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THE FISCAL SOCIOLOGY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have described an explosion of consultation in the last decades of the twentieth century, characterized by the proliferation of new deliberative assemblies. I propose a fiscal theory of consultation to explain this phenomenon. Democratic states are likely to grant citizens rights of binding consultation at times of fiscal stress, when intensive state extraction of resources provokes citizen resistance that results in procedural concessions. Three mechanisms--escalation by citizens, anticipatory consultation by state officials, and information arbitrage by nongovernmental intermediaries--promote continued innovation in the modes of such consultation. Historical and quantitative evidence concerning the evolution of public consultation in California and New York supports the application of this theory to the late-twentieth-century consultation explosion.

THE GREAT CONSULTATION

On Weds., Feb 18, 2009, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and a not-for-profit organization called California Forward jointly convened a meeting of about 40 local businesspeople to discuss possible reforms to the state's tax structure. Through “small group dialogue, electronic keypad voting and written comments,” the participants weighed in on policy options that included new sales taxes, changes to property tax rules, and simplification of the income tax code (California Forward 2009: 3). The meeting was only one of dozens of hearings, stakeholder convenings, public workshops, focus groups, ChoiceDialogues™, visioning sessions, “community conversations” and town hall forums convened in 2008 and 2009 to discuss options for fundamental reform of the state’s governance structure (see e.g. Rosell, Furth and Gantwerk 2008; Small and Neyestani 2008; Agee et al. 2009; California Forward 2009).¹ The interest groups convening these meetings took names, such as California Forward, Repair California, Common Sense California, and Saving California Communities, that evoked progress, civic healing, and even salvation. It was as if the state of California was convulsed by a civic revival: call it the Great Consultation. The immediate purpose of this revival, however, was not spiritual, but mundane. Conveners sought to elicit public participation in setting a policy agenda. “Certainly this forum is about informing people,” said the organizer of one such town hall meeting in suburban Thousand Oaks, “but more importantly it's about collecting feedback from the public” (Herdt 2009).

The Great Consultation exemplifies a recent transformation in governance described by

¹ChoiceDialogue™ is a trademark of Viewpoint Learning, Inc. The genus that I am calling “deliberative assemblies” would also include several other species, including charrettes and Deliberative Polls®; the latter is a registered trademark of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University.

scholars such as Lee and Romano (2010), Sirianni and Friedland (2001), and Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini (2009). Governments and interest groups have long sought to elicit the participation of the public by means of such techniques as public opinion polls and voter registration drives. What sets apart the new techniques for “collecting feedback” is their collective and deliberative character. At their most basic, all of these techniques, whether they be called community conversations or visioning sessions or Deliberative Polls[®], consist of getting people together in the same room and prompting them to discuss what should be done.² Scholars have begun to document and describe a new industry focused on facilitating public consultation through the convening of these new, occasional deliberative assemblies.

Explaining the rise of the new deliberative assemblies is of considerable scholarly interest because of their problematic status in democratic theory. In contrast to the anonymous, mass-mediated election campaigns of the 21st century, the new assemblies involve face-to-face discussion and deliberation of the kind that we may associate with idealized images of the classical polis or the New England town meeting. It can be tempting to see in them a revival of the ideal of participatory democracy (cf. Pateman 1970, Poletta 1998). On the other hand, the new deliberative assemblies are typically small, temporary, privately facilitated, irregularly scheduled, and open by invitation only to people who meet sometimes informal and only vaguely defined criteria for participation. All of these characteristics may limit access to these occasional assemblies in ways that seem inconsistent with democratic ideals of equal participation. For example, there is some evidence that those who participate tend to be highly educated, high-income people who already have disproportionate voice in the American political order, much

² I focus here on the rise of face-to-face deliberation, although there has been a parallel increase in internet-facilitated remote deliberation; see Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini (2009).

like the Los Angeles businesspeople convened by California Forward (California Forward 2009; Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini 2009: 48-52; cf. Schlozman et al. 2005). We might worry whether the rise of the new deliberative assemblies is symptomatic of a broader retreat from democracy.

In this chapter, my purpose is not normative evaluation, but sociological explanation; I conceptualize the new deliberative assemblies as a form of consultation between states and citizens, and attempt to explain their rise in late twentieth century California by drawing on a general theory of where such innovations come from. State officials and citizens invent new forms of consultation in order to manage the potentially conflictual process of bargaining over the allocation of shared burdens and benefits. Explaining the emergence of any particular innovation in forms of consultation thus requires attention to the historical sequence of forms that preceded it, since such innovations are likely to be introduced only when previous modes of consultation have failed. In particular, as the example of the Great Consultation illustrates, the emergence of the new deliberative assemblies—like the emergence of other techniques of public consultation from elections to public opinion polling—resulted from social conflicts over the appropriation and distribution of public resources. To understand the rise of the new deliberative assemblies we need to turn to fiscal sociology.

THE PARADOX OF PARTICIPATION, ILLUSTRATED WITH THE CASE OF LATE 20TH CENTURY CALIFORNIA

To explain the rise of the new deliberative assemblies we must first describe it. Social

scientists in the 1960s observed increasing demands for political participation on the part of formerly excluded people around the world, and anticipated a coming “participation explosion” that would transform governance across the globe (Almond and Verba 1963: 4). But the following decades brought something different in the United States. Instead of a rise in mass civic activity, the next decade saw a decline. Voter turnout began to trend downward, as illustrated for the case of California by Figure 1. Other forms of civic participation fell off even more precipitously. National survey data over the same period show that fewer and fewer people attended political rallies, volunteered for political parties, served on local committees, participated actively in clubs or associations, or showed up for public meetings on local affairs (Putnam 2000: 45, 60-61). This decline in routine forms of political participation may have been partly balanced by an increase in irregular, informal, and occasional forms of participation—for example, even as fewer and fewer Americans reported attending political rallies in the previous election cycle in the last decades of the twentieth century, slightly more Americans reported having signed a petition or attended a demonstration at least once in their lives (Norris 2002: 200-1; Caren, Ghoshal and Ribas 2010: 1, 4)—but at best such data moderate the impression of declining participation. There was no apparent explosion of demands for public participation in the U.S.³

3 The literature provides little reason to think that the share of the public participating in civic affairs has increased since Putnam’s work was completed. For example, Norris (2002) presents evidence that Americans over the period from the late 1960s to 2000 have become less likely to vote (2002: 42); belong to a political party (2002: 110); or report that they have attended a party meeting, worked for a candidate or party, or donated to a party or candidate during the most recent presidential campaign (2002: 117). The literature on other forms of participation is also consistent with a picture of stagnation or decline in the share of the public that is civically engaged. For example, Caren, Ghoshal and Ribas (2010) note that the rise in the percentage of people who report having attended a demonstration at least once in their life is attributable to the rising share of survey respondents who were young adults in the 1960s, rather than to any secular increase in civic participation; and Smith et al. (2009) show that those who engage in political activity on the internet consist mostly of people who already report above average levels of offline civic participation as well—implying that internet-mediated civic participation, while novel, has not much expanded the percentage of the public that participates in politics.

[Figure 1 here]

At the same time, there was an explosion in the supply of *opportunities* for ritualized consultation, as public and private organizations in the U.S. institutionalized various new forms of consultation with the public. A longer time series can help us put the rise of these forms of public consultation in historical perspective. In the absence of survey data or organizational directories covering a sufficiently long period, I rely on a time series of the number of articles mentioning a “public workshop” or a “town hall forum” in the *Los Angeles Times*. Although the data are obviously subject to all of the potential biases of newspaper reporting, the general picture of change over time that this indicator provides is consistent with what scholars have found using other data sources.⁴ Sirianni and Friedland (2001), relying on case studies constructed by a combination of interviews and archival research, date the emergence of public consultation to government agencies in the 1970s, with increasing uptake by nongovernmental organizations in the 1980s and 1990s. Lee and Romano (2010) rely on various interview and documentary sources to date the birth of the “field of professional public engagement facilitation” (2010: 19) roughly to the 1980s. And Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini’s survey of 396 organizations “that plan and run public forums” (2009: 142) found that two thirds of the organizations they were able to identify and survey had been founded since 1980. In short, something changed in the 1970s that began to increase the availability of occasions for public deliberation.

