

Fueling the Civic Imagination: *Exercising the Values of Democratic Civic Engagement in Assessment Work*

Erica Kohl-Arenas, Director, Imagining America, UC Davis

Timothy K. Eatman, Past Co-Director, Imagining America; Inaugural Dean, Honor's Living Learning Community, Rutgers University, Newark

Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship [APPS] Research Group

Group Representatives today: **Julia Metzker, Mary F. Price, & Anna S. Bartel**



Where are we now?
Where are we going?



Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship [APPS]

Who we are:

- ❑ Transdisciplinary research group within Imagining America
- ❑ Over our history, blend of community arts practitioners, academics, students and practitioners

What we do:

- ❑ Promote assessment that realizes the values and transformative potential of community engagement.

Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship [APPS]:

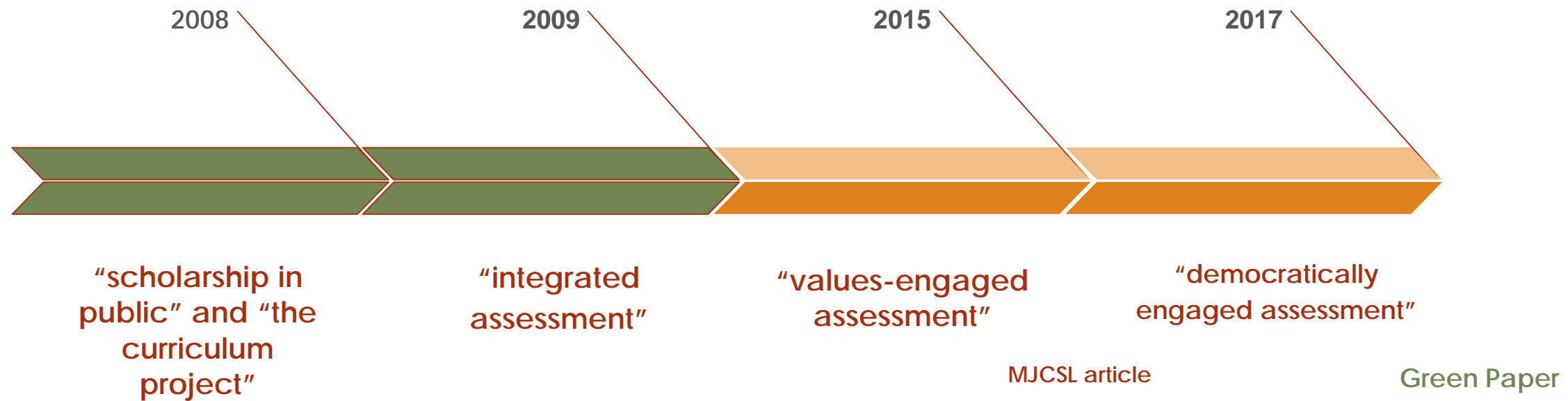


VEA—DEA Timeline

APPS Values

Full Participation
Co-creation
Generativity

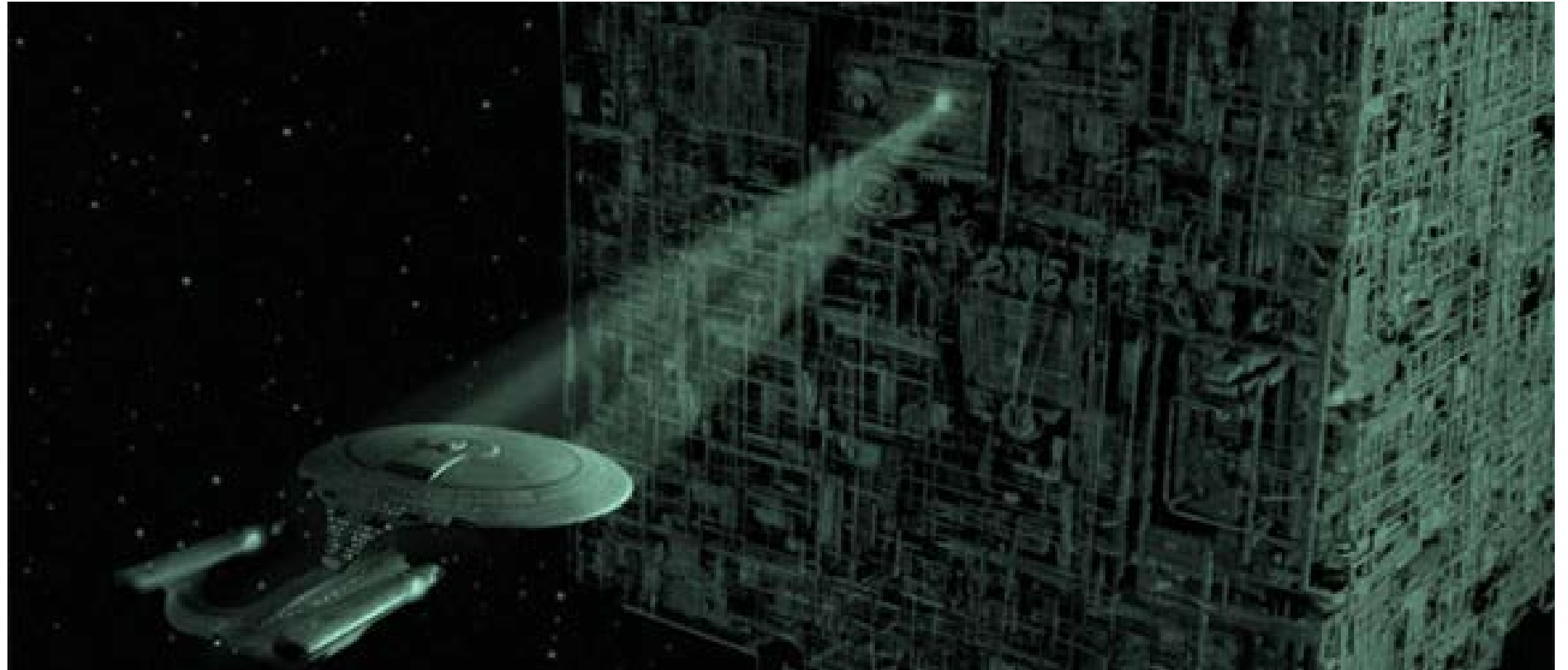
Rigor [intellectual and ethical]
Practicability
Resilience



Bandy, J., Bartel, A.S., Clayton, P. H., Gale, S., Mack, H., Metzker, J., ... & Stanlick, S. (2017). Values-Engaged Assessment: Reimagining Assessment through the Lens of Democratic Engagement. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 23(1). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mjcsloa.3239521.0023.110>



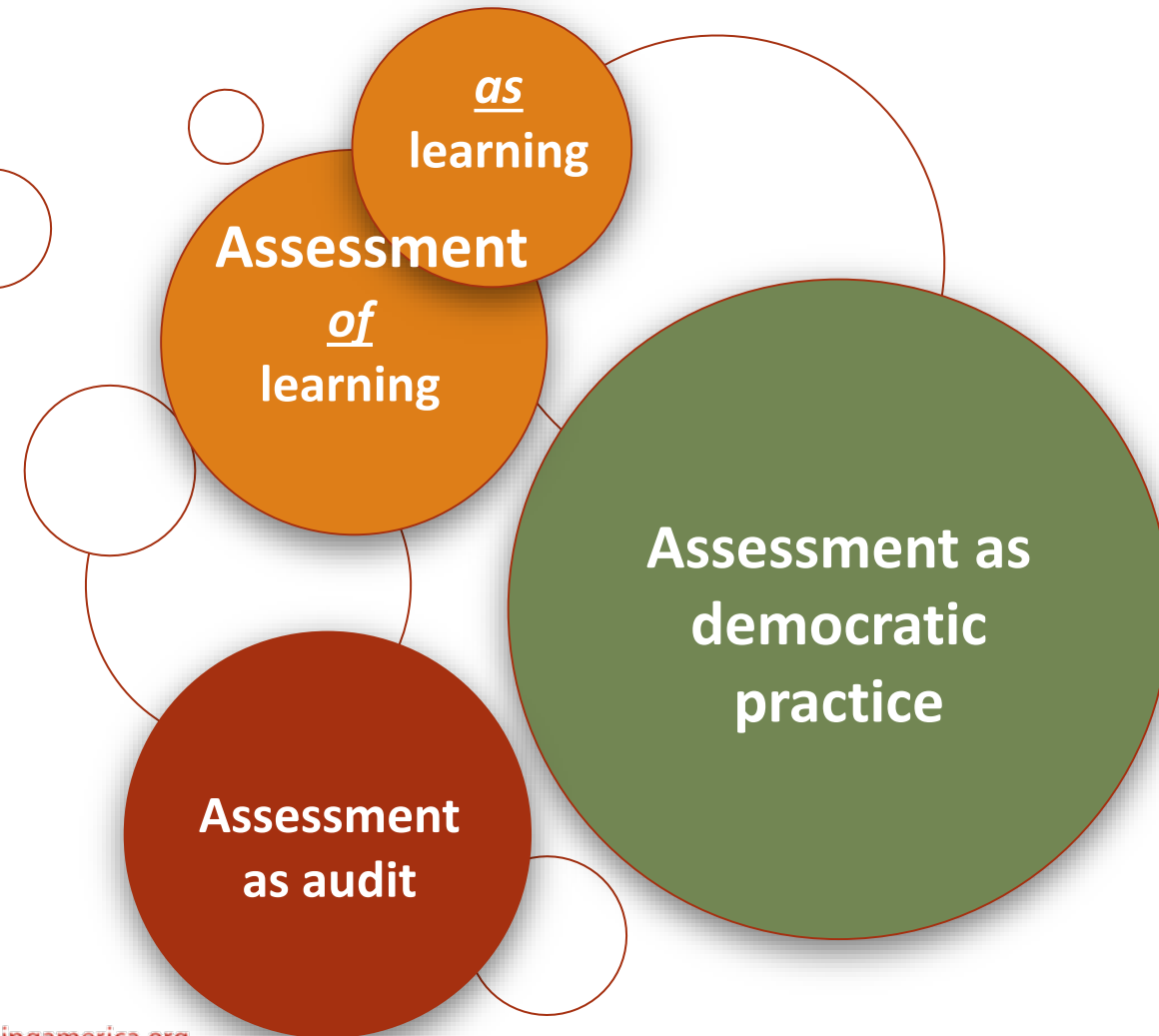
In your galaxy, who owns assessment?



