

How can I live my life as a living-global-citizen? From action research to political activism.

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Abstract

This paper narrates my post-doctoral journey as a Living Theory action researcher as I seek to continue to live out my values as a global citizen without the support of an academic environment. On leaving my role as a full-time educator in a UK state school, the challenge for me was to continue being a Living Theory action researcher whilst engaging with real-world politics. My desire to continue to live out my values as a living-global-citizen led me to move from action research into political activism. The vote to leave the EU in June 2016 was the catalyst for me to become more active in politics. My belief in democracy was shaken and it led me to consider how I could enhance the democratic process through forms of deliberative democracy. This was the motivation for my involvement in the development of a Democracy Cafe and a Citizen's Jury in my home town of Salisbury, UK. I claim that both of these activities are examples of how I am living out my values as a living-global-citizen and a democrat, in order to enhance my own learning, the learning of others and to influence the social formations in which we are operating.

Keywords: Democracy; Deliberative Values; Citizenship Activist

Introduction

As a living-theory action researcher, I seek to live out my values of cultural empathy, humanity, democracy and togetherness more fully in my life. When an individual lives out these values they can be described as a living-global-citizen. Coombs, Potts & Whitehead (2014) distinguish between Living Global Citizenship as a theoretical idea and the unique personal act of meaning that an individual is seeking to live as fully as possible in living-global-citizenship. This paper is about the unique personal act of meaning that I, as a living-global-citizen, am seeking to live out as I narrate my journey from an action researcher operating in an academic environment to a political activist operating in the real world of politics.

A key aspect of Living Global Citizenship is Cultural Empathy. Indeed, Cultural Empathy is what enables Living Citizenship to become Living-Global-Citizenship:

"The ability of an emerging global citizen to appreciate other cultures and societies and move towards a common shared set of values and understanding is a valuable goal. This global appreciation of other cultures, traditions and values is something we argue as "cultural empathy". Cultural Empathy is both a social policy and an act of humanity, and when combined with our notion of living-citizenship, it helps us to define what we mean by living-global-citizenship" (Coombs, Potts and Whitehead, 2014, p.8).

Cultural empathy helps us to celebrate and appreciate the richness of cultural difference (Andreotti, 2011). The result of the European Union referendum in the UK in June 2016 came as a shock to many. Some of the campaign messages were culturally non-empathetic in the sense that they lacked appreciation of other cultures and sought to exploit divisions in society.



Image 1 - The Visual Propaganda of the BREXIT Leave Campaign

Such a lack of cultural empathy contradicted my own values and motivated me to respond in ways that might help to restore the social value of cultural empathy. The referendum process was very adversarial, and the result left the UK a very divided nation. Direct democracy had worked in the form of a referendum to produce a result which clashed

with my values. This shook my belief in democratic forms of governance and led to a transformation in my learning about democracy as I sought a means to promote cultural empathy through a different form of democracy. A report by the organisation Compass, a non-party political UK organisation that aims to build a more equal, sustainable and democratic society (Compass Online, 2019), summed up the change that I was seeking:

"Much of the change we need to see is about culture and behaviour. We need a daily practice of kindness and consideration, listening to each other and making time for each other, respecting differences and learning from them. The Brexit vote exposed how polarised we are: it is a wake-up call to heal differences, not entrench them" (Compass, 2018, p. 78).

It was through Compass that I discovered deliberative democracy. As I learned more, I became a political activist seeking to influence others in seeing the benefits of deliberative forms of democracy and seeking to influence social formations through the establishment of, and participation in, deliberative democratic processes.

My narrative begins with an outline of my role as a citizenship-educator and the emergence of Living Global Citizenship as both a theoretical concept and a unique personal act of meaning. This is important in providing a framework for understanding my own actions as I first explore deliberative democracy and then provide evidence of how my involvement in the establishment of a Democracy Cafe and the pursuit of a Citizen's Jury are influencing my own learning, the learning of others and the social formations in which we operate. The evidence that it has influenced my own learning will be that I have been able to effectively critique deliberative democracy as a method and to successfully implement deliberative processes in my home city. The evidence that it has influenced the learning of others will be that participants in these deliberative processes have experienced a sense of belonging and learning from each other which has led to changes in attitudes, opinions, perceptions or behaviour. Finally, the evidence that the social formations have been influenced will be that the values of democracy, cultural empathy, humanity and togetherness have been lived out more fully as a result of deliberative processes.

