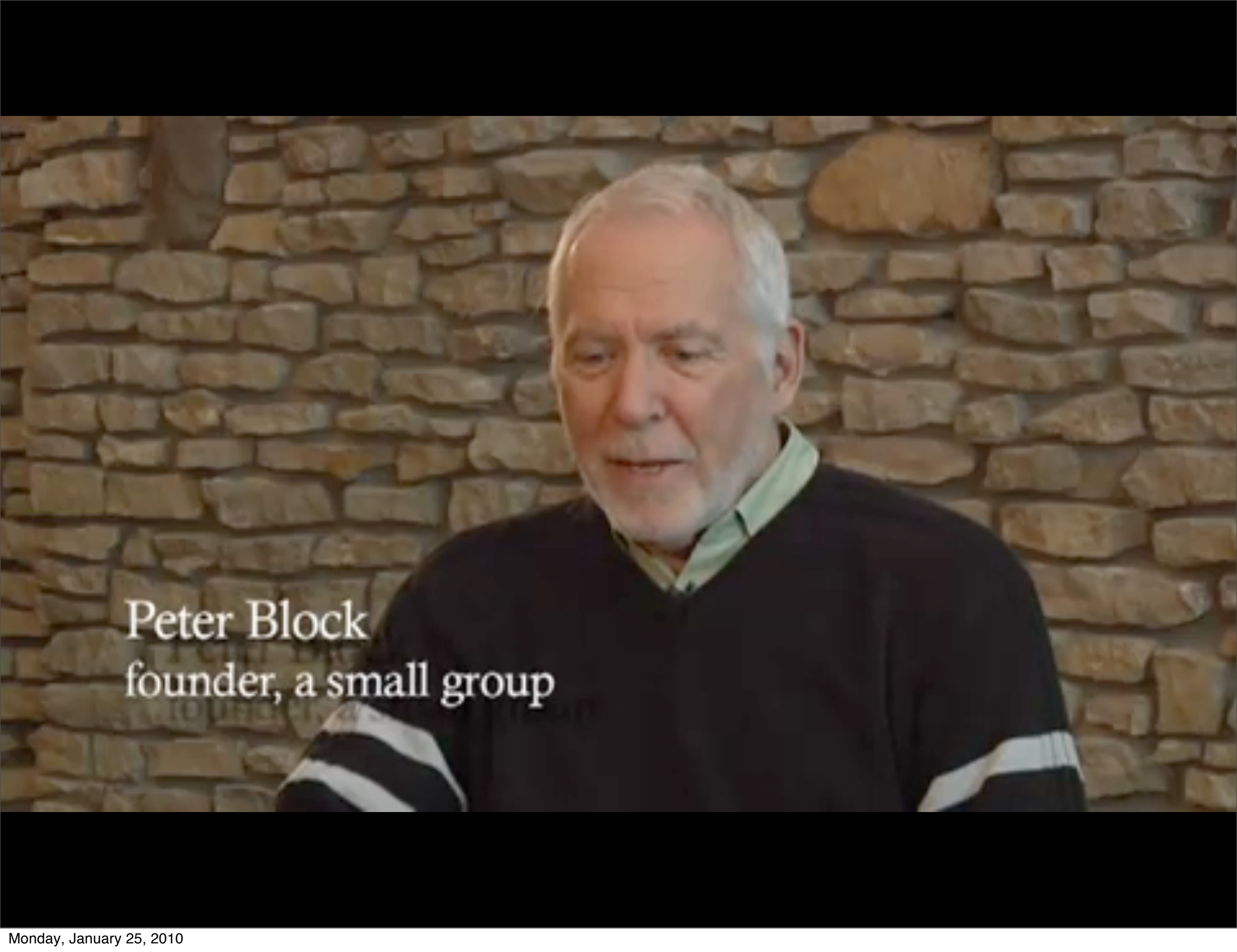


Community

Peter Block

A middle-aged man with white hair, Peter Block, is shown from the chest up. He is wearing a dark blue sweater with white stripes on the sleeves over a light green collared shirt. He is looking slightly down and to his left, with a thoughtful expression. The background is a rustic stone wall with irregular, light-colored stones.

Peter Block
founder, a small group

Accountability and Commitment

Our intention is to create
the possibility of an
alternative future by
creating a public
conversation based on
communal **accountability**
and **commitment**.

The dominant existing public conversation is retributive, not restorative. It is void of **accountability** and soft on **commitment**.

In this way it drives us apart, it does not bring us together. The existing conversation is about entitlement, not accountability.

To be **accountable**, among other things, means you act as an owner and part creator of whatever it is that you wish to improve. In the absence of this, you are in the position of effect, not cause; a powerless stance.

To be **committed** means you are willing to make a promise with no expectation of return; a promise void of barter and not conditional on another's action.

In the absence of this, you are constantly in the position of reacting to the choices of others. The cost of constantly reacting is increased cynicism.

What is
Action?

What is Action?

The real intent of civic engagement is to shift the context within which traditional problem solving, investment, and social and community action takes place. It is aimed at the restoration of the experience and vitality of community.

What is Action?

It is this shift in context, expressed through a shift in language, that creates the condition where traditional forms of action can make a difference.

Change the Question

Change the Question

It is the shift in public conversation that constitutes transforming action.

Change the Question

Questions we ask that have little power to create alternative futures:

How do we hold those people accountable?

Change the Question

Questions we ask that have little power to create alternative futures:

How do we get people to show up and be committed?

Change the Question

Questions we ask that have little power to create alternative futures:

How do we get others to be more responsible?

