



Democratic Illusion: Deliberative Democracy in Canadian Public Policy (Studies in Comparative Political Economy and Public Policy)

Genevieve Fuji-Johnson

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The theory of deliberative democracy promotes the creation of systems of governance in which citizens actively exchange ideas, engage in debate, and create laws that are responsive to their interests and aspirations. While deliberative processes are being adopted in an increasing number of cases, decision-making power remains mostly in the hands of traditional elites.

In *Democratic Illusion*, Genevieve Fuji Johnson examines four representative examples: participatory budgeting in the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, Deliberative Polling by Nova Scotia Power Incorporated, a national consultation process by the Canadian Nuclear Waste Management Organization, and public consultations embedded in the development of official languages policies in Nunavut. In each case, measures that appeared to empower the public failed to challenge the status quo approach to either formulating or implementing policy.

Illuminating a critical gap between deliberative democratic theory and its applications, this timely and important study shows what needs to be done to ensure deliberative processes offer more than the illusion of democracy.

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