Living Global Citizenship

We (Coombs, Potts & Whitehead, 2014) came to coin the phrase Living Global Citizenship as a result of transformations in our thinking over a number of years as we discussed the nature of citizenship and learning from international educational partnerships.

My interest in citizenship education had been sparked by Bernard Crick's (1998) report which led to the introduction of citizenship education to the UK curriculum "designed to enhance the political literacy of all young people and counter rising levels of democratic apathy" (Weinberg & Flinders, 2018). As a Deputy Head in a comprehensive school in one of the most deprived communities in Wiltshire, I had worked with others to establish a partnership between my own school and Nqabakazulu School in the black township of Kwamashu, Durban, South Africa. This partnership was based on shared values of social justice, equality, democracy and ubuntu, an African value that roughly translates as togetherness. In my Ph.D. (Potts, 2012) I had used a living-educational-theory approach to study the transformation in my own learning as a result of the partnership, the learning of others involved in the partnership and the influence that we had had on social formations.

Our intention in establishing the partnership had always been to engage students in a citizenship education curriculum which fitted in the justice-orientated category of active citizen, as outlined in the typology below:

Table 1. A Typology of Active Citizenship Source: Adapted from Weinberg & Flinders, (2018, p. 576)

The Individualised Citizen	The Participatory Citizen	The Justice-Orientated Citizen
Acts responsibly in his/her community. Works and pays taxes. Obeys laws. Recycles and gives blood Volunteers to 'lend a hand' in times of crisis. Contributes food to a food bank.	Active member of community organisations. Organises community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up the environment. Knows how government agencies work. Helps to organise a food bank.	Critically assesses social, political and economic structures. Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice. Knows about democratic social movements and how to effect systemic change. Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes.

This typology helps me to understand why I felt the need to continue my citizenship activities after leaving teaching, writing my Ph.D., and joint authoring of the book. I not only wanted to continue to be a participatory citizen as an active member of community groups, but I also wanted to go beyond this and be a justice-orientated citizen in effecting systemic change.

Two political events in particular motivated me further and critically to assess the predominant social, political and economic structures. In the UK, the vote to Leave the European Union and in the US, the election of Donald Trump as President seemed to go counter to the values and attitudes essential for contemporary democratic societies, such as respect for others, self-reflection, aiming for the common good, active participation as a citizen, and international understanding. It led me to question the prevailing democratic process and consider how democracy could be strengthened. Through a series of meetings with like-minded local people I became interested in deliberative democracy.

Deliberative Democracy

Many commentators argue that there is much wrong with the prevailing forms of democratic governance. Confidence in political leadership is falling, groups are feeling marginalised and excluded from the political process and individuals are making judgements in isolation.

"Democratic governance is eroding at the same time as public confidence in political leadership declines on an unprecedented scale. Media outlets across the globe predict, on a daily basis, the demise of democracy, and ask what will happen if it does not survive in countries that are traditionally considered to be democracies. Strengthening democracy

means working on ways to be more inclusive, ensuring people and their interests are at the heart of political dialogue and decision-making processes" (Chungong, 2017, p.1).

In addition, Warren (1996) argues that democracy works poorly when individuals hold preferences and make judgements in isolation from one another, as they often do in today's liberal democracies. When individuals lack the opportunities, incentives, and necessities to test, articulate, defend, and ultimately act on their judgements, they will also be lacking in empathy for others, poor in information, and unlikely to have the critical skills necessary to articulate, defend, and revise their views.

