

Deliberative Democracy and Public Hearings during Canadian Electoral Redistribution

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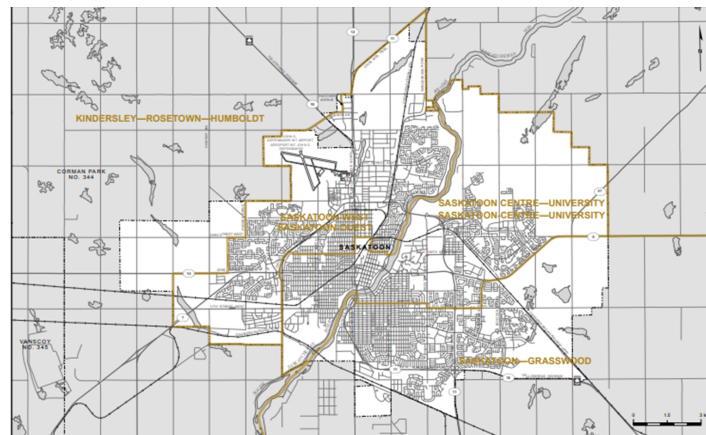
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Beginning in the 1990s, democratic theory took a ‘deliberative turn’ during which democratic theorists hailed benefits of deliberation and, on the basis of those benefits, advocated for its expanded incorporation into instances of public participation. This movement occurred thirty years after the reform of the Canadian electoral redistribution system (1964) - which marked the first time that public participation was incorporated into the re-drawing of electoral districts in Canada. This thesis seeks to define the most prominent structural and internal features of deliberation and explore how, if at all, these features exist in practice within the participatory stages of the Canadian electoral redistribution process. Specifically, it examines the written submissions and formal set-up of the public hearings in Saskatchewan in 2012 by qualitative coding and subsequent analysis. I argue that public participation in Canadian redistribution is best described as solely participatory when public hearings are analyzed as discrete forums. Within the larger context of the entire redistribution process, however, public participation can be seen as one element of a much larger deliberative system.

Keywords: deliberative democracy, political theory, public participation, electoral redistribution

Proposed Riding Borders of Saskatoon in 2011



(Source: Elections Canada, Redistribution Canada)