[Figure 2]

⁴I selected these search terms as appropriate indicators of long-run change because—unlike neologisms such as “ChoiceDialogue™” or “stakeholder convening”—they were in use by the early twentieth century to describe assemblies, increasing my confidence that the time series represents changes in the frequency with which such assemblies are mentioned, rather than changes in the words used to describe them. The graph shows the trend in the *number* of articles mentioning public workshops or town hall forums, but the overall picture is the same if we instead examine the *fraction* of Los Angeles Times articles mentioning public workshops or town hall forums.

This, then, is the paradox of participation: certain temporary occasions for the public to consult on civic decisions proliferated, even as the share of the public participating in politics appeared to be on the wane. The paradox is resolved if we shift our attention from *average* civic participation to the increasing *dispersion* of civic participation: the trend is towards participatory inequality, as public officials have come to engage in more intensive consultation with a smaller share of the populace. And to explain this trend, we must shift our attention from the demand for participation in general, the sort of thing indexed by Figure 1, to the supply of opportunities to consult on particular decisions. Under what conditions do organizational elites seek to intensify their consultation with particular segments of the public? In order to answer this question, I offer a fiscal theory of consultation that draws on classic works in the sociology of democratic government. The answer that theory provides, in its briefest form, is that organizational elites may institute new forms of consultation with particular publics when their organizations depend on those publics' willingness to provide material resources.

THE FISCAL SOCIOLOGY OF CONSULTATION

The fiscal theory of consultation presented here is a generalization of the fiscal theory of democratization. The latter draws on the classic tradition of “fiscal sociology” associated with the Austrian scholars Rudolf Goldscheid (1917) and Joseph Schumpeter (1918). These two scholars sought to explain the rise of constitutional democracy as a byproduct of the need for taxation in the competitive state system of early modern Europe. Later scholars refined their theoretical arguments and tested their ideas with comparative data; noteworthy contributions to

the theoretical literature include Bates and Lien (1985), Levi (1989), and Tilly (1992, 2007, 2009). My exposition of the theory draws particularly on the later work of Charles Tilly (2007, 2009), but my generalization of the theory to the case of the new deliberative assemblies is perhaps more in the spirit of Goldscheid and Schumpeter, both of whom went beyond asserting the importance of fiscal policy for understanding the origins of democratic government to hypothesize that the fiscal needs of the state shaped many important features of civil society as well (Goldscheid 1917: 3; Schumpeter 1991 [1918]: 100). In this section I explain how and why the fiscal needs of the state might be relevant to the explanation of the consultation explosion in the late twentieth century U.S., and late twentieth century California in particular.

The fiscal theory of democratization begins with the premise that democracy is best understood as an institutionalized form of consultation between state officials and citizens, where the state is conceptualized in realist terms as a coercion-wielding organization that exists in a field of such organizations (see Tilly 2007). We may define a state more specifically as a compulsory membership organization that successfully claims rule-making priority “over all other users of coercion within a given territory” (Tilly 1992: 44; see Weber 1922), and we may define a citizen as anyone with compulsory membership in that organization.⁵ The problem for a theory of democracy is to explain why officials of any state should bother to consult with its citizens. The answer is not obvious, for at least two reasons. First, because a state is an organization that sets the rules for the use of coercion, discontented citizens have little bargaining leverage in their negotiations with state officials. It is hard to get anything by negotiation when the other party has all the weapons. Second, because membership in the state is compulsory, exit is not usually a viable option for discontented citizens. It is hard to bargain for greater democracy

⁵ For convenience, I do not distinguish between the rights-bearing citizens of a state and the subjects of a ruler.

when you cannot plausibly threaten to go shopping for a more democratic state to live in.

The prospects for democratic government therefore depend on conditions that improve the bargaining position of citizens. One such condition that is particularly important is the state's mode of resource acquisition (Tilly 2007, 2009). States may acquire resources by various means, from plundering neighboring territories to selling scarce natural resources on world markets. But in the long run, state officials have found it most lucrative to define and protect a sphere of private property rights within their territory, and to appropriate for the state only a share of the private resources produced by their subjects (Tilly 2009; Ardant 1965). This mode of resource acquisition, which, following Tilly (2009), I call "extraction," can take the form of temporary labor obligations (such as *corvée* or conscription), or of taxes levied in money or in kind (see Tilly 1992, 2009). What all of these forms of extraction have in common is that they make the state dependent on the productivity of its citizens and thereby improve the bargaining position of the latter.⁶

All of the ways in which states acquire resources may involve conflict, but extraction gives state officials reasons to resolve that conflict peacefully. Citizens may resist the extractive demands of state officials, and in the face of such resistance officials may be tempted to resort to force. But state officials will ordinarily restrain their use of coercion because they need their citizens to remain alive and productive—and perhaps even, to some degree, positively willing (Levi 1989)—if those citizens are to continue supplying the state with taxes or labor services. Dead or jailed citizens are not much use as taxpayers, and a surly, foot-dragging taxpayer is not as productive as a happy one. Conflicts over extraction therefore tend to end in bargained

6 Tilly's analysis of extraction has some interesting formal similarities to the analysis of class exploitation by Wright (1994). The general point that the coercive appropriation of resources can empower the person from whom those resources are taken—and can thereby lend a dynamic quality to the relationship—is at least as old as Hegel's discussion of the master-slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

settlements between state officials and citizens, rather than in total victory for either side (Tilly 2007: 142).

Although the classic treatments of the fiscal theory of democratization emphasized conflicts over resource extraction, nothing in the fiscal theory of democratization assumes that extraction is the only source of conflict between states and citizens. Indeed, the history of contentious interactions between citizens and states is filled with conflicts over language rights, religious freedom, the conditions of labor, and countless other questions. But even when the conflict concerns other issues, as with religious civil wars, the fact that state officials are extracting resources from citizens is often what leads rebellious citizens to direct their ire against the state, rather than against other citizens; and the fact that state officials depend on citizens for resources is what gives state officials an incentive to resolve such conflicts by bargaining a settlement.

The bargain typically goes beyond agreement on a particular division of resources to encompass agreement on rights and duties of consultation over the extraction of additional resources in the future (Tilly 2007: 142). Citizens demand a binding commitment to consult with them in the future because they are interested in security against unpredictable or arbitrary demands. State officials, for their part, often find it advantageous to commit themselves to a future process of consultation because such consultation can reduce the cost of acquiring information about how much extraction citizens will tolerate (Bates and Lien 1985). Early constitutions that formalized the creation of parliaments and competitive elections are classic examples of such bargains (see, e.g., Mann 1985, Ross 2004). But fiscal bargains may also go beyond parchment institutions to include informal institutions whose rules are not codified in any

document. “In relatively democratic regimes, competitive elections certainly give citizens a voice,” Tilly wrote, “but so do lobbying, petitioning, referenda, social movements, and opinion polling” (2007: 13). All of these are examples of routine forms of consultation that might be invented, tolerated, or institutionalized as part of a fiscal bargain.

The fiscal theory of democratization was invented to explain the origins of democratic government, but in the remainder of this section I will argue that the basic logic of the theory suggests that even regimes that are already democratic will continually invent new institutions and procedures for public consultation. There are at least three mechanisms that will tend to generate such continual invention.