Deliberative democracy offers a way of restoring confidence in democratic institutions, ensuring all voices are heard and opportunities for participants to make judgements based on collective wisdom. It promises more inclusive and legitimate forms of political authority, more informed decisions and a more active account of citizenship. It is based on the principle that all citizens are entitled to participate in the process of political dialogue and have an equal right to introduce and question claims, to put forward reasons, to express and challenge needs, values and interests. Deliberative democracy promotes political dialogue aimed at mutual understanding. Participants don't necessarily agree but they are committed to resolving problems through discussion and deliberation. It encompasses a talk-based approach to political conflict and problem solving through arguing, demonstrating, expressing, and persuading. In a good deliberative system, persuasion that raises relevant considerations should replace suppression, oppression, and thoughtless neglect (Mansbridge *et al.*, 2012).

"What is fundamental to democratic dialogue is 'deliberative' as opposed to 'strategic' or 'instrumental' rationality. In contrast to the strategic manipulation and manoeuvring that is often characteristic of contemporary politics, we can describe a collective as deliberatively rational to the extent that its interactions are egalitarian, uncoerced, competent, and free from delusion, deception, power and strategy. Democratic deliberation encourages mutual recognition and respect and is orientated toward the public negotiation of the common good" (Smith and Wales, 2000, pp.5-6).

Democratic deliberation can not only lead to more legitimate and trustworthy forms of political authority, but it also promises more informed judgements. It offers the conditions whereby participants can widen their own limited and fallible perspectives by drawing on each other's knowledge, experience and capabilities. Fearon (1998) argues that this increases the likelihood of good judgements emerging, for two reasons: it might be 'additively' valuable in the sense that one actor is able to offer an analysis or solutions that had not occurred to others; or it might be 'multiplicatively' valuable in that deliberation could lead to solutions that would not have occurred to the participants individually.

Deliberative democracy also offers a more active version of citizenship, a more justice orientated citizen (see Table 1), one that seeks out and addresses areas of injustice and knows how to effect systemic change by recognising that political engagement has the potential to transform the values and preferences of citizens in response to encounters with others. Through participation and deliberation, citizens' viewpoints can be widened beyond the limited outlook of their private affairs.

Critics of deliberative democracy argue that citizens are unwilling to participate in political life. One of the most common reasons given by disengaged citizens for their unwillingness to engage in political life is the fact that the world of politics is separated from their own lives, and that political debates are removed from their own lived experience. Citizens claim to be alienated from the formal business of politics, and from the forms of dialogue which characterise and perpetuate it (e.g. Baston and Ritchie, 2004; Hansard Society and Electoral Commission, 2012; Parvin and McHugh, 2005).

Furthermore, social capitalists argue that increased inequality, deprivation and social fragmentation have resulted in a weakening of common bonds of citizenship, and an erosion of the kind of civil society that deliberative democracy relies on. The proposed causes for the decline in social capital, and civic and associational life in the literature, include the globalization of markets, the rise of a more fluid workforce, the decline of traditional manufacturing industries and the rise of the knowledge economy, the privatisation of leisure, the rise of social and economic inequality, increased individualism, and the expansion of economic markets (Macedo *et al.*, 2005; Putnam, 2001; Putnam *et al.*, 2005; Stoker, 2006; Verba *et al.* 1995; Whiteley, 2012). These and numerous other factors have combined to destroy those opportunities for face-to-face contact that citizens once had with their neighbours, bosses, friends, extended families and so on, leaving them isolated and alienated from one another (Verba *et al.*, 2003). If deliberative democracy requires a vibrant civil society, it must be created or, rather, recreated in the wake of these changes. Stocks of social capital have eroded and must be re-built; deprived neighbourhoods lacking a civic and political infrastructure must be reformed; demographic inequalities must be reduced; people who consider themselves divided or cut off from one another must be brought together. A social, political, and cultural shift must take place (Parvin, 2015).

Deliberative democrats respond to these criticisms by arguing that reconfiguring democracy as a process of public reasoning among citizens can re-connect citizens with one another and with politics, so that political discussion becomes part of their lived experience. This, I believe, has been demonstrated in the two examples of citizens' assemblies outlined below and in the Democracy Cafes as evidenced later in this paper. The social, political and cultural shift that Parvin seeks can be made, and social capital restored, through increasing the opportunities available to citizens to influence political decisions, and by emphasising the need for collective deliberation among citizens on matters of policy and principle. This approach can ensure social unity and political stability in circumstances of diversity, produce democratically legitimate outcomes in the face of disagreement, and offer a response to democratic decline by reconnecting citizens with institutions and the regime of laws under which they live, and with one another (Benhabib, 1996; Mansbridge & Parkinson, 2012). Two examples that demonstrate the success of deliberative processes are The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly and the Citizens' Assembly on BREXIT in the UK.

