s recommendations were aimed at local and state leaders, with a particular emphasis on changes coming from legislative and statewide action. It was presented publicly at a press conference by the head of the Redesign Caucus, and copies were shared with the twenty-two Art of Hosting trained facilitators who had volunteered as table hosts.

In our follow-up interviews, participants and facilitators hungered for next steps or more opportunities to engage in similar conversations. The process was new to them, and most reported really enjoying having smaller groups walk through a structured conversation. Yet many participants were not completely clear about the desired outcome of the gatherings. Some expressed pessimism about the report, believing it would not be used by the legislature in spite of the press conference fanfare. In addition, while an expressed purpose was to build relationships and trust across jurisdictional boundaries, many noted that building more durable relationships takes time beyond merely a shared meal and conversation. One participant reflected a sentiment expressed by others: “I don’t think they realized what the turf issue was and how strong it is. People say we should work together, but it just never happens.”

**HIV/AIDS Field Realignment**

Our second case also involved the sustainability and redesign of public services. When HIV/AIDS erupted as a public health crisis in the United States in the early 1980s, nonprofit agencies providing food, supportive housing, and health care developed to help people die with dignity and advocate for more effective and responsive action. In recent decades, advances in prevention and treatment have significantly reduced disease transmission and enhanced survival, changing the
service needs of HIV-infected people. When a statewide council of nonprofits offered resources for groups to use the Art of Hosting deliberative process to explore opportunities to improve and realign services in their field, four leaders stepped forward and invited people from their field to a three-day gathering.

To prepare for the gathering staff members conducted background research, highlighting critical policy and fiscal issues in briefing documents. A three-person team, all trained in Art of Hosting practices, designed the gathering in an iterative process, working with the four field leaders to shape significant questions that would bring content to the more general circle practice, World Café, and Open Space Technology techniques deployed. The agenda for the three days was represented on a visual landscape learned in the Art of Hosting training workshop.

The first two days focused on building relationships among this diverse group and planting ideas for change. Participants shared stories of their motivation for this difficult work, learned more about the field through a cocreated timeline of key historical events, and worked in triads to analyze briefing documents. Facilitators also sat on the floor and taught three theories from the Art of Hosting workshop, focusing on helping participants understand the intent to diverge in views before converging around some common understandings or action steps at the end of the third day. Through an Open Space Technology process, participants also generated conversation topics about issues relevant to the future of HIV/AIDS services.

The final day, held two weeks later, began with a presentation by one of the sponsors about a realignment spectrum. This set the tone for focusing the day more explicitly on realignment and restructuring. While the facilitators used the same Open Space Technology process as in the prior session, a few features of its implementation were notable. First, the facilitators explicitly wanted to create more convergence among participants, so they entitled the work period “Considering Realignment Possibilities” rather than “Open Space” in the agenda. Second, even though participants were encouraged throughout the three days to help direct how the sessions unfolded, this part of the process revealed that they were not always willing or able to do so. When the participants were asked to consider the question “How could we realign ourselves to achieve more effective user-centered services?,” nonprofit leaders hesitated. Public-sector leaders proposed the majority of the conversations convened that day, even though they comprised a minority of the attendees. Although the sessions were well attended and people engaged deeply in dialogue, nonprofit leaders were unwilling to lead conversations about strategic realignment in front of their peers.

A month after the gatherings, a five-page, colorful newsletter was sent to all participants. As facilitators related in interviews, this was intended to evoke the spirit of the gathering and inspire further action; it shared content discussed and also provided photos of activities. Participants pointed to its significance in reconnecting them to the feeling of the gathering and their intentions for field realignment. Some results were already becoming visible as of the third meeting day—in the opening circle, one public manager reported her efforts to start implementation of the centralized intake process they desired; a statewide
advocacy organization invited others to develop a shared policy agenda; and another participant opened up a training she had developed for her own agency to others. Nonetheless, there were not ultimately huge results in relation to the ambitious goal of field redesign. While those interviewed reported improved communication and plans to convene in the future, the deliberative process did not yield significant systems change.

**The Resilient Region Project**

The final case explores a regional planning process taking place over eighteen months that generated a plan to chart economic, environmental, and social sustainable development. A five-county region in rural Minnesota began to consider how to purposively prosper in the wake of the economic recession, elevated unemployment, eroded natural resources, and outmigration. After seeing a federal government call for proposals, the executive director of the regional development commission engaged others and successfully applied for a federal government grant that enabled them to develop a process to create a strategic and implementation plan for long-term development.