The first mechanism is the tendency for citizens' demands to escalate. When state officials strike a fiscal bargain that includes procedural concessions to their citizens, they change the process by which future fiscal bargains will be negotiated. A state may grant voting rights to the majority of its citizens, e.g., as the price of extracting resources from them. But even after state officials have struck this bargain, the need may arise for more resources, and with it the risk of a new round of resistance and bargaining. The resistance of already-enfranchised citizens cannot be calmed by promising them the right to vote: they have it already. Moreover, they may use it to demand and win additional rights of consultation. In short, each new mode of consultation confers additional leverage on citizens. They may use that leverage to extract procedural concessions that include new modes of consultation.

The mechanism of escalating demands is most likely to apply when state officials confront new demands for spending and when they elect to meet those demands with a strategy of *intensive* extraction. By intensive extraction, I refer to an increase in the rate at which state

officials appropriate resources that are already subject to some state claims--e.g., an increase the rate of an existing tax. The alternative is extensive extraction, which refers to the appropriation of new categories of resources to which the state previously laid no claim--e.g., a broadening of the tax base to encompass a new category of property, or the conscription of a previously exempt category of person. Both strategies may provoke resistance. But intensive extraction is especially likely to affect citizens who have been taxed before, and who have already won procedural concessions in prior rounds of resistance and bargaining. Intensive extraction is therefore particularly likely to result in escalating demands for consultation.

Note that the mechanism of escalating demands may exacerbate political inequality. Because canny state officials often target the citizens with the most resources for intensive extraction, any procedural concessions they offer in exchange are likely to be offered first to those citizens who are comparatively economically advantaged. And because the citizens targeted for intensive extraction are precisely those who are most likely to have been granted procedural concessions already in prior rounds of bargaining, their escalating demands for consultation may result in the accretion of political rights by those who are already *politically* advantaged, too. In the long run, the mechanism of escalating demands contributes to the process of democratization. But in the short run, it may actually exacerbate inequalities of political voice—much as the earliest parliaments increased the political rights of the nobility relative to the rights of peasants.

The second mechanism is what I call anticipatory consultation. The interests of state officials in securing a predictable revenue stream may motivate them to invent new forms of consultation. State officials in democratic regimes know that they will need to consult with their

citizens over resources in the future. They will often attempt to acquire intelligence in advance about the bargain they can hope to obtain. In order to get that information, they may be forced to invent or adopt new forms of consultation that allow them to anticipate future bargains. For this purpose they will usually prefer non-binding forms of consultation--hearings, listening sessions, and the like--that provide them with information without limiting their freedom of action.

The third mechanism is information arbitrage. Democratic regimes will continue to incubate new forms of consultation as long as there are opportunities for nongovernmental actors to profit by brokering the exchange of information. State officials and citizens have a shared interest in replacing the costly and unpredictable dialectic of extraction and rebellion with routinized and predictable forms of consultation. But no form of consultation is perfect. Intermediaries who promise new ways to make consultation easier, more informative, and more predictable therefore may be able to insert themselves as brokers between state officials and citizens. Examples of such intermediaries include political parties, interest group lobbies, and public opinion polling firms. By solving a common problem, such intermediaries can make themselves indispensable to state officials and citizens alike. They may thereby reap prestige, material rewards, and power in the form of subtle influence over the public agenda. Often such organizations seek to position themselves as information brokers in order to advance a particular substantive agenda: an interest group lobby, for example, may advance its constituents' interests most effectively by developing a reputation as a credible broker that can supply officials with reliable information about what constituents will tolerate, and constituents with reliable information about what officials will do. Other intermediaries, such as some non-partisan polling and campaign consulting firms, may have no particular substantive agenda beyond seeking for

their own sake the profits, prestige, or power that accrue to information arbitrageurs. The crucial point is simply that those who invent new processes of consultation—and insert themselves into those processes as expert brokers of consultation—may enjoy advantages, and that such advantages create an incentive for innovation.

The three mechanisms of escalation, anticipatory consultation, and information arbitrage may help to explain why the institutions of democratic consultation have generally evolved in a particular sequence. Consider a stylized history of the sequence in which practices of consultation emerged in modern European democracies. The history of such practices in Europe began in the middle ages with sporadic rebellions, and then proceeded to parliaments, followed by the right to petition, then competitive elections, then referenda, then opinion polls, and finally focus groups and the other forms of consultation that I have called the new deliberative assemblies. This sequence does not follow from any technological necessity—in principle, the focus group was as feasible in the time of Charlemagne as it is today—but the sequence has an immanent logic that might be expected from the three mechanisms of escalation, anticipatory consultation, and information arbitrage. Citizens escalated their demands, using one form of consultation to demand the next form of consultation on the list—as when European rebels demanded a parliament, or parliaments demanded that citizens be granted the right to petition, or petitioners asked for the suffrage (see Tilly 2004, 2009). State officials embraced new forms of anticipatory consultation—as when elected officials examined results of a referendum to anticipate how a candidate would do, or read opinion polls to anticipate the results of a referendum, or convened a focus group to help them predict the most favorable wording on an opinion poll. Finally, parties, interest groups, and consulting firms have invented and marketed

new forms of consultation in order to secure positions as mediators between state officials and citizens.

Can this theory account for the consultation explosion in California since the 1970s? The theory does offer reasons to think that any given conflict over state extraction may result in new forms of consultation, but that is not the same as predicting that any given boom in new forms of consultation results from a conflict over extraction. Nothing in the theory suggests that conflicts over state extraction of resources are the only or the most important source of innovation in modes of consultation. If this theory helps to explain the consultation explosion at all, then we should expect to observe a few things about the rise of new deliberative assemblies.

First, if the theory sheds light on this case, then we should expect to find that state officials were central innovators in the new deliberative assemblies, and that conflicts over state resources were the original sites of the recent institutional innovation. This hypothesis need not imply that states are the only organizations to use the new deliberative assemblies. Consider the secret-ballot election: although this mode of consultation is commonly used in the governance of private organizations, for example, the central claim of the fiscal theory of consultation is that this form of consultation originated and diffused globally in the course of conflicts between states and citizens over the public purse. By analogy, we might expect to observe that the new deliberative assemblies received their early impetus from conflicts over extraction of resources. And this prediction is, indeed, consistent with what some scholars have reported about the rise of new deliberative assemblies. Sirianni and Friedland (2001), for example, describe cases in which renaissance of civic participation began with federal mandates for government agencies to solicit public participation, and only later spread to nongovernmental organizations. Jacobs, Cook, and

Delli Carpini (2009) report survey evidence that the state remains a disproportionately influential organization in the field of deliberation. Federal, state and local governments comprise 22% of their sample of organizations that “plan and run public forums” (2009: 147), indicating substantial overrepresentation relative to the share of governments among all organizations.⁷

Second, we should expect to observe that new forms of consultation emerge and spread particularly rapidly in times of fiscal stress. State officials concede new procedural rights of consultation—and create new opportunities for nongovernmental brokers of consultation—when their extractive demands provoke resistance. We should expect to observe these sequences of resistance and new bargaining when states facing fiscal strains attempt to extract resources in excess of whatever customary settlement currently governs their relationship to their citizens.

Third, we should expect such bursts of innovation to be associated particularly with intensive extraction. State officials who intensify their reliance on an existing levy are particularly likely to provoke the resistance of citizens who have resisted before--and who have been empowered by previous forms of consultation. The bargain struck with these citizens is likely to require new kinds of procedural concessions.

