

Mumbai
25-10-2018

Public Ownership of Democracy

'What is most common to the greatest number has least care bestowed upon it'
Aristotle

T.R. Raghunandan

The three big transitions in democracy today

- Rising tide of majoritarianism.
- Institutions of democracy purpose built to keep a watch on each other, being aligned in the direction of the same majoritarianism
- Significant capitulation of the fourth estate, the media,

Core concepts of accountability

- Bentham's principle - *'The more strictly we are watched, the better we behave'*
- Nietzsche - we give an account only when it is requested, and only when that request is backed up by power. Therefore, accountability is closely associated with authority.
- Yet, puppets acting as extensions of someone else's will cannot be objects of accountability. Burke - *'your representative owes you not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.'*
- Discretionary governing - authoritative allocation of resources and the exercising of control and coordination.
- Need for an identifiable locus of authority, as argued by J.S. Mill, that *responsibility is null and void when nobody knows who is responsible. ... there must be one person who receives the whole praise of what is well done, the whole blame of what is ill'*
- Locke - accountability is possible only when the governed are separated from the governed.

Kinds of accountability

- Democratic accountability: To voters
- Legislative accountability: To parliament
- Political accountability: To political party
- Legal accountability: To courts
- Organisational accountability: To the boss
- Financial accountability: To the auditor
- Administrative accountability: To the inspector
- Professional accountability: To the group guild
- Social accountability: To society,
- Personal accountability: To your conscience!

'Accountability' universe

| Source of control | Strength of control | Vertical | | Horizontal |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | | Upward | Downward | |
| Internal | High | Business | Bureaucratic | Audit |
| | Low | Client-Patron | Patron-Client | Peer professional |
| External | High | Representative | Fiscal | Legal |
| | Low | Societal | Political | Reputational |

*Translation of
'Societal acct into practice*

Social Accountability universe

Traditional
Citizen &
Civil society
led actions

New generation
approaches

The Political Accountability universe

Elections -
blunt instrument
of accountability.

Institutional-
ised
hybrid
models

social mobilisation processes & strategies

The vision of Empowerment

Definition: Ability to make choices & derive desired actions and outcomes from them

