

Alison Burton Memorial Lecture
Random Selection: Achieving Representation in Planning¹
Presented by Lyn Carson²
Royal Australian Planning Institute, Canberra, ACT
31 August 1999

Dedicated to Alison Burton—in particular, her passion for, and commitment to, community consultation in decision making.

Synopsis

Participation has become a buzz word in local, state and federal government—the panacea for a variety of ills caused by an absence of democratic practices. Participation has come to describe anything from community education or surveys where there is little chance of influencing outcomes, to involvement of randomly-selected groups with a direct impact on high-level decision making. Two themes will be explored—deliberation and representativeness. In doing so, some of the more innovative enabling mechanisms in the consultative landscape will be surveyed. These can be found in the more remote terrain of active, radical participation. These innovative mechanisms include citizen juries, planning cells, consensus conferences, deliberative polling and people's panels—mechanisms that share a number of attributes. One attribute that they have in common is the random selection of participants. Random selection separates these consultative mechanisms from more orthodox consultation approaches such as public meetings or advisory committees. These approaches are often hampered by their unrepresentative nature. Orthodox approaches also have a tendency to attract a disproportionate number of 'the incensed and the articulate'. The potential for using random selection procedures to counteract such problems will be examined, particularly in relation to community involvement in planning.

Introduction

There are two main themes I would like to address in relation to decision making in planning—deliberation and representativeness. I want to rely primarily on two references for this explication of themes—one by Ricardo Blaug and one by Lyn Carson and Brian Martin. Neither book specifically addresses the issue of land-use planning or social planning but the relevance to planning and to problem solving is clear. Blaug's book *Democracy, Real and Ideal* is concerned with deliberation; our book, *Random Selection in Politics*, is concerned with both deliberation and representativeness but the emphasis is definitely on the latter.

In working through these two main themes I want to survey the consultative landscape—to visit sites of innovation (both local and overseas) and I want to acknowledge the problems and possibilities of all the sites I visit. I want to speculate on current practices,

¹ A number of the ideas expressed here and some of the material was first presented in a paper delivered by the author at the XIX Pacific Science Congress (1999) during a symposium on Science and Community Knowledge: Partners for Sustainability. The original paper was entitled "Enabling Mechanisms for Public Participation in Science".

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including the ACT's Local Area Planning Advisory Committees (LAPACs) and I want to offer a vision of the way I would wish this landscape to be.

I do not think for a moment that deliberation and representativeness are the only criteria for effective decision making. If I was to offer criteria for effective decision making it would look like this:

Criteria for Effective Participation

1. **Participation is timely.** Participation should not be so late in the life of an issue that it is tokenistic. The timing should occur when citizens have the best chance of influencing outcomes.
2. **Participants reflect a cross section of population.** Participants should be selected in a way that is not open to manipulation. Random selection offers the best chance of achieving this outcome (Carson & Martin 1999).
3. **Outcomes are focused on community, not self interest.** Participants are not asked what they want personally but rather what they consider is appropriate in their role as citizen (Barber 1992).
4. **Process is interactive and deliberative.** Questions or problems should not be reduced to a simplistic either/or response. Participation involves consideration of the big picture in discussion with fellow citizens and professional and non-professional experts.
5. **Decision making procedures are effective, preferably consensual.** Complete agreement need not be the outcome but the process should enable participants to strive towards consensus.
6. **Likelihood of recommendations being adopted is high.** Faith in the process is important by both the power holders and participants. Contracts can be signed to ensure that recommendations will be acted on and, if not, the decision-making body should offer a public explanation for its inaction.
7. **Process is in the hands of an independent, skilled, flexible facilitator.** It is important that all participants control the agenda and content because this will give the process more credibility. A skilled facilitator with no vested interest is essential in order to achieve this.
8. **Process is open, fair and subject to evaluation.** In advance, evaluation questions should be formulated—for example, how will success be measured? What are the indicators of success, beyond the adoption of recommendations?
9. **Process is cost effective.** This might be difficult to establish. For example, how does one measure community wellbeing or savings in costly litigation that could arise in the absence of consultation and participation? What price does one attach to achieving clearer planning goals?

My two themes cover many of these criteria—for example, deliberation (points 4, 5, 7) and representativeness (points 2 & 3).

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Background

I realised the importance of many of the above criteria during my single term as an elected representative in local government. One term was enough to discourage me from standing a second time. During my time with Lismore City Council (LCC) a number of innovative mechanisms were trialed—either because my Community Independent colleagues, Diana Roberts and Ros Irwin, and I initiated a consultative process, or because we had planners or administrators who were bold enough to run with new ideas. A number of them were trialed by me outside Council—because fear runs deep when democratic practices are floated among elected representative—and many new ideas were resisted by unwilling colleagues. Resistance is a formidable opponent and most of us are resistant to change. During my four years on Council the words of W H Auden and J K Galbraith followed me about like ominous mantras.