The Resilient Region Project was structured around four work groups—housing, land use, transportation, and economic development—and larger consortium meetings of all 220 participants, including the work groups. Most work groups involved thirty people who were intentionally recruited to include diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise. Information developed by these groups was brought to the larger consortium meetings participants to garner feedback and connect the work of the different groups. Additionally, other key stakeholders in the region, such as utility companies, educational institutions, and alternative energy groups, were consulted.

Initially leaders imagined a typical planning process, but just as the grant was being finalized, four leaders attended the Art of Hosting training workshop and decided to adapt their approach. The facilitators heavily used a World Café technique in the work group and full group consortium meetings to inspire people to engage in dialogue with others who might not share their point of view. They combined the technique with others to help the participants identify key issues, develop recommendations to address them, and identify action steps. As in the HIV/AIDS case, facilitators shared theories from the Art of Hosting approach with participants—for example, noting the natural tendencies for groups to diverge and enter the “groan zone” before converging on areas of resolution. They also used techniques from outside their Art of Hosting training, such as the nominal group process, when it helped advance the purpose of a particular meeting. They used information technology to share results and be transparent, although facilitators noted that sharing electronically was not a substitute for personal connections and relationships.

When interviewed, facilitators and participants identified a number of results. Some shared stories about participants engaging in new relationships, using insights developed, and their own heightened attention to listening in other arenas of their lives. As one person suggested, “Because everyone got to go around the table and offer their opinion, there was more even chance for everyone to hear from others.” A host shared a similar observation about the work group he assisted,
noting, “Using Open Space Technology and World Café is helping people understand they are not as far apart as they seem to think they are [or] as you’ve been told; they start to understand that there is more commonality. That has been the benefit in facilitating conversations and letting them talk to each other, and solve their own problems, and work through some of these issues, and create recommendations together. In a typical approach, where we just did lecturing and nobody spoke to each other, they wouldn’t see how close together they were.” To document how people engaged across their differences, the facilitators decided to create a video testimony of six ideologically diverse participants. In our interviews, people emphasized the importance of civility and including diverse opinions, suggesting that the deliberative methods used strongly contributed to a civil and inclusive process. Facilitators and participants also expressed their long-term commitment to the region and indicated they had discovered, strengthened, or honed it through the inclusive process. The Resilient Region Plan summed up the project’s work into themes, goals, recommendations, and action, and implementation began immediately. The first small but significant changes include private employers pooling resources to build a homeless shelter, the creation of trail projects developed at military training facilities, and technical and financial resources for wastewater treatment.

BUILDING DELIBERATIVE CAPACITY TO CREATE PUBLIC VALUE

These data indicate how engagement processes may build deliberative capacity for creating public value. They reveal that the mechanisms through which this occurs are neither static nor determined by use of a particular deliberative model. In the three cases, the Art of Hosting model provided a consistent group of techniques, theories, and practical design frameworks that enabled facilitators to more efficiently design and implement deliberative process. Hosts’ experience in the immersive training workshop provided them a common palette from which to create the deliberative projects, as well as experience as participants in cocreating agendas and visual artifacts. The Local Government Innovation forums benefited from many volunteer facilitators who, having been trained in the Art of Hosting method, were eager to contribute their time to honor their commitment to the In-Commons initiatives. In the HIV/AIDS realignment and Resilient Region conversations, the facilitator teams were made up of groups trained in the model who used it more extensively—for example, by employing a wider variety of techniques and by introducing participants to the convergence-divergence Art of Hosting practical framework, which participants said helped them to orient themselves and accept the sometimes uncomfortable or meandering process of public deliberation.

Yet these cases also showcase the significance of both facilitator choices and participant engagement in generating or undermining public value in deliberative projects. They point to two kinds of public value that may potentially be built by deliberative processes. The first is to incorporate publicly held values into outcomes aimed at addressing public problems. This is accomplished through enhanced participant involvement in understanding and developing better-informed actions on substantive policy issues and public program–delivery systems. The second involves
enhancing underlying deliberative capacity to work on not only the issue at hand but also potential others as an essential public value of good governance. Building this kind of public value—deliberative capacity—involves not only design and skill but also how the participants understand their agency in developing or acting on solutions.