Fourth, we should expect to observe path dependence. Initial bargains will be conditional on the content of earlier bargains over rights of consultation. Different states that make similar fiscal demands may therefore yield different forms of consultation, depending on the prior rights

⁷ An exact measure of this overrepresentation is impossible to estimate without more detail about how Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini defined an independent organization for the purposes of their sampling procedure. But as a point of comparison, the Census records 89,527 federal, state, or local governmental units, equivalent to 6 governmental units for every 100 private not-for-profit organizations in the U.S., and 2 governmental units for every 100 private organizations with employees. If one adds the total number of governmental units to the denominator of these ratios, then it is possible to calculate that independent governmental organizations comprise fewer than 6% of all nonprofit or governmental organizations, and fewer than 2% of all public or private organizations with employees. The numerator in these calculations refers to the total of federal, state, and local “governmental units” current as of the 2007 Census of Governments (see U.S. Census Bureau 2010a), and the denominators, representing 2008 and 2006, come from the Urban Institute (2009) and the U.S. Census Bureau (2010b) respectively.

of consultation enjoyed by their citizens.

The following section will show that these expectations are met with a comparative analysis of extraction and consultation in two similar polities, California and New York, over the twentieth century. These are big-spending states with a similar pattern of public expenditure growth over much of the century (see McCubbins and McCubbins 2009). As subnational governments, they have neither the territorial control nor the coercive power of a national state, so their citizens possess substantially more bargaining leverage than in the democratizing contexts emphasized by Tilly (2007). But, as we shall see, these states experienced substantially different patterns of public consultation in the late twentieth century, for reasons that are related to the differing fiscal bargains they struck with their citizens.

EXTRACTION AND CONSULTATION IN CALIFORNIA AND NEW YORK

In the mid-1960s, both California and New York appeared poised for an explosion of consultation. The proliferation of state and local government agencies, and increasing federal mandates to solicit public participation as a condition of receiving federal monies, encouraged officials in both states to seek out new ways of consulting with the public. But then the two polities began to diverge, as illustrated in Figure 4. This graph disaggregates the annual counts of town hall forums and public workshops noticed in the *Los Angeles Times* that were reported in Figure 2, and compares them to the number of notices of the same kinds of deliberative assemblies in the *New York Times* over the same period. The California consultation explosion apparent in Figure 2 was not evident in New York.⁸

⁸ The divergence is just as apparent if we standardize on the number of articles appearing in each paper. The *New*

[Figure 4 here]

The distinctive path of California at the end of the twentieth century reflects a different sequence of fiscal bargains that began almost a century earlier. In the middle years of the nineteenth century, California and New York had depended on general property taxes to finance their public expenditures. In the late nineteenth century, both states confronted demands for rising public expenditures to finance the infrastructure needed for growing and increasingly urban economies (Higgs-Evenson 2003). But public officials chose different strategies for financing those expenditures. Officials in California initially chose the intensive path, increasing the state's prior dependence on the taxation of property. Officials in New York chose an extensive strategy, relieving the property tax burden by enacting new taxes on inheritances, foreign corporations, domestic corporations, stock transfers, mortgages, and liquor sales (Teaford 2002: 52; see Newcomer 1917). By the dawn of the 20th century, it was possible for an observer to note that "California depends almost entirely upon the general property tax for state, county, and municipal revenues" (Plehn 1907: 660), whereas New York "has developed a system of state taxes which makes the state government practically independent of the general property tax" (1907: 756). These divergent strategies of extraction led to different patterns of resistance and bargaining, and thereby ultimately to different patterns of public consultation in general.

The decision of California's officials to intensify the taxation of property provoked resistance from real property owners. Farmers in particular resented the state's general property

York Times was consistently a far larger publication over this period, and reported far fewer deliberative assemblies. The relative shift might reflect a California-specific shift in reporters' biases--perhaps the new deliberative assemblies simply became much more culturally salient to California reporters?--but any such cultural shift would be hard to explain without assuming that there was, in fact, a greater quantitative prevalence of actual assemblies in California. The basic comparative picture is validated by other indicators of innovation in forms of political consultation in this period. Walker's (2009) analysis of the national population of grassroots political consulting firms listed in trade directories since the 1970s, e.g., includes a dummy variable for California firms, because the state is such a statistical outlier in the number of such firms.

tax because they felt it burdened them unfairly (Clemens 1997: 178-9). Although it was nominally a tax on all wealth, owners of financial wealth found it easy to hide their assets or move them across county lines. A farm was a kind of wealth that was hard to hide and therefore easy to tax. State officials calculated that farmers paid 10% of their income in property taxes, in contrast to “persons engaged in manufactures,” who paid an average of 2% (California Commission on Revenue and Taxation 1906: 9).

Farmers blamed this unfair distribution of the tax burden on a lack of democracy. To be sure, most adult male farmers in the state had the right to vote in California elections.⁹ But it was an article of faith among California farmers that the “machine,” a cabal of legislators in the pocket of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, really controlled the state government (Hichborn 1909; see Shefter 1983, Magliari 1989: 466-7). The railroad company was notorious for bribing or coercing local assessors to win favorable tax treatment, and even, when a state agency took over assessment of railroad property in the 1880s, for simply refusing to pay (Hichborn 1909: 228-32; California Commission on Revenue and Taxation 1906: 105-7; Magliari 1989: 465). The Southern Pacific also used its influence in the legislature to block or change regulation and tax bills it opposed. Machine legislators used a combination of deception and procedural legerdemain to get their way even when they were in the minority. They would take advantage of their strategic committee positions to keep a bill bottled up until the last days of the session, then amend it surreptitiously, and attempt to sneak the changes by their colleagues unnoticed in the last-minute rush of legislation (see Hichborn 1909: 37-42).

⁹ The California Constitution of 1879 granted the suffrage to adult male citizens with the exceptions that “no native of China, no idiot, insane person, or person convicted of any infamous crime, and no person hereafter convicted of the embezzlement or misappropriation of public money, shall ever exercise the privileges of an elector in this state” (Article 2, Section 1).

Farmers therefore demanded both tax relief and procedural reforms. The link between extraction and consultation was illustrated vividly for the state's property tax payers in 1909. Years of grassroots agitation by farm organizations “‘whereasing’ and ‘resolving’ on tax reform” had finally persuaded the governor to appoint a tax commission that would recommend a new revenue strategy for the state (Plehn 1911: 86). The commission’s first proposal failed at the ballot in 1908 because urban voters feared that it would simply increase their property taxes further, but a revised proposal, put forward by a reconstituted tax commission, appeared poised to pass in 1909 (Higgins-Evenson 2003: 83). The commission's proposed constitutional amendment would relieve real estate owners of state taxes, and it would impose new taxes on railroad receipts and on the stock issued by banks. The machine was unable to block the bill. But somewhere between the first introduction of the bill and the final vote, an unknown legislator quietly cut three words from the legislative text, turning the proposed tax on railroads’ annual receipts (“gross receipts... for *the year ending* the thirty-first day of December”) into a tax on their daily sales for only one day out of the year (“gross receipts... for the thirty-first day of December”). The change went undetected in the flurry of bills at the end of the legislative session (Plehn 1912: 122). When it was finally discovered, few doubted that the omission was deliberate. San Francisco property owners had to pressure the governor into calling the legislature back into special session in 1910 to undo the damage (1912: 122).

Tax resistance led to new demands for consultation. The finance professor Carl Plehn described an “army of tax reform... manned by over-taxed farmers and real estate owners” (1911: 86) that fanned out through the state. The state’s real estate dealers formed “active campaign societies” that joined forces with the State Grange to support the constitutional amendment

(Plehn 1912: 121) (see Figure 3). In the fall of 1910, voters approved the amendment (with the railroad tax restored) and elected a slate of progressive Republican reformers, led by gubernatorial candidate Hiram Johnson, who pledged to grant the people new rights of binding consultation in the form of the initiative and referendum. The progressives deliberately courted farmers with talk of tax reform and direct democracy, and farm votes were critical to putting the Johnson candidacy over the top (Olin 1966, Rogin 1968: 301-2).