*We would rather be ruined than changed
We would rather die in our dread
Than climb the cross of the moment
And let our illusions die.*

W H Auden

*Faced with the choice between changing one's mind and proving there is no need to do so,
almost everyone gets busy on the proof.*

J K Galbraith

During my period of office LCC completed its award winning 2020 Strategic Plan—a Community Independents' initiative that owed its award-winning nature to a planner, David Kanaley who is now with Byron Shire Council. David and his team consulted thousands of residents, among them interest groups and key stakeholders—many residents who were consulted were randomly selected.

Other consultative mechanisms that we introduced were simple administrative ones like the recording of votes in Council. Public Access was in existence when we arrived on the scene and we added Public Question Time prior to the formal business of Council meetings. Community Independent councillors experimented with listening posts and most councillors took part in fortnightly councillor interviews. There were a variety of public meetings and surveys. I trialed citizens juries outside Council's jurisdiction. We introduced a mediation policy and a social impact assessment policy at a time when both these approaches were in their infancy. We experimented with precinct committees until they were quashed. Staff members enthusiastically or reluctantly supported many initiatives, for example street corner meetings, on-site inspections and rural contact forums.

Despite this proliferation of consultative mechanisms and our obvious successes (made possible because of support from the majority of our fellow councillors), I learnt how incredibly difficult it is to convert one's espoused theories into theories-in-use (Argyris and Schon 1974). My personal aspirations towards democratic practice often foundered. Let me note some of the realisations I had whilst completing my doctoral studies, during my time with Lismore City Council.

I had become interested in Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Participation—a model with which I'm sure you are familiar (Arnstein 1969). Arnstein herself acknowledges the difficulty imposed by such a simplistic model and I was wary of using it to explain much of what I experienced (Table 1).

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Table 1: Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

(Arnstein 1969: 217)

I was prepared for the tokenism inherent in many so-called consultation processes. What I was not prepared for was the difficulty of genuinely consulting. Nor was I prepared for the realisation that power relationships permeated all groups, even those that one would regard as democratic. In fact, many of the supposedly democratic mechanisms managed merely to replicate the very problems they were designed to solve—demonstrating inappropriate power differentials, hierarchies, overly formal procedures and so on. Advisory committees did not stack up well under close scrutiny (Carson 1996). Public meetings were often unpleasant gatherings of the 'incensed and the articulate' with Council staff members reluctantly going through a 'boy, have we got a deal for you' pageant, in front of a community group that was muzzled by the non-consultative nature of the whole affair.

If I was to extend Arnstein's metaphor of a ladder of consultation, I saw the ladder as leaning against a very substantial wall of constraints—the constraints being interpersonal, structural, cognitive, physical, intrapsychic and so on.

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Wall of Constraints

Illustration by Brian Slapp (Carson 1996)

The following examples of constraints have been taken from my doctoral thesis (Carson 1996). These examples do not represent the entire list—but they give an indication of the impenetrable barrier of constraints which any well meaning elected representative (and planner) might encounter.

Structural/systemic constraints

- legislation and regulations which do not reflect the community's needs;
- elections: trying to please the electorate;
- media: close scrutiny, inaccurate reporting, influenced by hype;
- unhelpful staff, denied access to staff;
- fear of causing litigation to themselves or Council;
- lack of accountability;
- presence of formal, adversarial structures;
- budgetary constraints;
- vulnerability to other tiers of government: state and federal.
- success leads to ethical violations; power corrupts;

Interpersonal constraints

- community judgement (physical attack, criticism, cynicism, distrust, disapproval); decision makers exposed for their ignorance or lack of clarity or bias; they feared looking weak or being ostracised if they changed their mind;
- absence of support from partner, family, friends or political allies;
- lack of willingness to share information;
- inappropriate feedback: negative comments, little positive feedback & few suggestions about how to do it differently;

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- resistance to deviating from peers or party or support base;
- influence of strong leader - 'opinion leadership'.

Physical constraints

- physical disability eg. deafness, blindness;
- physical and emotional exhaustion;
- poor physical environment.

Cognitive constraints

- cognitive development; inability to understand complex information or deal with higher order thinking eg. policy formulation;
- lack of vision; inability to hypothesise.

Intrapsychic constraints

- world views, prejudice, bias;
- a heightened sense of responsibility which can become a heavy burden;
- absence of good humour; depression;
- belief in representative democracy and lack of willingness to share power;
- resistance to change, high levels of caution; belief in a single 'truth', one reality; clinging to what is 'known' rather than exploring the unknown;
- excessive enthusiasm for change;
- lack of willingness to accept support;
- belief in other people's apathy;
- self-consciousness: concerns about looking 'silly' so that questions of clarification are not asked;
- boredom; confusion; poor memory
- lack of compassion, empathy;
- belief in others as the 'enemy';
- motivation for seeking office: ambition, status, power.