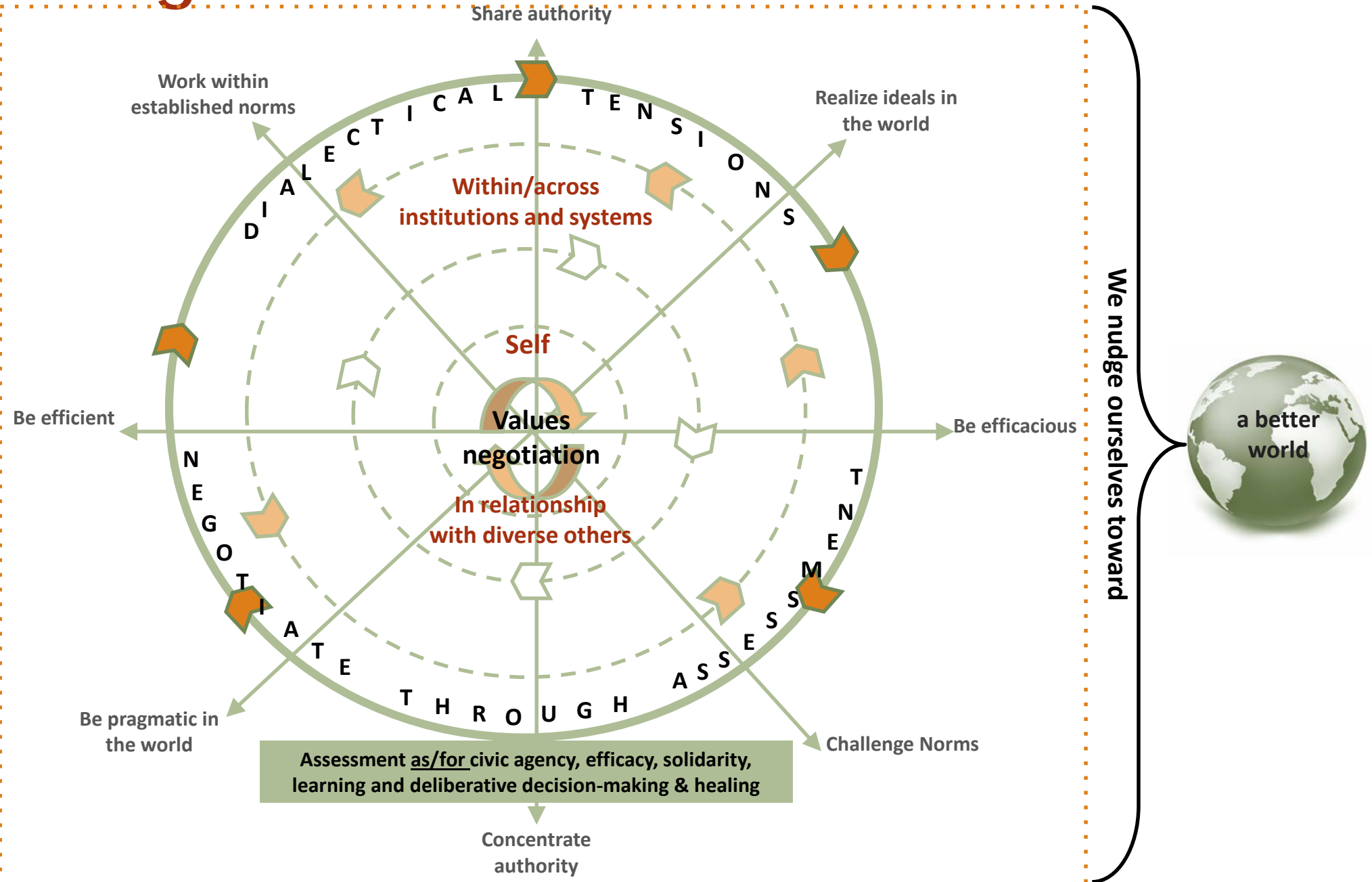
Resisting the “Shutdown” ...and reclaiming assessment