The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly in 2008 consisted of a relatively randomly selected body of citizens who were charged with choosing an electoral system for the province that would then be put before the citizenry as a whole in a referendum (Warren and Pearse 2008). This provided the members of the Assembly with an opportunity to influence political decisions. The Citizens' Assembly required that its citizen members become informal experts on electoral systems over the many weekends that it met in the

course of a year. It was screened against members with material or pressure-group interests in the issue, presented with balanced materials, and sponsored in a non-partisan way. These measures increased citizen trust in this relatively expert proxy group and gave citizens a reason to trust its conclusions (Mansbridge and Parkinson, 2012).

"The BC Citizens Assembly for Electoral Reform is far and away the best political exercise I've ever seen. David Wills, one of the members, made a very important point yesterday ... in fact it's a crucial point ... The Assembly did not go into the exercise with the notion that they had to recommend reform. They spent considerable time deciding whether the present system needed any reform at all ... and it was only after they decided that the answer was yes, did they embark on a rigorous search for a new system. The remarkable thing about this exercise is that 160 people, from all parts of the province, from all walks of life, men and women, could spend the time they did on such a vexing question without getting at each other's throats" (Mair, 2004, p.1).

A second example is the Citizens' Assembly on Brexit, which was held over two weekends in September 2017. It brought together 50 randomly selected citizens who reflected the diversity of the UK electorate. According to the UCL Constitution Unit, (2019) the aim was to bring together citizens to engage in detailed, reflective and informed discussions about what the UK's post-Brexit relations with the European Union should be.

The Summary Report (2017) says that the process was a success in re-connecting citizens with each other and with politics after the divisive 2016 referendum.

"The Citizens' Assembly on Brexit provides robust evidence that UK citizens are willing and able to learn about, deliberate and come to subtle and well-considered recommendations on highly complicated and controversial policy issues. If citizens can do this on an issue as divisive as Brexit, this suggests strongly that citizens' assemblies and other deliberative processes can be used on a range of challenging political and constitutional issues.

Citizens' assemblies and other deliberative processes can strengthen representative democracy, not only by giving politicians insight into informed public perspectives on complex policy issues, but also by building trust in the political process. Random selection means that the wider public can be confident that Members are just like them and are not representing special interests. They can be confident that fellow citizens have spent time learning and deliberating with each other before making recommendations.

Citizens' assemblies show that it is important to think carefully about how we design public participation. Poorly designed processes can further alienate citizens from politics. Citizens' assemblies are not the only way to engage citizens in a deliberative process, but they have proved their effectiveness" (Summary Report, 2017, p.7).

Cross (2019) suggests that there is a tension between deliberation and activism. Critics of deliberative methods fear that if activists were to rely exclusively on deliberation, certain substantive injustices might only be exacerbated. However, as Cross points out, if common features of activist conduct like rhetoric, heckling, partisan campaigning, and protest may generate greater public attention for neglected viewpoints, then these methods may have a welcome place within a deliberative system. This may go a considerable way towards resolving the tension between deliberative democracy and activism.

One of the key themes of the Brexit debate was "taking back control". My encounters with deliberative democracy have led me to believe that it is a way of reconfiguring democracy with citizens taking control. As the Compass report (2018) into the causes and cures of Brexit points out:

"Democracy has to become an everyday part of our lives, at work, in trade unions and civil society. Taking back control in a meaningful way means taking back responsibility too – individually and collectively" (p.78).