Constraints due to an absence of skills or knowledge

- inability to question; inability to articulate;
- inability to evaluate;
- inappropriateness of community consultation method; lack of familiarity with community consultation methods;
- absence of good leadership or decision-making skills;
- inability to listen; propensity to make speeches and talk over others;
- poor research skills or lack of research support;
- lack of education about the decision maker role;
- inability to separate the person from the issue;
- inability to shift from critic to decision maker;
- readiness to stereotype or falsely assume.

How might decision makers remove this solid wall of constraints? How might they consult in order to make better decisions? What could be done differently in order that better decisions are made? A number of lessons emerged. Given the substantial wall of constraints that has been identified the lessons could perhaps be called 'tools for dismantling'.

Structural/systemic tools

- design appropriate community consultation methods eg. do not use public meetings unless the only purpose is to disseminate information; use random selection if a representative sample is necessary;

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- educate the community to support decision makers to make good decisions.

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Interpersonal tools

- have fun;
- allow yourself to be supported; support from a community group which is based on relationship (and not issues) is potentially far more enduring; a support group will also encourage accountability;
- dare to be in relationship with anyone even those you think of as your 'opponents' or 'enemies';
- communicate honestly even if fearful;
- share skills, strategies and stories with your peers - the consequences can be therapeutic.

Intrapsychic tools

- be willing to share your power (abandon 'them and us' mentality);
- explore one's existential capability; be open to the possibility that you don't have a privileged access to reality;
- trust in the intelligence, goodwill and creativity that is out there in your community;
- be unattached to the outcome of decisions.

Tools to overcome an absence of skills or knowledge

- think strategically, not reactively;
- learn to evaluate the effectiveness of decisions;
- listen, listen, listen, and ask questions if you don't understand, then feedback what you have heard;
- use appropriate methods to consult with your community;
- focus on the issues, forget the personalities;
- cultivate a democratic personality;
- acquire skills of consensus making.

As 20th century citizens, we have strayed so far from our democratic origins—the vibrant if somewhat limited experience of Ancient Athens—that we no longer recognise the appalling absence of democracy in this political desert we know as representative government. The model of government we have inherited is all that the aristocracy was prepared to concede, ie, minimalist concessions to democracy that would maintain powerful elites. Not much has changed. In place of an inherited aristocracy we have an elective aristocracy. There is a tragic irony in the fact that our system of representative government was “conceived in explicit opposition to democracy” yet today it “is seen as one of its forms” (Manin 1997: 236)

Internationally it seems that we are all democrats now —as fascism and communism yield to the pressure of the global market place, democracy is the banner under which the unregulated market does its increasingly dirty business. The divide between normative democratic theory (how we ought to live) and empirical practice (how we actually live) is expanding into a vast chasm (Blaug 1999). As we teeter anxiously on the edge of this chasm, resisting the fall, this may be a good place to begin a journey through the landscape of innovative democratic practices. It is worthy of note that the motivation for such a journey springs from two sources in my experience—either we are motivated by a love of democracy or a hatred of politicians. I confess to a love affair with the former.

*...democracy is one of those beautiful, absolute, clear principles—clear in the abstract like 'thou shalt not kill'—that poses a maddening, tantalizing puzzle to humankind and launches us on the historic project of seeking to realize it in our collective life...
Democracy does not abolish power: it gives it to the people (Lummis 1982:11-12).*

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The challenge inevitably will be working out how to institutionalise the democratic practices I am about to introduce, so that they might provide a tool to influence the macro-level of political institutions and the global economy. This is no mean feat. However, I unashamedly operate from a world view that is steeped in optimism—to quote Gramsci—pessimism of the intellect but optimism of the will.

I also believe that democracy is something that we *do*, not something that we *have* (Lappe & Du Bois c1993). If democracy is a verb, rather than a noun then it is appropriate to start with democratic practice in the home, the workplace and the community. Human interaction takes place at various levels. Blaug (citing Eder's work) describes the home, workplace and community as micro and meso levels of human interaction:

Problem of size and degree of interaction.

Micro level—personal relationships between family, friends, neighbours, co-workers.

Face-to-face; small numbers, interaction oriented to mutual understanding though power-saturated discourse observable..

Meso level—civil associations, social movements, ethnic and religious groups, firms, institutions of civil society.

Broadening of loyalties; methods of information exchange that are no longer face-to-face. Texture of interaction starts to change.

Macro level—structures of the state, the economy, supracommunity level.

Complete change in texture of interaction due to complexity of issues and number of people involved. Face-to-face only among elite elected representatives and corporate directors.