[Figure 3 here]

The election resulted in a new fiscal bargain that included new rights of consultation. The Johnson administration received the support of property tax payers. In exchange, it agreed to tax reforms that would slow future property tax increases, and it established new institutions for consulting voters over future tax increases.

In New York, there was no such bargain struck because state officials did not intensify their extraction of property taxes. Instead they followed an extensive revenue strategy that provoked only scattered and piecemeal resistance. State legislators gradually reduced the burden on property tax payers by enacting a variety of new taxes. They began with a franchise tax on corporations in 1880; a long list of selective taxes followed, most notably an inheritance tax in 1885 and a particularly lucrative liquor tax in 1896 (Newcomer 1917: 59, 63). Each of these taxes provoked resistance and bargaining by the affected constituency—the corporation tax in particular provoked “a great deal of litigation” (1917: 59)—but the gradual division of the tax burden among multiple constituencies over an extended period limited the size of the coalition that formed to protest any given tax.

As long as New York State did not intensify its extraction of property taxes, demands for

intensive consultation did not arouse much enthusiasm at the grass roots. New York farmers were slow to take up the cause of the initiative and referendum (Goebel 2002: 107). Advocates complained in 1909 that the New York State legislature treated their proposal for direct legislation as “a joke” (Schmidt 1989: 254). Comparative evidence suggests that the weakness of agrarian Populism and the strength of traditional patronage party organizations kept initiative and referendum off of the legislative agenda in New York and many other eastern states (Bowler and Donovan 2006; Shefter 1983). New Yorkers might have had a brief window of opportunity to circumvent the legislature and introduce these forms of intensive consultation at the state constitutional convention of 1915, but the rural delegations were dominated by conservative Republicans who “prevented any serious discussion of direct democracy” (Goebel 2002: 108).

In short, because New York did not pursue intensive extraction, it provoked few demands to intensify consultation with existing landowners. State officials addressed resistance to corporation taxes by adopting new forms of occasional and non-binding consultation with corporate interests, including a variety of temporary state commissions and unofficial consultation with pro-corporate “research bureaus” (Higgins-Evenson 2003: 50-51, 929-93). But there was no grand cycle of mass resistance and bargaining, and state officials did not institute broad forms of binding consultation such as the initiative or referendum.

Extraction and consultation in the 1970s

These different fiscal bargains struck in the Progressive Era had important consequences for the subsequent evolution of consultation in California and New York. In the 1960s, growing

public expenses for education, welfare, and local infrastructure again required state and especially local officials to find new strategies for appropriating resources. This time, officials in both California and New York chose intensive strategies of extraction that relied heavily on the property tax, and both states thereby triggered cycles of resistance and bargaining. But the outcome was different because of prior bargains they had struck in the Progressive Era.

In both states, judicial pressure forced legislators to modernize the assessment and collection of property taxes. In California, a major corruption scandal involving many of the state's local assessors prompted the legislature to impose new standards for the assessment of property in 1966. The result was improved measurement of rising property values--and a sudden increase in the pace of tax increases. Homeowners across the state resisted with direct action. Los Angeles homeowners and landlords organized a property tax strike (Lo 1990: 132). Homeowners in the San Francisco Bay Area burned tax assessment notices. And property owners in communities across California demonstrated in tax assessors' offices and demanded that their tax burden be reduced (Martin 2008: 50-57).

California property owners also used the rights of consultation that voters had won in the Progressive Era to secure a new bargain that further increased their rights of consultation. A coalition of Southern California homeowners' associations began circulating a ballot initiative petition to abolish the property tax in 1968. When that petition failed, several competing groups of activists began circulating alternative ballot initiative policies to cut or limit the tax on homes (see Lo 1990, Martin 2008: 91-95, 100-104). In 1978, voters had their choice of two initiatives that would severely cut or limit property taxes. The one that passed—an initiative listed on the ballot as “Proposition 13”—combined a strict limit on property taxation with reforms that further

increased voters' rights of consultation. Local governments could increase certain local taxes only after submitting them to the voters for approval. A statutory initiative in 1986 extended this requirement to all local tax increases, and a constitutional initiative in 1996 sealed the bargain (see Rueben and Cerdán 2003: 9). The result was a settlement that gave citizens new rights to veto state extraction.

In New York, the decision to intensify property taxes also provoked resistance. A 1975 decision of the state's highest court forced the state legislature to impose new rules that standardized the assessment of property. As in California, local officials in New York chose to treat the improved measurement of rising property values as a revenue windfall. As in California, rising property taxes provoked resistance. Farmers and homeowners across New York State organized tax strikes, heckled local assessors, and picketed public agencies demanding property tax relief. They also petitioned for an end to rising property taxes, and they organized protest candidacies in local and state elections (Martin 2008: 118-120, Kuttner 1980: 161-2).

But the New York tax resisters were constrained by their own progressive-era bargain. Unlike their California counterparts, they did not have the right to consult in the form of referendum or initiative. New York State legislators attempted to appease angry taxpayers by increasing the intensity of consultation, but they relied characteristically on the non-binding and explicitly temporary forms of quasi-corporatist consultation that had their roots in the progressive era fight over corporation taxes. The governor and the state legislators appointed several temporary state commissions to deal with different dimensions of the property tax crisis, and the commissioners included representatives from affected interest groups ranging from public schools to real estate lawyers. The Temporary State Commission on the Real Property

Tax, for example, was led by representatives of major New York real estate firms (see Martin 2008: 119).

If New Yorkers had the institution of the statewide ballot initiative in 1978, they probably would have voted for a constitutional bargain like that the Californians had struck. The National Election Study from 1978 showed that 55% of adults in the northeastern U.S. said they were willing to vote for “a measure similar to Proposition 13.”¹⁰ When the Temporary State Commission on the Real Property Tax took taxpayer testimony throughout the summer of 1978, the hearing record quickly filled up with New Yorkers clamoring for their own version of the California bargain. On July 23, a realtor named Philip Pagliarulo submitted testimony calling for “Our Own ‘Proposition 13’.”¹¹ A conservative candidate for state senate appeared before the commission in order to announce his support for “a Proposition 13 type of Constitutional Amendment and a temporary freeze and then reduction of real property tax rates.”¹² The Senior Homeowners’ Association of Spring Valley called for a “1% Maximum Property Tax Amendment to the State Constitution (Proposition 13).”¹³ But New Yorkers did not have access to the initiative, and they did not get a Proposition 13 of their own.

Instead, the fiscal bargain took a different form in New York. In 1980, the legislature relieved the property tax on homes by shifting some of it onto commercial property. The new law included no new institutional arrangements for consulting with the voters on tax increases. Nor did it substantially impair the ability of state officials to raise property taxes in the future

10 The 95% confidence interval is from 50% to 60%. Among New York State respondents, support for “a measure similar to Proposition 13” ran even higher (at 59%), but the National Election Study sample was not designed to be representative at the state level. These statistics are calculated from Miller and National Election Studies (2000).

11 Letter from Philip Pagliarulo, 23 July 1978; Box 1, Folder: Public Hearing 7/27/78 Nassau/Suffolk, NYS-TSC, NYSA.

12 Testimony of Jim Lack, 26 July 1978; Box 1, Folder: Public Hearing 7/27/78 Nassau/Suffolk, NYS-TSC, NYSA.

13 Newsletter of the Senior Homeowners Association, Spring Valley, n.d. (November 1978?), Box 7, Binder: Rockland Hearing, NYS-TSC, NYSA.

(see Martin 2008: 120). In the absence of the threat that taxpayers would veto their actions at the ballot box, public officials and interest groups in New York devoted less effort than their California colleagues to the task of figuring out what exactly the taxpayers would tolerate. Property taxes continued to increase much as before.

