

## Inclusive and Generative Journalism for a New Narrative



*Photo credit: Yvonne Hollandy*

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Thursday, June 28, 2018 -- Peter Pula

**Curator's Note:** *The Reimagining Democracy blog series by Peter Pula continues with an exploration of the key elements of a reimagined democracy. In this blog, Peter writes about another one of those elements: inclusive and Generative Journalism for a new narrative. A blog on the topic of schools as an element of a reimagined democracy is forthcoming. To read Part 1 in this series, click [here](#).*

The stories we tell shape our culture. Journalism as a civic art, to be of real assistance to democracy, has a few things to overcome.

The first is where it looks for the emerging narrative. Institutions have resources and power. This is how they continue to dominate our news narrative. The people, on the other hand, are more loosely organized and their resources and power are less concentrated. They can be harder to find. Who is to tell their story? How do they get the attention of our storytellers? Fellow journalists, where is it that we are looking for our news? Let's look to community and those who are exercising their creativity and agency.

Secondly, we must transcend to higher states of inquiry. Consider carefully the questions we ask. Every question either reinforces the current narrative or it cultivates new life.

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Do your questions rest in who-what-when-where-why, then report on the observed facts, thus reinforcing them? Or, do they mine for giftedness, emergence, and what is about to happen? Do they surface what is possible now that wasn't possible before? Do they tug away at discovering how our source might go about getting there, and what sort of support they would like from their fellow community members? Do you dare anticipate what might happen next and print it?

A third thing to address is change theory. It is time to move beyond industrial-age change theory. Approaches like biomimicry, asset-based community development, and appreciative inquiry are all well-tested approaches. They are fresh, accessible, well-taught, and supported by communities of practice. To get good at them takes a

change of mind and lots of persistence.

A fourth hurdle is one of context and content knowledge. Media in general knows how to cover business and politics as usual. So, it does. Its approach to narrating the cycle of protest, debate, and competition fans those flames and reinforces an old narrative. It has yet to see past its current paradigm of democracy. It believes it is serving, as the fourth estate, as well as it can by doing what it has always done. It too often serves to reinforce the institutional-system-world narrative. It has so far done little to emphasize an alternative narrative. It is beholden to its dissociative embeddedness in the institutional narrative of protest and debate.

Every election we allow ourselves to become yet again distracted by the circus at the expense of illuminating the enabling and ennobling stories of real democracy, that of civic and associational life.

A new expert storyteller will learn to be comfortable and transparent with their subjectivity, to deepen the arts of inquiry, to recast their view of democracy, and to point their gaze in a different direction. They will become aware of the forms and functions, stepping stones, and life cycles in and of a reimagined democracy.

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These are but a few of the elements of a reimagined democracy.

What comes to life for you when you consider a reimagined democracy?

Where have you seen something like that at work?

What could you do, as a first small step, to bring that closer to being true here in your community?

What would you like from your fellow community members to make that happen?

*This blog is Part 4 of a 4-part series on the topic of reimagining democracy. To ensure you don't miss any of this content, sign up for the free Axiom News e-news by clicking [here](#).*

*Reimagine Democracy Blog Series, Blog 1: [“Beyond Voting: It’s Time to Reimagine Democracy.”](#)*

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*Reimagine Democracy Blog Series, Blog 3: [“Elements of a Reimagined Democracy: Unleashing Local Capital & Pent-Up Capital.”](#)*