Reclaiming assessment

- ❑ more than technique--it's socio-cultural practice
- ❑ operates across communities of practice
- ❑ Practice of SLCE spans multiple assessment CoPs simultaneously
- ❑ "values" variably understood, contested & enacted
- ❑ recognizing these forces at play in your own work is first step to reclaiming power/agency.



Reclaiming assessment: an act of resistance?





Imagine

“Assessment is...

“a laboratory to fuel
the **civic imagination.**”





APPS' Evolving Response: *Democratically Engaged Assessment [DEA]*

- Assessment is always undergirded by values.
- Most important to ask “**which values?**” and “**who determines them?**”
- Do we **default to** a set of values, let ourselves **be pressured into alignment** with others’ values, or **deliberately choose** the values that guide our assessment.





How we commitment to democratic engagement...

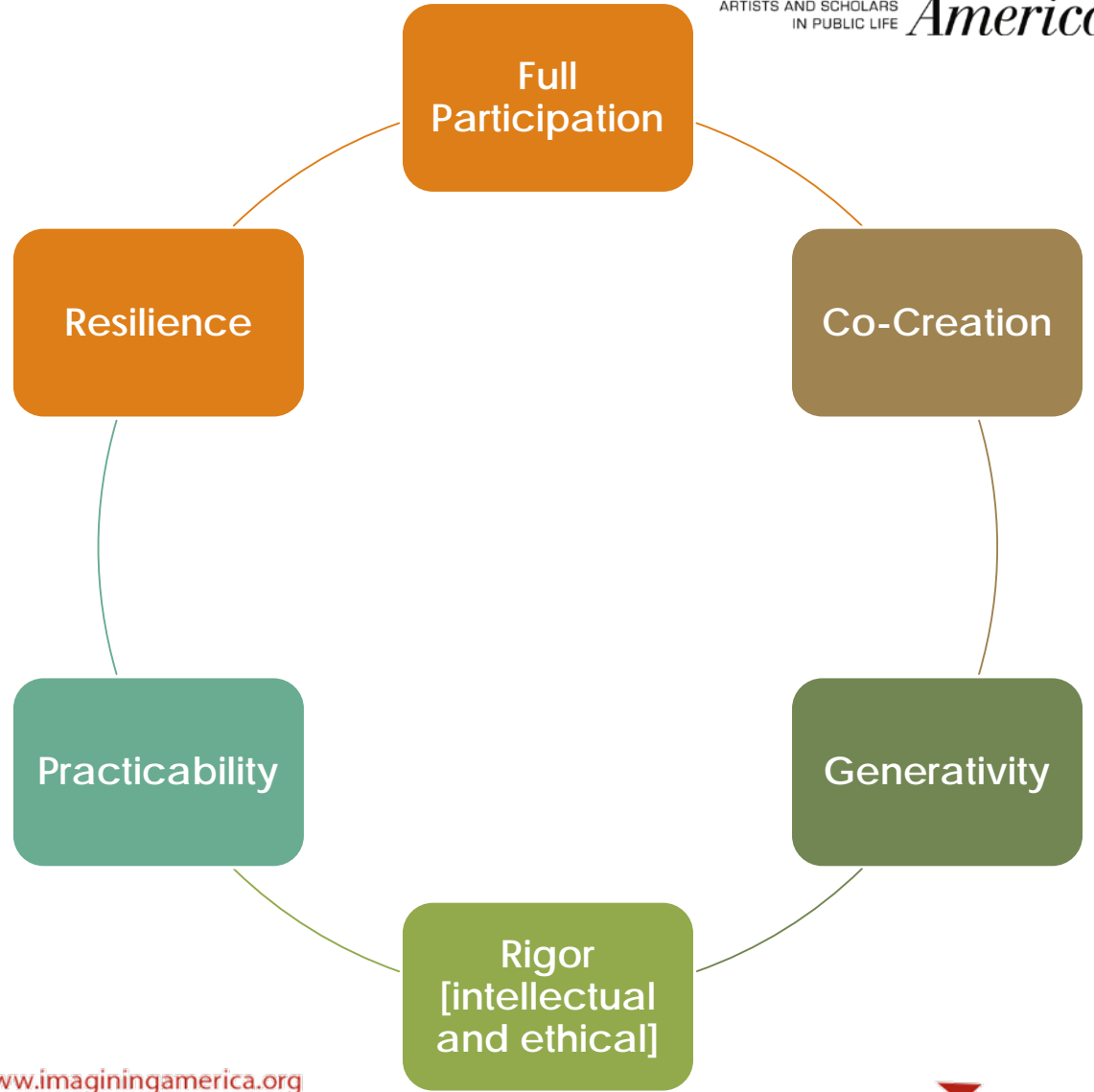
Table 1: Commitments of Democratic Engagement