In California, meanwhile, the new fiscal bargain triggered processes of anticipatory consultation and information arbitrage—a flurry of invention that culminated in the new deliberative assemblies. State officials, constrained by the new rules of consultation with voters, responded by resorting to additional, anticipatory forms of consultation, chartering frequent opinion polls and other forms of non-binding consultation to figure out what level and kind of taxation voters would tolerate. The rise of the new deliberative assemblies was part of this increase in anticipatory consultation.

It was not just public officials who began to convene deliberative assemblies. The demand for anticipatory consultation created new opportunities for information arbitrage, and a flood of new consulting firms seized the opportunity to insert themselves as brokers between state officials and the citizens of California. Observers of California politics described this as the rise of a grassroots initiative campaign consulting industry, sometimes colorfully called an “initiative-industrial complex,” that took inspiration directly from the campaign for Proposition 13 (Schrag 1998, McCuan et al. 1998). To be sure, such firms had existed in California since the first days of the initiative process (McCuan et al. 1998), but they began to proliferate in the late 1970s (Donovan et al. 2001; see Walker 2009), at least in part because the intense conflicts between California officials and California citizens over resource extraction created an intensive stimulus to the market for their services. The clients of such firms were not only state officials,

but also included client groups dependent on state largess, trade associations concerned about public regulation, and interest groups of all kinds. The portfolio of issues that such firms consulted on, too, went well beyond questions of extraction. But extraction, and taxation in particular, has remained the single most common subject of ballot initiatives since 1978 (cf. Initiative and Referendum Institute 2011), and conflicts over this issue have been critical to the development of a new set of interest arbitrageurs in California.

These new intermediaries in turn have contributed to the invention and diffusion of new deliberative assemblies as one technique among many for facilitating consultation between state officials and citizens. One interview study of California political campaign consultants, for example, found that leading firms in the late 1990s offered their clients an elaborate sequence of increasingly costly modes of anticipatory consultation, beginning with deliberative assemblies in the form of focus groups, in order to inform the crafting of an opinion poll, in order to inform the drafting of an initiative, that only then would be submitted to voters at the ballot box (Donovan et al. 2001: 107-8)—a sequence that dramatically illustrates the historical evolution of forms of consultation in reverse. By the 1990s, the consultation explosion depicted in Figure 4 clearly had begun.

The initiative and the consultation explosion: quantitative evidence

If this historical account is correct, then the increasing use of the ballot initiative in California following the property tax revolt should make a measurable contribution to explaining the quantitative divergence of indicators of public consultation in these two states. To test this

implication, I regressed the number of *Los Angeles Times* articles mentioning deliberative assemblies on the number of initiative measures appearing on the state ballot, as reported by the Initiative and Referendum Institute. I repeated the analysis separately for the count of public workshops and the count of town hall forums. I controlled for the total number of articles in the *Los Angeles Times*, to allow for the possibility that any trend in reporting might simply reflect the variable availability of space in the newspaper. I also controlled for the number of articles mentioning deliberative assemblies of the same kind in the *New York Times*, in order to focus on the divergence between the two states depicted in Figure 3. And I included a control variable for years elapsed since 1900, to proxy for the influence of any unmeasured linear trend variables. I report coefficient estimates from a linear regression with a Prais-Winsten transformation to correct for serially autocorrelated errors.¹⁴ The regression results, reported in Table 1, confirm that increasing use of the ballot initiative went hand in hand with increasing use of consultation via deliberative assemblies.

[Table 1 here]

The results are consistent with the historical argument presented here that the property tax revolt--or something that coincided in time with the property tax revolt--really was critical in setting California on a different path from New York. Models 2 and 4 test whether the association between direct democracy and consultation was greater after 1978, when state officials in California had increasingly to worry about securing public approval for any new

¹⁴ The finding of a positive and significant correlation between initiatives and town hall forums is robust to a variety of other modeling strategies that ignore the time-series properties of the data (including a linear model estimated by ordinary least squares and a negative binomial model estimated by maximum likelihood). The finding of a positive and significant correlation between initiatives and public workshops, by contrast, is sensitive to the assumptions made about serial autocorrelation. This is to be expected, since the latter time series exhibits more serial autocorrelation. A Durbin-Watson test after an ordinary least squares regression indicated the presence of serially autocorrelated errors, so the Prais-Winsten specification is preferred. I also tested the hypotheses that unit roots were present in each time series, and failed to reject the null hypotheses of no unit root at $p < .05$ in both cases.

expenses of government. These models estimated an interaction between ballot initiatives and time by estimating separate slope coefficients for ballot initiatives in years 1901-1978 and in years 1979-2000. The model also introduced a dummy variable for the post-1978 period to control for any unmeasured difference between the periods. Splitting the time period in this way improved the fit of the regression models. The difference across periods was dramatic. Ballot initiatives until 1978 were virtually uncorrelated with the number of deliberative assemblies. After 1978, they were strongly correlated with the number of deliberative assemblies. The results reported in Table 1 imply that in the post-1978 period, we might expect at least one additional town hall forum and six additional public workshops a year to be noticed in the *Los Angeles Times*—and more in years with ballot initiatives, at the rate of one additional town hall forum and two additional public workshops for every seven new ballot initiatives.

In short, the rise in new deliberative assemblies was part of a general increase in intensive consultation between state officials and citizens, and this general increase was associated with a period of fiscal conflict.

THE GREAT CONSULTATION AND THE FISCAL THEORY OF DEMOCRATIZATION

The Great Consultation, then, had its origins in the sequence of fiscal bargains struck over the course of the 20th century. Organizations such as California Forward, many of them organized with the participation of current or former state officials, hired grassroots consulting firms to convene deliberative assemblies because they wanted to gather information about public preferences that would allow them to craft legislative proposals that would stand a chance of

winning enough votes to pass at the ballot box. The new deliberative assemblies took their place alongside a profusion of older forms of consultation, including opinion polls and referendums—indeed, the Great Consultation took the form it did precisely because state officials and interest groups hoped that consultation with new deliberative assemblies would help them anticipate the outcomes of these older forms of consultation. It is not surprising that officials and interest groups should wish to test out their messaging in a series of small dialogue sessions, for example, before they sink resources into an opinion poll for a referendum campaign that might go down to defeat. They had to resort to such anticipatory consultation because of a history of citizens' resistance to state extraction, and in particular, because of property tax revolts in 1910 and 1978 that expanded citizens' rights to binding consultation.

What are the implications of this account for the governance of California in the twenty-first century? It is too much to hope that the Great Consultation will deliver civic salvation. But the rise of the new deliberative assemblies may indeed smooth the process of fiscal bargaining, by allowing public officials to calibrate their fiscal demands more carefully to the political tolerance of the citizenry. It is striking, for example, that no movement of resistance like the property tax revolt has occurred in California since 1978, despite continued, acute fiscal strain; and the invention of the new deliberative assemblies may help us to explain how the dialectic of extraction and rebellion has been avoided. It would appear that public officials and information arbitrageurs rely on new deliberative assemblies in part because such assemblies do, in fact, help them to resolve conflicts pre-emptively.

So much for the process of negotiation. But what implications might this change in the form of consultation have for the *substance* of the fiscal bargain? In very general terms, the fiscal

theory of consultation suggests that we should expect the content of any fiscal bargain to be driven by fiscal exigencies rather than ideological commitments. Thus, given the substantial increase in economic inequality in California since the 1970s, we should probably expect future rounds of fiscal bargaining in California to take place between public officials and economically privileged groups. Public officials who are strapped for resources will attempt to extract those resources disproportionately from their high-income and high-wealth citizens, not because these officials are ideologically committed to progressive taxation, but instead out of necessity—because that is where the money is. But if the fiscal theory of consultation is correct, we may predict that the state will not get that money without making procedural concessions to high-income and high-wealth citizens, potentially including increased rights of consultation. Solving California’s fiscal crisis, in other words, may require elite negotiations that exacerbate inequalities of political voice in the short run.

