

Four questions

Reflections from Seven Student-
Led Policy Dialogues in Singapore

7 Student-led Policy Dialogues

- **Policy dialogues:** My class held 7 different dialogues in Singapore:
 - Groups of 6-12 students per class.
 - Topics included: immigration policy, maritime museum, and labour policy.
 - Policy dialogues involved broad range of real stakeholders.
- **Internal negotiations:** student groups negotiated internally to choose a dialogue topic and then convene a dialogue



Four questions

1. How can we get the **right parties to the right table at the right time for the right reasons?**
2. How can we prepare **representatives to negotiate more effectively?**
3. How prepare people to **negotiate up hierarchies?**
4. How do perceptions of “**in-group**” and “**out-group**” affect consensus building behaviours and attitudes?

Right people, table, time, reasons

- There is a growing demand for participation

AND

- Legitimate concerns about implications for governance

WHICH, WHEN COMBINED

- Can result in poorly designed processes that leave all parties unsatisfied.

Preparing representatives

- Often, people come with positions.
- Positions can be more inflexible in multi-level negotiations, e.g.:
 - Hard-fought compromise between internal factions, or
 - Restricted by mandate by law, policy, etc.
- Learning at the table and relationship building **often don't extend to constituents and bosses.**

Negotiating with “Bosses”

- Little discussion on **how to negotiate up and down hierarchies.**
- Yet, policy dialogues often involve power and authority hierarchies **at the table and behind them**
 - E.g. government officials can have great power, **and** be very restricted in what they can do.

“In-group” negotiations are different

- Negotiations among members of the same group can be very different in style and expectations.
- Sometimes, these differences help
- Sometimes, they impede

Conclusions

- Our thinking needs to look more at the work of getting people to the table and helping them negotiate with those behind them.



Thank you!

"High Voice/
Participation"

"Low Voice/
Participation"

Effective
Negotiations

Mediated
Negotiations

Deal Making

Weak
Negotiations

Public Hearings

Bureaucratic
Procedure