

Designing the New World Trade Center: Personal Storytelling in Public Deliberation

by Francesca Polletta

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NEW YORK -- Theorists and politicians today largely agree on the value of public talk for strong democracies. Giving people opportunities to discuss matters of public concern with fellow citizens is widely recognized to produce better policies as well as citizens who are more informed, engaged, and invested in their political institutions. But what kind of talk fosters those things? Here, democratic theorists disagree.

Some believe that proper deliberation should be oriented to reasons. Participants in a deliberative forum should back up their opinions with universal principles, like equality or efficiency. Say you believe that your city should preserve a local park rather than build a new convention center on the site. You could recount in vivid detail your pleasurable experiences playing in the park as a young child. But why should your experience trump **[SNIP – End of preview.]**