To be sure, California is not a representative or typical state. It is probably an influential state, however, in part because it is an innovative state in the practice of consultation, and such innovations have a tendency to spread. It is also an instructive case study because of its implications for the study of consultation and deliberation more generally.

One such implication concerns the promise of a state-centered account of the changing practices of consultation. Many classics of political sociology attempted to explain the rise and fall of democratic governments by generalizing from nongovernmental organizations such as political parties (Michels 1959 [1915]) or trade unions (Lipset and Trow 1956). The pioneering scholars of fiscal sociology would reject this style of generalization. States are sufficiently unlike nongovernmental organizations in relevant respects that it is invalid to generalize from the

conditions that make for democratic organizations to the conditions that make for democratic states. Indeed, the distinctive qualities of states make them sufficiently influential that for some purposes it is more useful to reverse the lens, and to inquire about the causes of democracy in nongovernmental organizations by studying the causes of democracy in states. Rudolf Goldscheid, who was one of the founders of the German Sociological Society, went so far as to assert that “sociology that is not oriented towards public finance and fiscal history must remain in an incomplete [lückenhaft] and unsatisfactory condition” (1917: 3). His injunction to attend to fiscal history is not good advice for understanding every subject in sociology, but it is probably good advice for understanding this one. Nongovernmental organizations that practice consultation are typically structured by their participation in a political field in which states, and the fiscal needs of states, are central. When nongovernmental organizations take up new forms of consultation—the election, the deliberative assembly, and so on—they are often simply taking up practices that were invented for the purpose of fiscal consultation between states and citizens.

Another implication concerns the theory of democracy more generally. Are the new deliberative assemblies a grassroots revival of participatory democratic ideals, or a retreat from formal democratic norms of equality? If we wish to *evaluate* the assemblies, the question is inescapable. But if we wish to *explain* the assemblies, the question presents us with a false opposition, since democratic and undemocratic forms of consultation may arise from similar causes. Every actually existing polity that we call a “democracy” is a congeries of institutionalized practices whose relationship to the ideal of rule by the *demos* is tenuous, approximate, and contested. The history of any such polity is not one-dimensional tug of war between democratic and anti-democratic ideals. It is a history of conflicts and accommodations

between real social groups, in which the disposition of shared resources is at stake, and in the course of which conflicts the very modes of negotiation are continually invented and reinvented. The new deliberative assemblies are one such mode of negotiation. They take their place in this history as a technique of consultation that arose and became institutionalized for some of the same reasons as the other techniques—elections, opinion polls, petitions and parade permits—that we have come to identify with actually existing democracies. The new deliberative assemblies are not the last such invention we will see.

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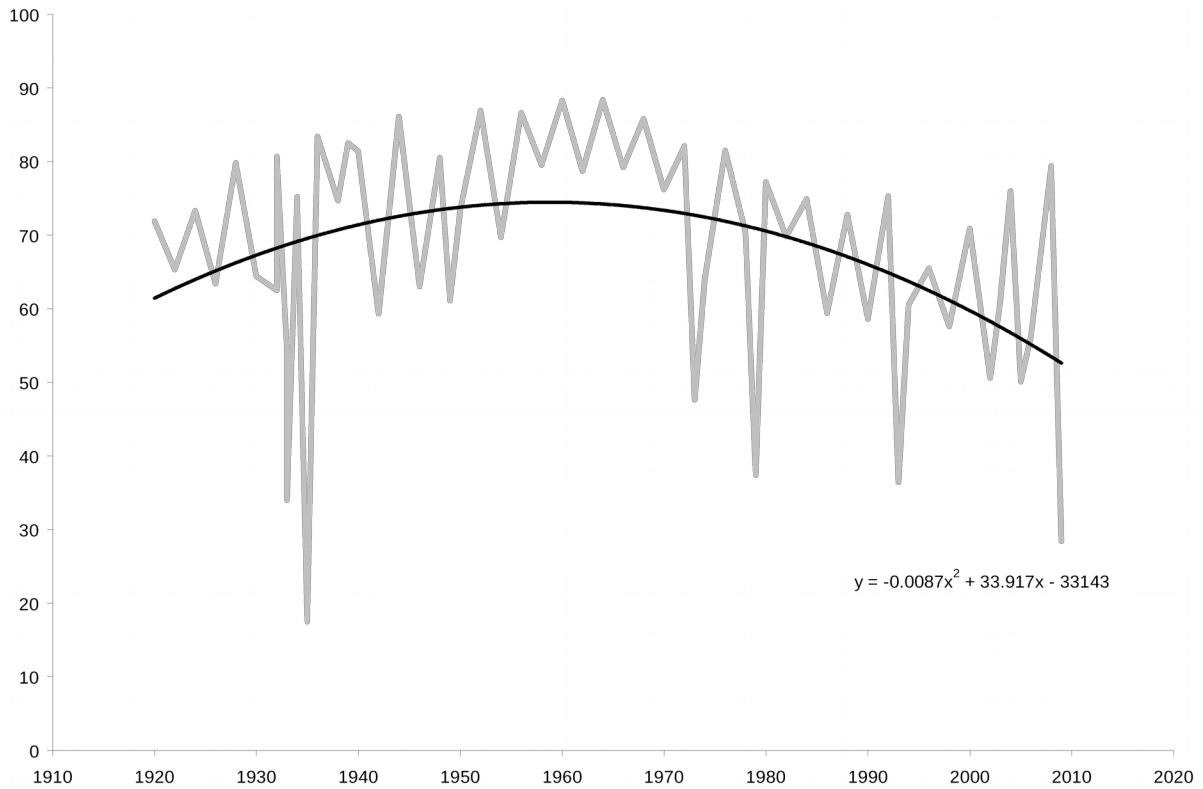
Table 1.

The consultation explosion and the ballot initiative in California, 1901-2000:
Results from time-series regression models

	<i>Public workshop</i>		<i>Town hall forum</i>	
Intercept	-3.4 (2.6)	-1.1 (2.5)	-1.7 (.52)	-1.05 (.56)
Years since 1900	.10 (.045)	.026 (.049)	.042 (.012)	.024 (.014)
<i>LAT</i> articles, in 1,000s	.015 (.011)	.020 (.011)	.011 (.0072)	.011 (.0070)
Mentions in <i>NYT</i>	-.58 (.25)	-.64 (.23)	-.046 (.29)	.025 (.29)
Initiatives on the ballot				
...all years	.16 (.051)10 (.042)	...
...1901 through 1978	...	-.013 (.068)018 (.060)
...1978 through 200030 (.06)15 (.058)
After 1978? (=1 if yes)	...	6.2 (2.6)	...	1.2 (.84)
P	.78	.78	.22	.20
R ²	0.19	0.32	0.36	0.42

