Civic Intelligence (1)

The physical, social and knowledge environment is changing rapidly. Intelligence, more than anything else, describes the capacity to influence and to adapt to a changing environment. Is society smart enough to meet the vexing challenges it faces?

Organizations with civic missions have the responsibility to keep their principles intact while interacting effectively with other organizations, both aligned with and opposed to, their own beliefs and objectives.

Effective and principled civic intelligence is necessary to help humankind deal collectively with its collective challenges. People need to develop theories, models and tools of civic intelligence that can help integrate thought and action more effectively.

Written by Douglas Schuler

Social Responsibility (8)

Things don’t get better by themselves. Without purposeful intervention, organizations of all kinds lose sight of their social responsibilities. Having social benefits as part of an organization’s purpose, does not guarantee positive achievements. Any organization with a shared vision of social responsibility, whether a for-profit corporation or a not-for-profit group working for the public good, needs to deliver what it promises. A passion for principles drives the efforts of individuals and citizen groups to make corporations, professions and governments more responsive; the more open and accountable they are, the more responsive they will become.

Activism on behalf of principles other than self-interest or convenience is necessary to remind selfish businesses of their social responsibility, and to prevent other organizations from losing touch with theirs. This activism can take place outside the organization, in citizen groups and political platforms, or within the organization as the individual actions of the tempered radical and in the form of changes to policy and governance. In these efforts, the struggle of advocacy is at least as important as the specific principles being advocated. Social responsibility does not depend upon any one principle of conduct.

Written by Stewart Dutfield, Burl Humana and Kenneth Gilgren

Global Citizenship (6)

Citizenship is generally described as the formal relationship, usually codified in law, of person (the citizen) and a state and often is delineated in terms of rights and responsibilities. Its site has shifted from the Greek city-state where the idea first took hold to the modern nation-state whose birth is linked to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia that established the convention that countries and its citizens do not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

Citizenship often determines access to health care, education, and other rights — rights that arguably should be universal. A narrow interpretation of citizenship implicitly cedes power to national governments whose defense of "national interest" can sometimes be used against its own citizens who have no legal access to a "higher authority," and can restrict the participation of citizens in global affairs and problem-solving.

The journey towards global citizenship will be incremental, perennial, lurching, and met by setbacks as well as successes. There are tasks for many people with a wide variety of roles and responsibilities and there are hosts of organizations and projects in which people can engage. Communication with people in other countries is especially important to build bridges of understanding.

Martha Nussbaum, in "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" refers to the fact that each of us dwells, in effect, in two communities — the local community of our birth, and the community of human argument and aspiration that "is truly great and truly common, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our nation by the sun" (Seneca, De Olio).

Written by Douglas Schuler and Lori Blewett

Collective Decision Making (10)

Divided decision making is a major factor behind the disrupted personal relationships, fragmented communities, atomized specializations, and compartmentalized organizations that have become standard in Western society. To resolve any serious issue in any community for the long term, the collective voices of individuals, the community, experts, and organizations working toward a shared goal are required for a harmonious response to the disrupted social and natural environments of our time.

Examining the knowledge cultures involved in Western decision making can provide details of the ways decisions are made about the future. Although all of these are needed for satisfactory decisions each knowledge culture is likely to reject the contributions of the others. Yet all five knowledge cultures have to learn to accept each other’s contribution if there is to be a constructive synthesis. A sustainable synthesis calls for commitment to respecting their individual contributions while strengthening their connections. Tools found to assist in this transformational change include David Bohm's rules of dialogue. Concerted change requires all the knowledge cultures to join in the stages of open learning, as described by David Kolb.

Written by Valerie Brown