Change the Question

Questions we ask that have little power to create alternative futures:

How do we get people on-board and doing the right thing?

Change the Question

Questions we ask that have little power to create alternative futures:

How do we get others to buy into our vision?

Change the Question

Questions we ask that have little power to create alternative futures:

How do we get those people to change?

Change the Question

Questions we ask that have little power to create alternative futures:

How much will it cost and where do we get the money?

Change the Question

Questions we ask that have little power to create alternative futures:

How do we negotiate for something better?

Change the Question

Questions we ask that have little power to create alternative futures:

What new policy or legislation will move our interests forward?

Change the Question

Questions we ask that have little power to create alternative futures:

Where is it working? Who has solved this elsewhere and how do we import that knowledge?

Change the Question

Answering these questions supports the belief that an alternative future can be mandated, negotiated and controlled into existence.

Change the Question

They are the cause of the very thing we are trying to shift: the fragmented and retributive nature of our communities.

Leadership

Leadership

Leaders provide the means or architecture for gathering people in a way that will build communities in which citizens will choose accountability and commitment.

Leadership

Leaders produce engagement in a way that creates accountability, which is to care for the well being of the whole and commitment, which is to make and fulfill a promise without expectation of return.

Change Your Thinking

Change Your Thinking

Shifting our thinking creates a condition where where a shift in the world becomes possible.

Change Your Thinking

The shift is an inversion. Thinking of ourselves as effect to thinking of ourselves as cause is the primary act of inversion. This is the point upon which accountability revolves.

Change Your Thinking

Examples of inversion thinking:

The audience creates the performance.

Change Your Thinking

Examples of inversion thinking:

The subordinate creates the boss.

Change Your Thinking

Examples of inversion thinking:

The child creates the parent.

Change Your Thinking

Examples of inversion thinking:

The citizen creates the leadership.

Change Your Thinking

Examples of inversion thinking:

Problem solving occurs to build relatedness.

Change Your Thinking

Examples of inversion thinking:

A building and its rooms are created by how it is occupied.

Change Your Thinking

Examples of inversion thinking:

The student creates the teacher.

Change Your Thinking

Examples of inversion thinking:

The future creates the present.

Change Your Thinking

Examples of inversion thinking:

The listening creates the speaker.

Change Your Thinking

Examples of inversion thinking:

The openness to learn creates the teaching.

Change Your Thinking

Doesn't matter whether inverted thinking is true.

Change Your Thinking

It's which system of thinking is most useful and gives us more power.

Change the Conversation

Change the Conversation

Certain conversations are satisfying and true yet have no power and no accountability. For example:

- Telling the history of how we got here
- Giving explanations and opinions
- Blaming and complaining
- Making reports and descriptions
- Carefully defining terms and conditions

Change the Conversation

Conversational shifts that are other than just talk:

- Invitation replaces mandate, policy and alignment
- Possibility replaces problem solving
- Ownership and cause replace explanation and denial
- Dissent and Refusal replace resignation and lip service
- Commitment replaces hedge and barter
- Gifts replace deficiencies

The Six Conversations

One: The Invitation

The elements of invitation are:

- *Naming the possibility*
- *Who needs to be in the room*
- *Attendance is a choice*
- *What hurdle is required should they choose to attend*
- *A strong request to attend*
- *Picking the form of the invitation*
- *What can we create together that we can not create alone?*

Two: Possibilities

A declaration of the possibility we stand for. Distinct from problem statements.

Individual Questions:

- *What is the crossroads that you find yourself at this stage of your life or work or the project around which we are assembled?*
- *What declaration of possibility can you make that has the power to transform the community and inspire you?*

Communal Questions:

- *What do we want to create together that would make the difference?*
- *What can we create together that we can not create alone?*

Three: Ownership

The decision to become the author of our own experience.
Distinct from blame, which is a form of entitlement.

Individually answer & rate on 7-point scale, low to high:

- *How valuable an experience (or project, or community) do you plan this to be?*
- *How much risk are you willing to take?*
- *How participative do you plan to be?*
- *To what extent are you invested in the well being of the whole?*

Later:

- *What have I done to contribute to the very thing I complain about or want to change?*

Four: Dissent

“No” is the beginning of commitment, without “no” there is no “yes”. Distinct from denial, lip service, rebellion or resignation.

- *What doubts and reservations do you have?*
- *What do you want to say No to, or refuse, that you keep postponing?*
- *What have you said yes to, that you do not really mean?*
- *What is a commitment or decision that you have changed your mind about?*
- *What forgiveness are you withholding?*
- *What resentment do you hold that no one knows about?*

Five: Commitment

Commitment is a promise made with no expectation of return. Distinct from a barter agreement.

- *What promises am I willing to make?*
- *What measures have meaning to me?*
- *What price am I willing to pay?*
- *What is the cost to others for me to keep my commitments, or fail in my commitments?*
- *What's the promise I'm willing to make that constitutes a risk or major shift for me?*
- *What is the promise I am postponing?*

Six: Gifts

Change and an alternative future occur by capitalizing on our gifts and capacities. Bringing the gifts of those on the margin into the centre. Distinct from deficiencies.

In circle, one person at a time receives statements of appreciation from others.

- *What gift have you received from another in this room? Tell the person in specific terms.*
- *What is the gift you continue to hold in exile? What gift do you hold that no one knows about? What are you grateful for that has gone unspoken?*

Our Invitation

How do we use the weeks leading into the 2010 municipal election as a catalyst for Torontonians to actively shape their desired future, one meaningful conversation at a time?