existence of choice

Demand & supply frameworks

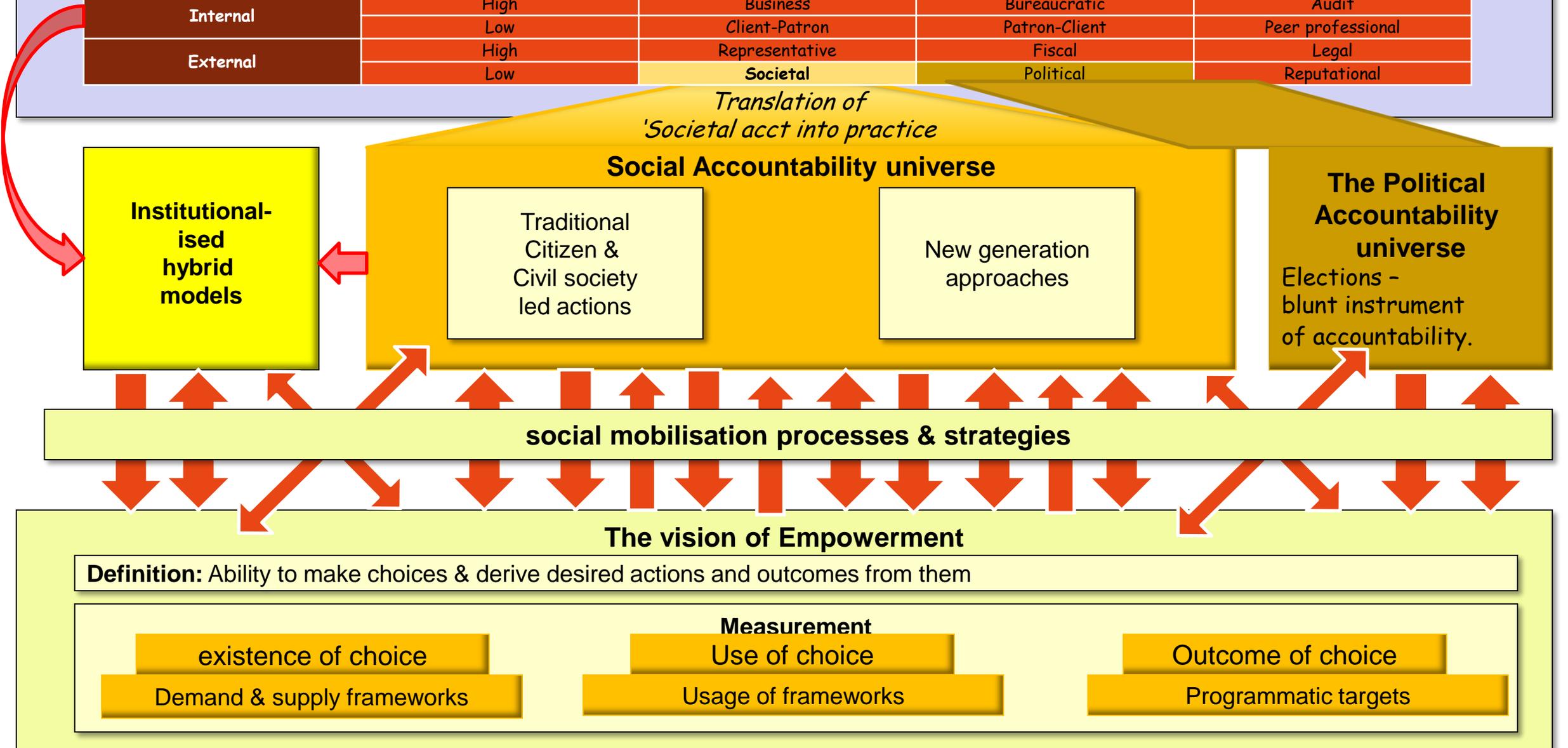
Measurement

Use of choice

Usage of frameworks

Outcome of choice

Programmatic targets



The Socially Smart Contract; <https://www.democracy.earth/#paper>

- *"We can consider elections implemented by states, provinces and city municipalities as democracies within which we are reduced to being passive recipients of a monologue. Citizens are called in-between substantially long periods of time, during elections, to provide a basic input: essentially accept or reject players in the same system. This is the bandwidth of the legacy system that is our so-called modern democracies. Under these systems less than one percent of the population is able to vote on legislation or execute budgets while the rest are legally forced to outsource their full citizenship rights to a representing minority that eventually figures out how to perpetuate itself."*
- The simple 'yes' or 'no' question that we answer when we cast a vote, if often too inadequate a form of expression of preference to really mean anything much. It may have sufficed to meet the needs of democracy so far, but will it suffice for the future?

The conundrum of political corruption; Streams of collection

- farming corruption in front line service delivery provided by government,
- Big, single kickbacks in procurement contracts and sale of natural resources,
- unaccounted contributions to political parties by business and other interests in the hope of wresting favours from them
- Payments made by business interests and others to have questions asked in legislatures that favour some vested interests, or lay bare information about competitors,
- Internal transactions, such as the sale of candidatures for elections.

The conundrum of political corruption; Streams of expenditure

- Bribe voters
- Fund expensive election campaigns, including through the securing of funds into private coffers, ostensibility for funding campaigns beyond the limits set for the same.
- Bribe media to produce favourable reports
- Engineer defections or prevent mid term destabilisation efforts by bribing elected representatives.
- Channelise money into private pockets of politicians

The conundrum of political corruption; Possible solutions?

- Law to regulate political party organisations, with stringent stipulations on
- Transparency in campaign funding,
- Mandatory limits on leadership positions and setting standards for inner party democracy,
- Compulsory audits with reports in public domain,
- Public funding for elections?

But questions remains; if voters see elections as 'payback time', how does one stop them accepting bribes?

So, is direct democracy the answer?

- Distortions in democracy could manifest in small communities as well;
- People will vote for low taxes and better services - mutually contradictory
- Second generation fiscal federalism prediction will manifest - of tendency for fiscal fragmentation, exporting of tax burden and NIMBY deadlocks
- Plus other social distortions - lynching, kangaroo courts, protection of iniquitous practices

Conceptualizing Deliberation

- **Public discussion:** An unstructured exchange of ideas and opinions on an issue with no specific purpose.
- **Public dialogue:** Open-ended exploration of different perspectives and experiences to reach mutual understanding.
- **Public deliberation:** Rigorous and respectful examination of a problem to reach a shared judgment or decision.

Adapted from the work of
John Gastil, Professor and Head
Department of Communication Arts & Sciences
The University of Pennsylvania (USA)

Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative Analytic Process

- Solidify information base
- Prioritize the key values
- Identify a broad range of solutions
- Weigh pros, cons, and tradeoffs
- Make the best decision

Democratic Social Process

- Distribute speaking opportunities
- Ensure mutual comprehension
- Consider diverse perspectives
- Respect other participants

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Different Levels of Deliberation

Micro-level group deliberation

- Well-structured designs can generate high-quality discussion
- Often lack political legitimacy/authority as decision-making bodies (except jury)

Macro-level mass deliberation

- Can include all citizens in the political unit
- Limited contact with opposing views and low issue knowledge