(Blaug 1999:149-150)

A number of enabling mechanisms for public participation have been trialed in urban, industrialised situations, at the micro and meso levels. Let's begin the journey around the participatory landscape...

Deliberative Polls

Deliberative polls have been trialed in the US and UK and one is about to be conducted in Australia by the creator of the process, James Fishkin, in collaboration with the Australian National University, Issues Deliberation Australia and Newspoll. The topic focuses on Australia becoming a republic and will culminate in a gathering at Old Parliament House (22-23 October).

A deliberative poll is an enhanced opinion poll that gets over many of the limitations of opinion polls (Fishkin 1991, 1995). One aspect of deliberative polls that is worthy of note is its process of selection—ie, random selection via telephone numbers. Another important aspect is that it brings people together for discussion. The chief characteristics of the deliberative poll are:

- Involves statistically significant numbers of citizens in an extended, informed discussion, leading to a vote or series of votes.
- National random sample of voters (usually several hundred) is given briefing material.
- Brought to a single site, expenses paid, for one or two days, to hear and question witnesses and debate an issue in small groups.
- Views are polled before and after event.

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- Designed to correct weakness of opinion polls (too little information or consideration of issues)—so it's an opinion poll with deliberation.
- Organisers control agenda but process is open; results not easily manipulated.

A deliberative poll is a useful mechanism to use when one would otherwise consider an opinion poll. For example, a deliberative poll would seem to be useful for the resolution of a contentious planning issue—one in which urgency is paramount. However, the more complex the issue, the less I would favour this method over others such as juries or consensus conferences. My concern is with the size of the group. In the case of the imminent deliberate poll in Australia, there will be 300 randomly-selected participants³. My concerns are increased when cost is also taken into account.

For more information: <http://www.la.utexas.edu/research/delpol/cdpindex.html>

People's Panel (UK)

Another method that has been used to provide a pool of respondents for survey purposes but holds so much more promise than that, is the people's panel. I know of at least two current working examples of this mechanism: one in Tony Blair's Cabinet Office in the UK and one in Jim Soorley's (Lord Mayor's) office in Brisbane City Council in Australia. The Blair model *does* alert users, ie government bureaucrats, to the usefulness of using the people's panel for deliberative polls, citizens juries and so on. To date the emphasis seems to have been on using the panel largely for surveys in order to evaluate service delivery. This is also the case in Brisbane where the panel has been used mainly to evaluate the Council's performance though panel members have also been involved in community visioning exercises.

The UK people's panel has been summarised by the Cabinet Office's Service First Unit as follows:

- 5,000 adults, aged 16 and over
- profile that is representative of UK population in terms of age, gender, region and other demographic indicators
- recruited from random sample of UK addresses, followed by survey of data on both service usage & attitudes
- large enough for regional studies to compare local with national norms
- ideal for consultation on cross-sectoral issues
- can track changes in views over time
- used for survey, benchmark data, comparable national data
- different type of research that the panel can be used for include—

³ Two useful books that address the difficulties of small group democracy are John Gastil's *Democracy in Small Groups* and Ricardo Blaug's *Democracy, Real and Ideal*. A good text on group processes also canvasses the issue of group size and its impact on a group's effectiveness.

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quantitative research: telephone surveys, face-to-face interview surveys, self-completion postal surveys

qualitative research: focus groups, citizens workshops, depth interviews, citizens juries, deliberative polls

- all research is published

Source: <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/service>

People's Panel (Australia)

Brisbane City Council's people's panel was inspired by the activities of the former mayor of Seattle, Norman Rice. BCC's mayor, Jim Soorley was keen to find a way to conduct an ongoing dialogue with his constituents and to develop a consensus on the city's future direction. Brisbane's PP aims: to build a sound platform of public confidence in BCC's decisions; to develop broad based community ownership of BCC's programs; and to develop a mandate that translates into political support. The latter is seen to be quite different to the way politicians usually choose to operate— when they attempt to convert political support into a mandate.

To build this mandate, Soorley and his team invited all residents to be part of an ongoing PP. Expecting about 600 responses they were surprised to find 6,500 accepting BCC's invitation. The entire 6,500 respondents now make up the PP or reference group. The group receives regular newsletters that most often include a returnable survey that asks for feedback on different topics, eg the city's public transport system or development along the Brisbane River. The results of any PP surveys are also reported back via the newsletter in order to keep participants informed.

The reference group members are invited to attend community activities such as conferences or public meetings on topical or controversial issues. This educational component is to ensure that residents have as much up-to-date information as possible so that the complexity of issues can be understood. Research groups are conducted as well, using the PP as the pool for focus group participants. As more information is gleaned from the PP reference group, surveys and focus groups can be conducted which draw on a stratified sample that reflects a cross section of the wider population.