Establishing a Democracy Cafe

A friend introduced me to the idea of a Democracy Cafe as a form of face-to-face deliberative discussion; and as someone who is interested in developing people as citizens and extending participation in discussion about issues, I was immediately interested. I volunteered to be the facilitator for the first Democracy Cafe to take place in my home town of Salisbury in the UK, which we launched in September 2017. Despite undertaking some publicity, we were quite prepared for the first meeting to be attended by just three or four people. As it happened, 25 people turned up, demonstrating a thirst for political discussion. Two years later the number of participants remains a similar number, however the faces change each month.

At this first meeting, participants suggested ten different topics for discussion. In a democratic way, we then voted on each topic and the one that got the most votes was then the topic to be discussed. The chosen topic was *Democracy, is it a good thing?*.

The idea of a Democracy Cafe comes from Christopher Phillips' Socrates Cafe, which is based on sharing ideas and ideals and enquiring into issues and problems through collective dialogue.

"Inclusive participatory societies thrive on face-to-face give-and-takes – on 'democratizing' – in which everyone matters and counts and has a genuine chance of being heeded and heard, in which equal consideration is given to a bracing variety of perspectives, and in which every interlocutor has a chance to reveal her unique story, expertise and stores of wisdom" (Phillips, 2019, p.1).

The purpose is to allow participants to present views which are heard respectfully whilst being challenged, leading to a thorough discussion of the issues. Participants are asked to suspend judgements so as to encourage dialogue. The idea is to bring in to the open impulses, feelings and opinions on these matters so that they can be seen and reflected back by others in the group. The discussion does not necessarily reach a conclusion and usually raises more questions than answers. The role of the facilitator is to ensure the ground rules are followed and to encourage contributions from participants.



Image 2 - Democracy Cafe Ground Rules

We have also held Democracy Cafes in local schools and in a community cafe on a housing estate. They have now also started up in Oxford and Southampton following the success of the Salisbury cafe.

So, what is the evidence that Democracy Cafes are enabling citizens to be more engaged and appreciative of other perspectives?

With the permission of the participants in the Democracy Cafe of February 2019, I took this short video of a discussion taking place. They gave me permission to upload the video to Youtube and to use it in this paper.

[Video link to Salisbury Democracy Cafe](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qk1FMHJ0ojY&t=32s)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qk1FMHJ0ojY&t=32s>

In the video, I think you can see that participants are engaged in listening to each others' views. People are actively listening as participants contribute to the discussion. There is some nodding of heads as people agree with statements made.

Four of the participants wrote some reflections on their participation in Democracy Cafes and they have given me permission to reproduce some of what they wrote here:

"In the three Democracy Cafés David and I have attended the quality of the conversation has been the same. I'd describe my experience of this quality as:

A temporary state of belonging which exists only whilst we converse – a transitory state of learning between my ignorance and my insights.

For the two hours we are together, each person's passion is contained in their individually self-mastered capacity for listening and or voicing contributions to the democratically selected topic for discussion in a forum where everybody has an equal right to be heard. I see that temporary state of belonging as a social movement in the context of Living Theory" (Burgess 2019 p.1).

A second participant wrote:

"I think it would be fair to say that for me these activities have contributed to a change in approach. For example, I have been trying to become a better listener, as we encourage participants in Salisbury Democracy Cafe to do, and to suspend judgement before challenging an opinion if I disagree with it. I have also been attempting to track and objectify my emotions during deliberations, in order to minimize their influence during debate (not

always successfully it has to be said). In addition, I have been trying to avoid labelling myself because I think this process encourages unjustified polarization. So, for example, instead of saying that I am A or B, I will say that I live my life as though A or B are true, or that I am persuaded by arguments leading to A or B. I keep in mind that what we are talking about is plausibility or tenability rather than something that is absolutely true.

I can't speak for others, except to say that most people seem to enjoy the process and relish the opportunity to deliberate in a calm and safe environment, which can only be good for democracy" (Bellringer, 2019 p.1).

A third said:

"I have attended the Democracy Café since its inception. For me it has become a way of getting outside my own 'bubble' through having to sit and listen, without interrupting, to views that are not just a reflection of my own. It has led me to have a greater understanding of – and respect for – the differing views of others." (Curbishley, L., 2019, p.1).