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21st Century Town Meeting

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Voters' Pamphlet

Oregon General Election
November 2, 2010



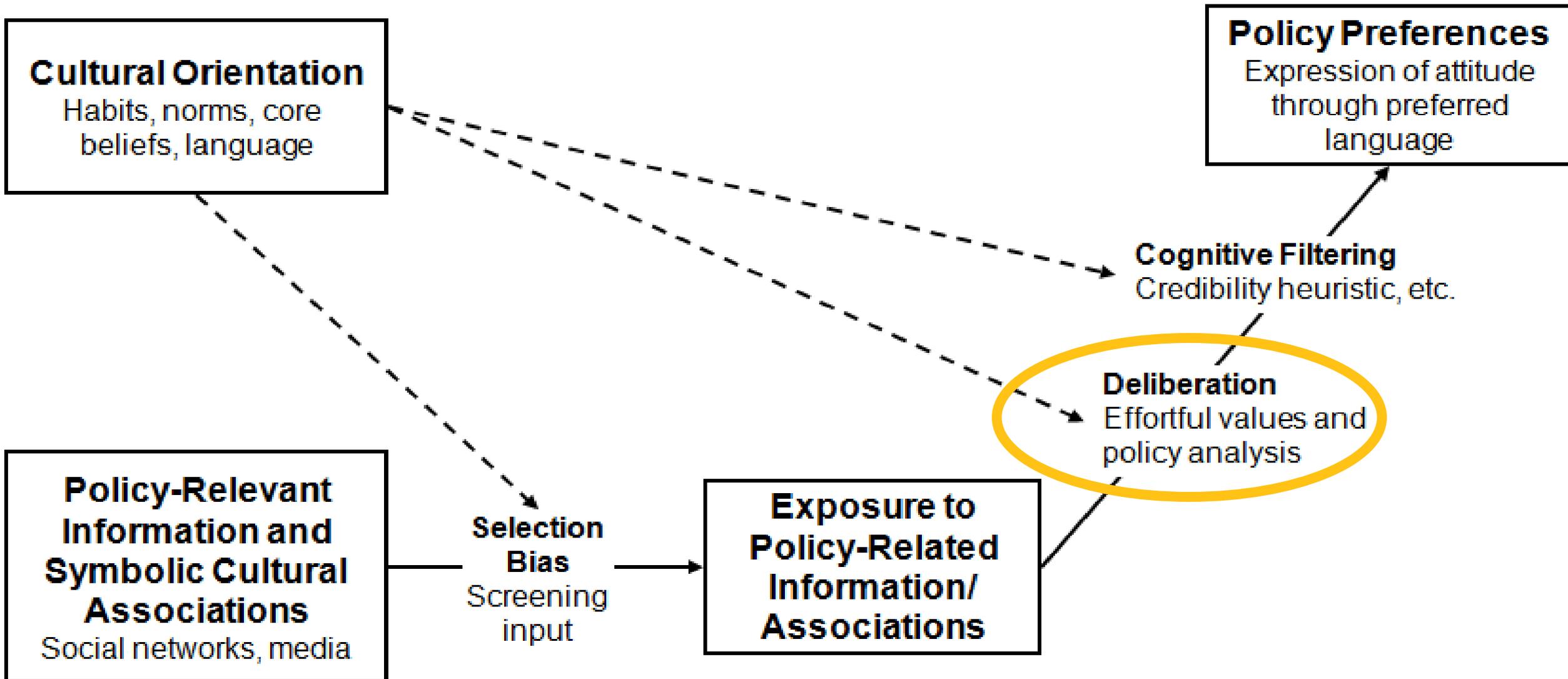
vote!



Kat Brown

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Conflicting Cultural Orientations



Slogans versus Reasons

Slogans and simplistic postures

- Easy to understand
- Appeal to emotions, particularly anger/hope
- Appeal to desire for simple solutions
- Make the opposition sound evil and/or ignorant

Why people sometimes reject them

- Deeper problems persist for decades
- A little solid information can cause skepticism
- Getting to know "opponents" as people
- Experience of deliberation shows alternative

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The idea of 'liquid' democracy

- Can quickly re-engineer the way that we deliberate and participate in a democracy and overcome the growing lack of faith in both representative and direct democracy.
- Impossible to expect, even from the most conscientious public representative, the ability to track every single issue and gain instant expertise to make a quality contribution to policy making.
- Could one choose one's representative for the issue in question. In a liquid democracy, one would be able to choose a personal representative to be a proxy for one, on any particular issue.
- A publicly verified network of proxies that are connected through blockchain, enabling every voter to keep track of their proxies and ensuring constant accountability during decision making.

Let us dispel gloom with optimism

- Dissatisfaction with the current waning of the public ownership of democracy ought not to be a cause for disquiet; it provides the substrate for optimism.
- The future will however call for rapid changes in the processes and techniques that can enhance and hold the interest of people in democracy. Blockchain and artificial intelligence, the emergence of social networking systems that transcend national boundaries, could enable a much faster and smoother breakdown of current protocols for the exercise of democracy.
- The future looks exciting.

Thanks. Any questions?

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/raghunandan.tr/>

Blog: <http://www.accountabilityindia.in/raghubytes>

email: trraghu2014@gmail.com

mobile: +91 9845749988