Soorley's office claims that BCC's projects and annual budget have been altered to reflect the community's values. Participants have responded positively to the invitation to have their say—indeed the project is called “Your City, Your Say”. The project has moved beyond opinion polling by involving the community in ongoing dialogue, for example in strategic planning via “Vision and Values” workshops. Soorley believes that while ever participants continue to be involved, the project can be deemed to be successful. The project is highly dependent on the BCC's mayor. There is no obligation to act on the community's recommendations though it could be argued that it would be a foolhardy leader who ignored such clear messages from his or her constituents.

The strength of the project is that PP participants are provided with considerable information along with the blank survey forms, just as participants are with deliberative polls. It could be claimed that an informed citizenry is responding to questionnaires, presumably having discussed the issues with family and friends. However there is less emphasis on debate or community agenda setting, and more on satisfying BCC's needs-- even the focus groups are designed to answer specific questions.

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The PP mechanism lends itself to more deliberative, consensual processes for change--such as citizens juries or consensus conferences. This appears to be the aim, though perhaps not the reality, of the UK people's panel. Inevitably there seems always to be a huge divide between "show democracy" or "therapeutic democracy"--ie seeking information from, and giving information to, citizens—and radical democracy --encouraging debate amongst equals and allowing community members to make their own decisions. Radical democracy need not be antithetical to representative government. Collaborative decision making is surely possible. Enabling mechanisms such as BCC's people's panel at least go some way towards community involvement. However, radical democracy requires a level of trust and a willingness to share power that is generally lacking in today's decision making arenas.

I'm sufficiently intrigued by the democratic possibilities of people's panels to make them the subject of a research project I plan to conduct next year in northern New South Wales.

Citizens Survey Panel

One consultative method that *did* combine a number of diverse enabling mechanisms was a citizens survey panel that was used to develop a large-scale transport plan in Boulder, Colorado. The panel was selected to match a community demographic profile (Table 2).

Table 2: Citizens Survey Panel (Boulder, Colorado, USA)

Pre-panel	Citizen transport advisory committee (TAC) formed (7 members) to develop transport master plan. Designed 'citizen survey panel' model. Project manager appointed to coordinate interviewers, develop research instruments, analyse data, write & present reports.
Panel formation	Random stratified sample of 700 invited by Mayor to participate. Respondents (32%) then randomly selected to represent community housing & household composition + political party affiliation—147 participants formed final panel. Ten interviewers appointed for one-year project.
Panel exercises	Data collection via 7 panel exercises—one phone interview, 2 in-home interviews and 4 mail surveys--80%-100% participation rate.
Outcomes	Data used by TAC as support for decisions, to end TAC stalemate, as reason to change policy or to justify contrary position. 79% policy congruence (between panel & TAC) reflected in final transport plan. Evaluated as successful by participants, TAC, wider community. Due to expense & design, suitable for development of major policy documents.

Source: Kathlene, L. and J. A. Martin (1991) "Enhancing Citizen Participation: Panel Designs, Perspectives, and Policy Formation", Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 10(1): 46-63.

Though still focused on surveys, the project coordinators included face-to-face interviews as well as trials involving free tickets on public transport in order to facilitate informed

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comment. However, unlike the deliberative poll, citizens were not brought together—the interactive component was absent. This panel worked in tandem with a reference committee of professional and non-professional experts who were influenced by the panel members' comments.

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Four-Step Method

In Lismore (northern New South Wales) I took up the idea of the importance of the 'expert' and experimented with a three-step method that I converted to a **four-step method**. Ortwin Renn and others originally devised this method in Germany and their work has involved controversial projects such as the siting of a high-temperature incinerator (Renn et al 1993). The three- or four- step method is appealing because it cushions the role (and power) of the expert between two stages involving randomly-selected citizens (Table 3).

Table 3: Four-step model for community participation.

<p>Step 1 Concerns and Criteria</p> <p>Involves interest groups in the creation of a vision or goals. Values and criteria are also established. Depending upon the issue, this could be either stakeholders only or a randomly-selected group from the whole community.</p>
<p>Step 2 Assessment of Options</p> <p>Collection of "expert" judgements from a small reference group. They take information from the first step and operationalise it. For example, an action plan is devised or a list of options created. The reference group offers a range of options and also assesses their viability.</p>
<p>Step 3 Evaluation of Options</p> <p>Randomly-selected citizens meet. Witnesses offer information and opinions and stimulate discussion. This step is to test the acceptability of the options. The citizen panel evaluates the options and offers recommendations.</p>
<p>Step 4 Accountability and Education</p> <p>Feedback to the whole community, including an evaluation of the process. Ensures all are informed and those making the final decision are accountable.</p>

Model developed by Carson (1999)--modification of:
Renn, O, Webler, T, Rakel, H, Dienel, P, and Johnson, B (1993). "Public Participation in Decision Making: A Three-step Procedure", *Policy Sciences*, **26**: 189-214.