With (not merely <i>in, on, to, for</i>)
Asset-based (not merely needs-based)
Multi-directional flow of ideas and questions within a web of knowledge centers
Collaborations that involve not merely transactional exchanges but that are potentially transformative (of self, others, organization/institutions, systems, paradigms)
Co-roles / powershift / disruptions of hierarchy – all partners positioned as co-creators





Selected values negotiated in DEA





“Imagining” full participation



**What
would/does it
look like to
enact “full
participation” in
your assessment
work?**

.....





Wrestling with “Rigor” as a value



Constraining Notions of Rigor	Democratic Notions of Rigor
Rigor mortis, static	Does not assume limits
Gatekeeping term with a purpose to exclude those without research expertise. Includes some types of knowledge and omits others. Epistemically unjust.	Includes multiple knowledges/diverse voices. Epistemically inclusive and just.
Code for not listening; devaluing relational knowledge.	Can bring stakeholders together to listen, respect one another
Assumes a hierarchy of knowledge creation. Privileges expert knowledge.	Encourages conversation, dialogue between local and expert knowledge
Valuing only things you can count (quantitative methods)	Values multiple methods, forms of data
Assumes objectivity	Questions objectivity
Assumes there is one right way	Questions assumptions
Someone else’s framework (administrators, donors, public relations). Rigged!	Framework co-created by stakeholders
	Offers protection from skeptics, critics
	Encourages concentration, intentionality, ambition, and thorough-mindedness
	Ethical reflection



Negotiating & Enacting Values in DEA

People

- Whose values guide the project?
- What role(s) do I play in this project?
- Who decides?

Processes

- Who's included and excluded?
- How are they involved?
- When?
- Who decides?

Purposes

- Why do we do assessment?
- Who decides?

Products & Evidence

- What counts?
- What has value?
- Who decides?
- How to harvest what can't be counted?
- Alignment with values?





Reclaiming values in your own assessment work

- What resonates with you in this idea?
- What possibilities does it offer ?
- What questions do you have?
- What do you want to take home and try?
- What's one practice you would change?



Contact Information

Julia Metzker, Executive Director
Brown Center for Faculty
Innovation and Excellence at
Stetson University
jmetzker@stetson.edu

Mary F. Price, Director of Faculty
Development
IUPUI Center for Service and
Learning
price6@iupui.edu

Anna Sims Bartel, Assoc. Director
Office of Engagement Initiatives
Cornell University
aws4@cornell.edu

Sylvia Gale, Director
Bonner Center for Civic
Engagement, University of
Richmond
sgale@richmond.edu