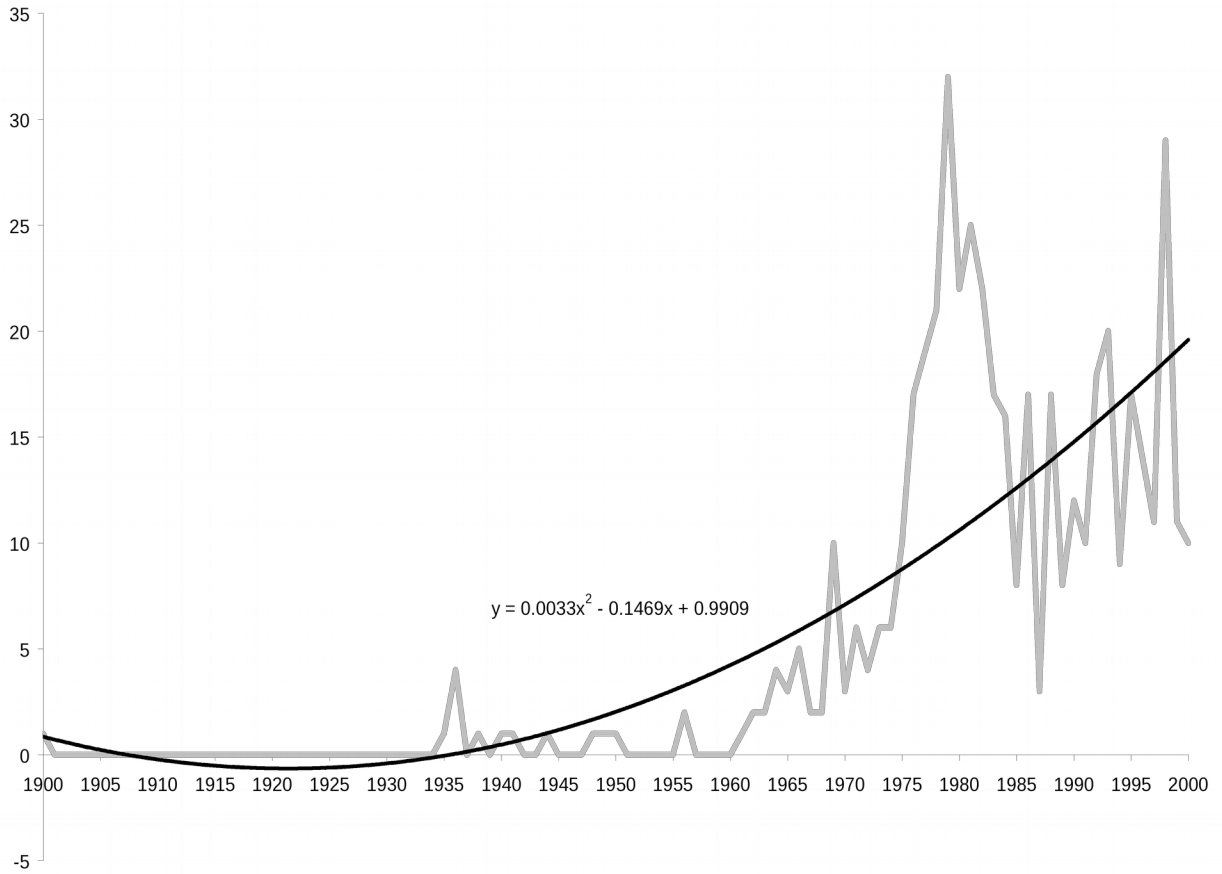
The dependent variables are annual counts of articles in the *Los Angeles Times* mentioning the phrases “public workshop” and “town hall forum.” The reported coefficients are from linear regression models with Prais-Winsten corrections for serially autocorrelated residuals. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Figure 1.
The falling demand for participation: Votes cast as a percentage of all registered voters in California elections, 1912 to 2009



Source: Calculated from data in California Secretary of State (2010)

Figure 2. The increase in opportunities to be consulted: Number of articles mentioning “public workshop” or “town hall forum” in the *Los Angeles Times*, 1901 to 2000



Source: Author’s calculations from ProQuest *Historical Los Angeles Times* database.

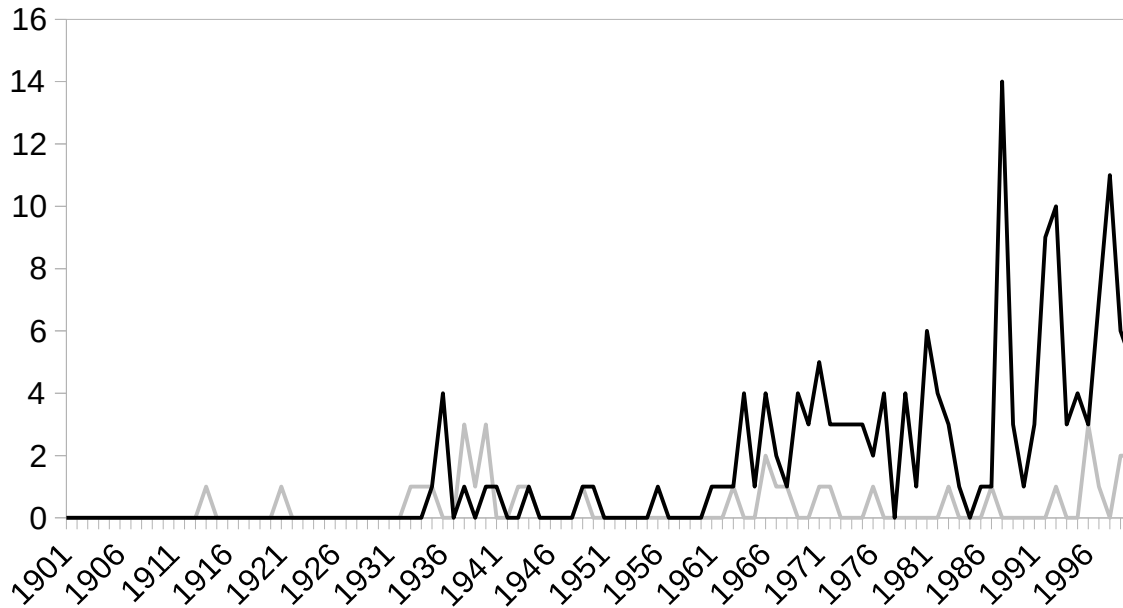
Figure 3. Button from the grassroots campaign for tax reform, 1910



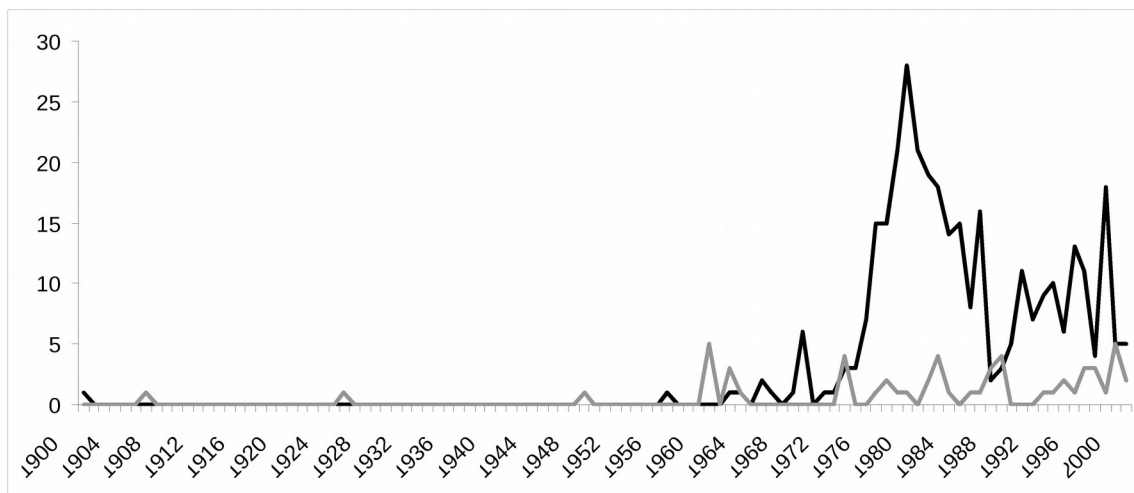
Source: Plehn (1911: 82)

Figure 4. Consultation in California and New York:
 Number of articles mentioning “public workshop” or “town hall forum” in the *Los Angeles Times* (black) and the *New York Times* (gray)

a. town hall forum



b. public workshop



Source: Author’s calculations from ProQuest *Historical New York Times* and *Historical Los Angeles Times* databases.