In the model above, the role of the expert is to convert the community's vision to action, then to check back with the community to see whether the plan is in accord with the community's original dreams. Controversy surrounds the use of 'experts' and this term should be interpreted as being inclusive of those community members who are non-

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professional. The term 'expert' does not denote educational or professional qualifications alone; a community member with considerable experience of an issue certainly qualifies as a non-professional expert.

Like Ricardo Blaug I am mindful of the 'trade-offs' that must occur between participation and effectiveness in decision making (Blaug 1999: 143-149). While ever the community can be assured that its members have participated in decisions about such trade-offs, I see no difficulty in streamlining a consultative process to enhance its effectiveness. Excessive deliberation can kill a democratic group just as surely as it can empower it. Actioning or operationalising a community's dream is important to the overall consultative process. Testing the validity of such action plans is the aim of the third step outlined above.

Citizens Jury

The citizens jury (Table 4) has been tried and tested over two decades--in the US, in Germany (where they are known as planning cells), and more recently in the UK (Coote & Lenaghan 1997). There is little doubt about its usefulness as an effective participatory mechanism.

Table 4: Citizens Juries (US, UK), Planning Cells (Germany)

Pre-jury phase	Issue defined by commissioning authority, which has power to act on jury's recommendations. Coordinator appointed to convene advisory group for recruitment of witnesses, arrange selection of panel, and gather briefing information. Independent facilitator appointed. Convening of jury and topic are publicised. Jury randomly selected to match a socio-economic profile. Contract between commissioning authority and jurors. Jurors develop own criteria for decisions that will lead to recommendations in a report.
Jury session	Jury session involves expert (professional & non-professional) witnesses who are questioned. Jurors receive written evidence before and after jury session. Jurors deliberate in plenary and smaller groups. Jurors prepare a report for commissioning authority.
Post-jury phase	Jury's conclusions are published. Authority either acts on recommendations or explains publicly why not.

Unfortunately, most often the commissioning body has not been the decision making body, hence the recommendations that have emanated from these juries have generally languished. However, participants speak highly of the experience, as do media representatives who have covered juries. Much of citizens juries' success--that is, in the credibility of the method--is attributable to the method of selection of its jury members.

Further information: <http://www.loka.org/pages/panel.htm>

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Random Selection

The issue of 'random selection' is an important one because it is an essential component of most of the recent innovations that have been mentioned. Various methods are used to select randomly and some of the methods used overseas as well as in Australia are outlined below. There is no suggestion that these methods lead to representativeness. Participants would need to be conscripted in order for genuine randomness to occur. However these methods command confidence because the stratified sample reflects a cross section of the population.

I favour random selection as a selection method because I believe it is the fairest way to provide an opportunity for everybody to be involved in decision making—it gives everyone an equal chance of involvement and it avoids claims of bias or conflict of interest (Carson & Martin 1999). Not only is it fair, it is seen to be fair--particularly in a country like Australia with our heritage of two-up, lotteries and juries. Making a decision to randomly select is not enough to guarantee fairness, judgement still comes into play. Here are some examples of the different procedures that I have encountered that have dealt with achieving randomness in the selection of participants.

Method 1

A profile of the population is developed to suit the issue eg gender, age, class, ethnicity, housing tenure, occupation, education, geography, religion, attitude. Recruiters find participants to match the profile using a combination of door-to-door, approaching people in street etc.

Method 2

Advertisements are placed in local, state or national newspapers asking for participants. The issue is specified and respondents are asked to write a brief explanation about their interest. Respondents are then selected according to diversity.

Method 3

Advertisements are placed in newspapers. No detail is given except that research is involved and citizens' views are sought. Respondents are phoned, a survey is completed, then respondents are matched to a profile.

Method 4

Letters are sent to citizens who are randomly selected from the electoral roll, inviting them to participate. They are given minimal information about the issue except the date and duration of participation. Respondents complete a questionnaire to provide demographic data. Responses are matched to profile criteria then randomly selected.

Method 5

Prospective participants are randomly selected via the electoral roll. They are sent an invitation to participate. This is followed up with a telephone call or a personal visit. Suits a small community.

Consensus Conferences

The citizens jury process can be equated to that which is used for a consensus conference. I see a consensus conference as a larger scale and more expensive version of a citizens jury but one in which participants, to date, have had more control over the agenda. Consensus conferences (CCs) have a long and respected history with antecedents in the US. The original medical and technology assessment model relied on an expert lay panel. More notably, in the past decade, Denmark's Board of Technology has involved lay persons in its panels and this model has been replicated dozens of times throughout the world (Joss & Durant 1995).