And a fourth wrote:

"For me, the meetings have encouraged me to think there might be a better way to manage our political affairs. For example, the climate change debate has encouraged us to propose a citizens' jury to the local council. This may not be successful but two years ago we would not even have tried. We would have watched passively as the local council carried out a series of half-hearted actions which will not meet their own objectives. Instead, we have felt emboldened to enter the fray and propose a better way" (Curbishley, P., 2019, p.1).

These participants suggest that the process is influencing their learning. Burgess (*ibid.*) refers to the temporary state of belonging that the discussion generates. This suggests a sense of togetherness in humanity as we explore the issue. Bellringer (*ibid.*) talks about how he has changed his approach and modified his behaviour as a result of his participation. Curbishley L. (*ibid.*) talks about the increased respect she has for differing views, and Curbishley P. (*ibid.*), of how participation has led him to become more active in extending democracy.

Further evidence of how the Democracy Cafe promotes inclusiveness and participation is evidenced by this feedback from sessions that we have run in local schools:

"The Democracy Café sessions went particularly well, both from talking to students who attended, and also via Martin from our committee who worked with you. He enjoyed your sessions so much that he stayed for the third (normally we say committee members can go see a different workshop in the last session if they like), and said that each session was different, both in subject matter and dynamics. He thought the inclusive way topics for discussion were chosen worked very well, and that students felt really encouraged to get involved." (Assistant Head of Sixth Form - South Wilts Grammar School, October 2017, p.1)

The fact that the Cafe has now been running for 26 consecutive months and continues to attract 20-30 people each time suggests that participants find it a valuable

activity. Moreover, the fact that our model has been copied and replicated in Oxford and Southampton shows that others have been influenced by the work that I and my colleagues have done in setting up and running the Cafe. Thus, I claim that by contributing to the establishment of a Democracy Cafe in Salisbury, I have been living my life as a living global citizen by encouraging citizens to be more active and engaged democratically in civic life. I have contributed to the promotion of the values of cultural empathy, with participants appreciating different perspectives on issues, as well as humanity and togetherness.

In recent months my colleague set up another Democracy Cafe in another part of the city. In an attempt to hear the voices of those that are harder to reach this Cafe is run in a community centre on the biggest social housing estate in the city of Salisbury. The number of participants has so far been smaller, but lively discussions have ensued. One of the problems, however, with Democracy Cafes is that the participants are self-selecting. In order to strengthen democracy, it is important to engage those who are harder to reach and whose voices are not usually heard. This is why other forms of deliberative democracy, such as Citizens' Assemblies or Juries, are also necessary.

Pursuing a Citizens' Jury

I am the elected chairperson of Salisbury Democracy Alliance, which is seeking to build support amongst local community groups in Salisbury, for the idea of citizens' juries to be run to make decisions on local issues. Our work to establish a citizen's jury in our home city is based on our assessment that there is a democratic deficit and through such a jury this deficit can be addressed. The participants in a jury will become more informed on the issues considered and be able critically to assess social, political and economic structures and see beyond surface causes. They will be given the opportunity to question, debate and recommend changes to established systems and structures that reproduce patterns of injustice over time. This will enable them to make recommendations to address areas of injustice and effect systemic change.

The citizens' jury concept was developed to provide a means for a randomly selected group of around 20 people to come together over a period of several days to tackle a specifically defined problem. Although participants are randomly selected, work is done to ensure that they are from a cross section of the community and are as representative of the community in terms of ethnicity, age, gender and income as possible. Individuals with relevant expertise may also be invited to attend and advise. There will also be a professional facilitator. Citizens' assemblies have been used in a variety of situations, two of which I referred to earlier, and in a range of countries including Canada, Ireland, Australia, USA as well as the UK.

After discussions with the Leader of Salisbury City Council, we have made a proposal to run a Citizens' Jury on the following topic: Following the declaration of a climate emergency by Salisbury City Council, what action needs to be taken by them and by Salisbury citizens to implement the declaration?

