

Introduction

SUSTAINED DIALOGUE AND PUBLIC DELIBERATION are two of the most important attempts to take the next steps toward more deliberative democracy in government and society. In this section, five sets of authors offer their perspectives on the basic role and position of public conversation in modern life.

In the first “basic statement” in this section, coeditor Jon Van Til expands upon the theme stated in his opening sentence: “Sustained dialogue and public deliberation are forms of structured human interaction that address, name, and frame issues of mutual concern.” Harold Saunders and Priya Parker lay out the fundamentals of the sustained dialogue perspective as it has developed through the work of the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue. In a second, related chapter, Saunders and Parker discuss a wide variety of local, campus, and international applications of sustained dialogue undertaken by groups associated with IISD. David Robinson ties thoughts on the deliberation and dialogue frame into another, contemporary framework of social capital from the perspective of his practice in Wellington, New Zealand. While there are numerous published studies of social capital, Robinson reports here on what is likely the first study to examine intergroup efforts at sustained dialogue in that context. In a paper originally written for another context and first published here, Lisa Bedinger expands upon the connection between sustained dialogue and higher education. In the last statement in this section, coeditor Roger A. Lohmann and Nancy Lohmann explore the long record of social work involvement with fundamental ideas of deliberative democracy in organizations and communities.