I was a member of the steering committee that was convened by the Australian Museum for Australia's first consensus conference (CC) on gene technology in the food chain (held in old Parliament House in March 1999). Australia's CC had an eighteen month gestation and owed its conception and the safety of its final delivery to Carole Renouf from the Australian Consumers Association (Renouf 1999).

The lay panel's final recommendation were intelligent, cautious and timely, given the current heightened debate on this topic. I am amused to hear continued calls for community consultation on this issue when such a rigorous process has already occurred. At least one of the lay panel's recommendations has recently been vindicated by a broad survey that showed 90% of respondents in favour of labelling of food. Awareness of, and faith in, the CC process could save opinion pollsters a lot of money!

The following tables (5 and 6) were developed by Rosemary James and Russell Blamey who compared the similarities and differences between citizen juries and consensus conferences. These tables were presented at the XIX Pacific Science Congress at the University of New South Wales in July, 1999.

Table 5: Shared features of consensus conferences and citizens' juries

Feature	Consensus Conference	Citizens' Jury
Use of steering committee	Yes	Sometimes
Panel or jury selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advertisement • selection from respondents on basis of self-provided information • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • various, including that used for consensus conferences
Theoretical basis	Participatory democracy Deliberative democracy	Participatory democracy Deliberative democracy
Legislative support in Australia	No	No
Facilitator	Yes	Yes
Payment of fees	Yes-replacement of income foregone	Usually a <i>per diem</i> as a part payment for income forgone
Elements of the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read preparatory material • question the witness • evaluate information • reach decisions regarding the key and subsidiary questions • prepare final report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read preparatory material • question the witness • evaluate information • reach decisions regarding the key and subsidiary questions • prepare final report
Open to the public	Yes	Maybe
Size of panel	10-14	10-24
Outcome	The outcome is documented in a final report from the panel.	The outcome is documented in a final report from the panel.
Composition of the panel	All lay people. No one to be an expert or to have special interest in the matter.	All lay people. No one to be an expert or to have special interest in the matter. However, the exclusions do not appear to be as rigorously applied.

Source: Rosemary F. James and Russell K. Blamey (1999) "Citizen Participation—Some Recent Australian Developments", Paper presented at the Pacific Science Congress, Sydney, 4-9 July

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Table 6: Differences between Consensus Conferences and Citizens' Juries

Feature	Consensus Conference	Citizens;' Jury
Duration	3 days plus two preparatory weekends	Usually 2-4 days
Wording of the key questions or charge	Performed by the panel	Performed by the organisers
Calling of witnesses	Panel decides witnessed to be called, with input from the steering committee	Panel may be given the opportunity to call witnesses in addition to those nominated by then organisers

Source: Rosemary F. James and Russell K. Blamey (1999) "Citizen Participation—Some Recent Australian Developments", Paper presented at the Pacific Science Congress, Sydney, 4-9 July

Further information on consensus conferences: <http://www.loka.org/pages/worldpanels.html>

The above comparison is based on a number of assumptions with which I would not necessarily agree. For example, there were no payments for participants in any of the North Coast citizens juries and Australia's consensus conference only covered the participants' travel and accommodation costs. In fact the relative cost of these mechanisms is very dependent upon the approach taken. The budgets for the citizens juries and consensus conference with which I have been directly involved have ranged from \$200 to \$200,000.

Comparison of Consultation Processes

The comments I have made so far have been drawn together into a table that is fraught with subjective judgements but was a useful tool for assessing the extent to which each participatory method met my original criteria for effective participation (Table 7).

Table 7: Comparative Assessment of Consultation Processes

Model	Typical of popul'n	Cmnty focus	Interact-ive & Deliber-ative	Consens-us	Influent-ial	Facilitat-ed	Open & fair	Cost effective
Advisory Committee	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	3
Deliberative Poll	4	3	4	2	1	4	4	3
Cit. Survey Panel	4	3	1	2	3	2	2	3
4-Step Procedure	4	4	4	4	2	4	3	3
People's Panel	4	2	1	1	1	2	2	3

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Citizen Jury (& Consensus Conference)	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	3
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Key: 1= not much 2= somewhat 3= considerably 4= very much
n/a= not applicable or unknown

Clearly, had traditional methods such as surveys or public meetings been included, they would have compared poorly. The methods, in my opinion, that would earn the most confidence from both commissioning bodies and the general public are the four-step model, citizens juries and consensus conferences. The people's panel, too, holds great promise as a way of combining a number of enabling mechanisms.

Local Area Planning

At this stage it is worth applying the "so what?!" test. So what are the implications for planning? My guess is that planners, like elected representatives and academics and citizens, wrestle with a serious contradiction:

Many of us appear to hold two intuitive assumptions about the making of decisions...The first is that a decision is somehow "more moral" when those affected have participated in its making. This is a normative belief. The second is that human nature and the real constraints of decision-making in fact preclude the possibility of complete participation. This is an empirical assertion (Blaug 1999: x-xi).