Although an espoused goal in the Local Government Innovation process was to build relationships among participants, facilitators did not pursue relationship-building processes in a sustainable way. In fact, rather than enabling spontaneous connection, the process limited opportunities by preassigned seating throughout the event and offering participants no opportunity to coorganize discussion topics. While the material collected ultimately appeared in the glossy report, it did not build a collective sense of value from the deliberation because it was not “harvested” in a coproduced manner with the participants. Created by consultants to advance a state-level policy goal rather than to document shared understandings among participants, the Local Government Innovation process created cynicism among some participants who, while enjoying the conversations, knew it wasn’t so easy to work together across jurisdictional boundaries because “it just never happens.”

The facilitators in the HIV/AIDS project made many more explicit decisions to involve participants in cocreating the events, from shaping the design and questions to enabling people to critique the briefing documents. Yet, while this did create an expectation that field changes needed to come from participants’ own leadership, the results were more modest than had been initially hoped. The deliberative process was not able to help nonprofit leaders overcome the risks they sense about fundamentally redesigning their system. In the Resilient Region case, both facilitator choices and participant engagement generated public value. In this instance the process and results were coproduced through the use of a range of Art of Hosting techniques and practical design frameworks. The process generated new relationships, appreciation of differences, and concrete plans and projects in the community related to their ambitious goal of regional resilience.

These cases also highlight time as potentially significant in how deliberative processes create public value. As is noted in table 3.1, The HIV/AIDS Field Realignment and Resilient Region Project brought participants together for several hours at a time, repeatedly, over an extended period for analysis and discussion, whereas the Local Government Innovation project brought participants together just once for a few hours. The hosting model is agnostic on whether there is a desired amount of time, duration for a process, or particular sequencing of steps. However, greater time—to permit reflection and in-depth work—does seem to support opportunities for systemic change, a finding echoed in the literature on designing engagement processes (Bryson et al. 2014; Nabatchi et al. 2012).

CONCLUSION

This study has allowed us to examine in some detail how a new approach to engagement, the Art of Hosting, may offer opportunities for creating public value through building deliberative capacity. Potentially, these opportunities contribute to creating public value in two ways: by enhancing the influence of publicly held
values in framing public problems and formulating policy solutions, and in building deliberative capacity as an intrinsically valued feature of good governance. The data was drawn from three specific public service redesign projects that used some elements of the Art of Hosting approach. Like other deliberative scholars (Fung 2004, 2006; Gutmann and Thompson 2004; Sirianni and Friedland 2001), we find that the design and implementation of deliberative processes influence both how citizens understand substantive issues and how they understand their agency in developing or acting on solutions. Thus, for public managers, other policymakers, and citizen activists, this research practically stresses that how they enact deliberative processes has a powerful impact on whether or not they create public value. Deliberative processes do not guarantee that these important results are achieved.

As these cases highlight, no silver bullets are contained in the democratic process—even one that trains facilitators to be more deliberative than in many other engagement methods. While Art of Hosting advocates make ambitious claims in regard to creating public value, the practicalities of public engagement processes and building deliberative capacity are very significant. They suggest that the impacts of public participation design choices extend far beyond the success or failure of a particular project. Facilitators’ skillfulness in coproduction is not merely important for solving a particular challenge but for what it teaches participants about their abilities, or lack thereof, to influence collective actions through engagement with others. These capacities are core to leveraging the power of engagement for creating public value through building deliberative capacity on a larger scale.

NOTES
1. This reflects an understanding that resources are not fixed but endogenously generated and brought into use in particular ways. Frameworks or schemas have a recursive relationship with resources in which they help to bring one another into use (Feldman 2004; Feldman and Pentland 2008; Feldman and Quick 2009; Sandfort 2013).
2. For an illustration of this breadth and depth, see http://artoofhosting.ning.com/.
3. In repeated satisfaction surveys taken after the three-day workshop in Minnesota, the vast majority of participants rated it useful or very useful (89–100 percent). For many the workshop provided exposure to new techniques and frameworks that—they might have heard about before—they had not had the chance to experience. For copies of reports, including photos from training events, see http://www.leadership.umn.edu/education/leadership_forum.html. When we interviewed the first two cohorts of workshop participants six to eight months later, all could recall notable techniques, frameworks, and experiences from the three-day workshop; while not all were deploying them, the Art of Hosting workshop was memorable for all who had participated (Sandfort, Stuber, and Quick 2012).
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