The context is that Salisbury City Council has declared a climate emergency. At the same time several local organisations, for example Extinction Rebellion, have become active locally and raised awareness of the issue of climate change. A Citizens' Jury will provide an opportunity for a representative cross section of Salisbury's population to deliberate on the

issue. This will enhance and complement the existing democratic process. It will also increase awareness amongst the citizens of Salisbury of climate change and could give the City Council a democratic mandate for action on the issue. This is intended as the first Jury of several in the city in order to extend deliberative democracy and help to restore confidence in the democratic process. The Leader of the Council has responded favourably to the proposal and has agreed that any recommendations made by the Jury would be considered by the full Council.

My involvement in putting together the proposal for a Citizens' Jury on this issue is an example of how I am acting as a living-global-citizen seeking to live out my values of cultural empathy, humanity, democracy and togetherness. Citizens' Juries offer an opportunity for the voices of those who are disempowered to be heard, strengthening the democratic process and bringing the community closer together.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this paper, I claimed that I would provide evidence that my involvement in the establishment of a Democracy Cafe and in pursuing a Citizens' Jury is influencing my own learning, the learning of others and the social formations in which we operate. The evidence that it has influenced my own learning is that I have been able to distil from the literature some of the strengths and weaknesses both of deliberative democracy as a process and of some forms of deliberative democracy. Furthermore, I have been able to use this understanding, along with others, to successfully establish and sustain a Democracy Cafe and to pursue the idea of a Citizens' Jury with the City Council.

The evidence that it has influenced the learning of others is that participants in the Democracy Cafe have listened to and respected the views of others as shown in the video. As Burgess' reflections suggest, the Cafe discussions have brought a sense of belonging and a state of learning for the participants. Bellringer's response (*ibid.*) shows a change in his approach and behaviour. Curbishley L. and P. (*ibid.*) talk about how they have been made more aware of differing views and become more involved in the promotion of deliberative democracy. The sense of everyone having an equal right to be heard has encouraged contributions and led to people changing their attitudes, opinions or perceptions as a result of the deliberative process. Additionally, as some participants have learned how to run a Democracy Cafe they have gone on to form Democracy Cafes in their own cities of Southampton and Oxford.

The evidence that the social formations have been influenced is that the Democracy Cafe has enhanced democratic processes, promoted cultural empathy and humanity and has been conducted in a way that has brought people together. Thus, these values have been lived out more fully as a result. Burgess calls this a social movement in the context of Living Theory. This movement will be strengthened should our pursuit of a citizens' jury be successful.

Whilst I recognise a weakness of a deliberative democratic model, focused on democracy cafes and citizens' juries, is that it is small scale in nature and is in many ways a rejection of the idea of deliberation by the citizenry at large, it is also a form of deliberative democracy that, as I have demonstrated, that can be made to work. As Parvin (2015) says, it

seeks to harness the benefits of small-group deliberation in the policy-making process. Whilst feasible, it avoids what many see as the aim of deliberative democracy, i.e. the need for appropriate and widespread participation in democratic life.

Nevertheless, the success of democracy cafes in our community and their subsequent development elsewhere (Oxford and Southampton), as well as the increased use of citizens' assemblies in the UK and a number of other countries demonstrates that these relatively small-scale projects can influence the growth of deliberative democracy and increase participation in democratic life.

As a result of a referendum in 2016 I experienced myself as a living contradiction as I struggled to reconcile my belief in democracy with the other values that I cherish of cultural empathy, humanity and togetherness. My work in promoting deliberative democracy has helped me to work towards resolving that contradiction, as I have come to realise that democracy takes different forms. Whilst the referendum result was the culmination of a democratic process, this was not a deliberative process in which people were given the evidence and provided with the tools, the time and the space to reflect on the issue coming to a reasoned conclusion. I have come to see that there is a place for deliberative democracy alongside other forms of democracy and that deliberative democracy with its focus on inclusivity and mutual respect encourages the values of cultural empathy, humanity and togetherness

My journey through life from teaching to action researcher to political activist continues. A thread that ties this journey together is my desire to be a living-global-citizen who can bring forth hope, love and humanity. I hope that this paper helps to demonstrate that I am able to blend together my teaching skills with those of an action researcher who is researching their own practice and a political activist who is trying to make a difference in the world.

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