This is surely a fundamental dilemma for all policy makers—that citizens *ought* to be able to participate in decision making—but the reality of complete participation is *so* difficult. The further complication is our combined inexperience with deliberation.

We are not good at participation ...attempts to participate expose individuals to the full force of our collective incapacity to manage moral and value conflicts (Blaug 1999: xi).

This combination—that real constraints of decision making preclude complete participation and that we are not much good at it anyway—deserves attention. Ongoing advisory groups have a tendency to not only be unrepresentative--no matter how enthusiastic and well-meaning the volunteers who attend; they also have a tendency to self-destruct. Advisory committees are very reliant on skilled facilitation and sound group processes—almost always absent in my experience. That is not to say that robust groups are not possible, simply that they are rare and they arise not by accident but because the group is dedicated to developing expertise in deliberation and decision making. Without such dedication these groups are as hollow as the representative system that spawned them.

We all need to develop our deliberative, decision-making ability—it is a useful skill in the kitchen, the bedroom, the board room or the tea room. But we are wary of developing this capacity. We assume we are born with it. We are not.

Blaug talks about the need to develop *deliberative capacity* and believes that deliberative capacity:

1. Is dependent on good information, on its accessibility and continued provision.
2. Requires practice if it is to be preserved.

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3. Requires motivation—the group’s energy is its greatest resource.
4. Participants must understand that it takes time to learn to do it well.

[This is]...*precisely the problem that has always bedeviled democracy, for without a perfectly informed and wise populace, the devolution of power appears a very dangerous undertaking* (Blaug 1999: 146).

Participation will not arise miraculously; it must be practised. Community members’ participatory muscles have atrophied through lack of use and need to be pumped up with regular work-outs. Mechanisms such as citizens juries and consensus conferences provide a good training ground for these democratic athletics. Surprising things happen. People scale walls of constraints. Democracy ‘breaks out’.

...democracy...occasionally breaks out among particular people in particular situations. Suddenly, we find we have risen above the power-saturated ways in which we normally interact and that something quite different is taking place between us (Blaug 1999: 135).

Providing innovative options for consultation, providing good facilitators, randomly selecting people who would otherwise be missed in community consultation, using sound decision making techniques, encouraging debate—these are all admirable contributions in the creation of a strong democracy.

[Participants’] *ability to survive as a democratic entity will be directly related to their collective expertise in making judgments that preserve the fairness and efficiency of their decision-making process* (Blaug 1999: 141).

What I am *not* suggesting is that we abandon existing strategies for community consultation but they may need to be more finely tuned. Nor should more innovative practices be avoided because they are too difficult and radical democracy is too hard. The alternative—to persist with processes that we know to be suspect—would be such a missed opportunity. It would be an admission that representative government is as good as it gets—heaven forbid!

...the question is not whether discursive democracy can become the practice of complex societies but whether complex societies are still capable of democratic rule (Benhabib 1994: 42, cited by Blaug 1999: 156).

Robust, democratic groups *do* exist already. For example, community development strategies often breed democratic practice. The mechanisms I have talked about should be seen as additional to such healthy groups and additional to those processes that you know are working well already.

The good news for planners is that federal politicians have caught up with the immense significance of local area planning. Mark Latham (1998), Lindsay Tanner (1999) and others who are flying Tony Blair’s Third Way banner (under the influence of Anthony Giddens), are speaking increasingly of the problems created by locational disadvantage; place management, community building and integrated planning are becoming catch phrases; community development is no longer ‘bottom up’ it is ‘inside out’ (Brisbane Institute address by Mark Latham, July 1999).

Conclusion

I have argued that, for participation to be effective, a number of essential criteria need to be applied. A number of enabling mechanisms have been described: deliberative polls, people's panels, a citizens survey panel, a four-step model, citizens juries and consensus conferences. The importance of two of the criteria—deliberation and representativeness—has been discussed. I would conclude by saying that any mechanism that moves us closer toward direct, deliberative democracy using samples typical of the population, is worthy of further trial. Only after sufficient trial and evaluation will it be possible to institutionalise these enabling mechanisms with confidence. Considerable work has already been done and the results are extremely promising. There is no reason to persist with orthodox methods that serve only to increase the community's cynicism. Radically democratic methods such as those described will satisfy our need for fairness, immersiveness, interactivity and inclusiveness in any decision making that deeply affects our lives.

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International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

<http://pin.org/>

The Loka Institute's page on US citizens' panels

<http://www.loka.org/pages/panel.htm>

The Loka Institute's page on worldwide consensus conferences

<http://www.loka.org/pages/worldpanels.html>

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