

## Notes from Dr. Oliver Escobar discussion 7/08/2014

These are the main points that were raised and discussed

- Biggest barrier - rethinking our understanding of democracy.
- Apathy – apathy among the general population is about processes *not* about issues
- Trust - apathy results from raising public expectations and then dashing them.
- Participative democracy no longer fit for purpose... don't get rid of it. Change it. Reshape it to allow evidence ideas and questions to flourish and not be held hostage. Citizens must be able to bring things to the policy arena.
- Anyone looking at parliamentary exchanges and any other exchange in political system and being told that was representative democracy would feel excluded from the process
- Trade unions: reps used to collect trade union dues every week and cld discuss issues with personal connection. Do they still play that role? No. Now there is tension between elitism and members.. leaders buy into elitism, so how do we create institutions where informed deliberation can take place?
- Communication. Debate about teaching people how to articulate their needs may be an issue, but we also need to learn how to listen.
- Language is key. It is marker of power. We use it include or exclude.. academics.. etc all use it assert their expertise. Has anyone ever read a planning application?
- Participative democracy is not about surveys and opinion polls and focus groups. Big difference between those kind of opinion-seeking activities and giving people responsibility to make decisions. At core is that it is no longer enough to let people join in conversation.. they have to take responsibilities... .. people making decisions.. .. then get those decisions before parliament
- People need a greater choice than to be merely a bystander or complainer
- Some debate about how best to give people responsibility. OE argues that we need to remove barriers to understanding.
- Responsibility isn't enough on its own. People need a learning phase so that they have an understanding of issues. They also need to interact

with others about the issues, for there to be discussion and an exchange of views.

- There is a need for facilitators to be trained properly. Expert facilitation skills are crucial to enabling these democratic discussions to work for everyone involved.