

# Participatory-Deliberative Engagement: a literature review

Noel Cass  
Department of Geography, Lancaster University

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# 1 Introduction

This working paper arises from Lancaster's literature review (work package 1.1) within the TSEC (Towards a Sustainable Energy Economy) project entitled "Beyond NIMBYism: a multidisciplinary investigation of public engagement with renewable energy technologies". The paper is one of four working papers produced by project partners, the other papers representing reviews of "regulation and planning", "NIMBYism" and "public perceptions of energy".

## 1.1 Engagement?

Given that the Lancaster contribution runs alongside work that addresses 'regulation and planning' and 'NIMBYism', we work with a particular definition of 'engagement' in this literature review. The concept of 'public engagement' is used in two senses. These differ in respect of who is actively 'doing the engaging' in that in one case, the state or developers engage with the public, in the other, the public engage with the technology or with specific proposals.

In the first sense 'engagement' is used to refer to the formal processes used to include members of the public in decision making processes, and to facilitate the collection or integration of their views, to a greater or lesser extent. These are processes of public engagement including consultation, communication and participation (see Rowe and Frewer 2005). This review will not focus on those aspects of formal assessment (such as the production of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)) that fall within the remit of 'regulation and planning'.

However, in another sense 'engagement' is seen to refer to public perceptions and constructions of RET (Renewable Energy Technologies), and the ways in which publics interact with the technology outside the formal 'engagement' processes. These senses of engagement *by* the public cover the social-psychological area of responses, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and so forth, and also the informal processes of the public 'engaging with' technologies and policy through protest activity and mobilisation around specific developments or the broad sweep of energy policy. Informal processes of the public engaging with RET can also include involvement with community initiatives, involvement in micro-generation or actually owning RET, or investing in for example 'green electricity' or particular organisations that have a policy of supporting RET development. These aspects of active public engagement are also relevant to the project, and may be covered by the reviews of 'public perceptions' and 'NIMBYism'.

'The participatory model' is a discourse which has increasing hegemony in discussions of the best way to conduct different aspects of policy-making, from agenda-setting at the state level down to technology assessment and 'consultation' on individual projects or developments. It broadly proposes that policy-making is qualitatively improved by the participation of members of the public, and more recently, the use of deliberation-based methods has been promoted within the goal of increasing public participation. It is this area of formal engagement with the public that is addressed in this review, with a focus on participatory and deliberative engagement methods.

## 1.2 Structure of the Review

This review will first offer an account of the origins of ‘participatory-deliberative’ engagement’, the rationales for its usage and the claims for its benefits, with some explanation of the scope of specific mechanisms, techniques, tools and processes that fall within this category. There have been numerous attempts at the evaluation of different methods of public engagement, there are ‘reviews of reviews’ that can be drawn upon (e.g. Renn, Webler and Wiedermann 1995; Rowe and Frewer 2005), and each of these documents applies a different typology or set of criteria for evaluation. One section of the literature review offers an over-view of these previous studies, particularly in the sense of getting a picture of the ‘framework’ for engagement.

The account then moves on to examine critiques of aspects of participatory and deliberative mechanisms, including questions addressing whether or not such engagement is either legitimate or adds to the legitimacy of the decision-making process, or whether or not it is effective or adds to the effectiveness of the decision-making process. We then focus particularly on a more political account of how participation and deliberation can be ‘used’ through the strategic behaviour of different actors, and how the very pursuit of participation and deliberation contains paradoxes, dilemmas, and important choices.

A concluding section reviews the latest literature to establish the current ‘state of play’ in debates around engagement, and addresses the issue of engagement with renewable energy specifically. It conveys an impression of the existing consensus or constellation of agreement about the ‘best’ ways of conducting (particularly participatory-deliberative) engagement, for particular reasons or in the area of technologies in particular. The final section thus brings out key conclusions and implications for the project.

## 2 Origins and Rationales

### 2.1 Clarifying definitions

The literature itself is complex and, in places, contradictory in the ways in which key phrases (such as ‘participation’, ‘inclusion’, and ‘deliberation’) are used. A simple distinction to make at the outset is that an engagement process can be participatory without being deliberative, and deliberative without involving *public* participation. An example of the former case is a referendum (the public are involved in the decision-making process, but do not engage in dialogue), and of the latter, a stakeholder or expert ‘round-table’ (there is much dialogue, but members of the public are excluded). This helps us to understand the broadest definitions employed in the literature: that public participation “may be defined as the practice of consultation and involving members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making, and policy-forming activities of organisations or institutions responsible for policy development” (Rowe and Frewer 2004: 512); and that deliberation involves processes of dialogue including “time to discuss information provided and explore key issues” (Stagl 2006: 57).

In the literature there is a general consensus that ‘public engagement’ can be used to describe any number of ways in which information, views or opinions flow backwards and forwards between the public and decision-makers, but ‘participation’ is

sometimes used in a similar sense (e.g. Soerensen *et al.* 2001) to include information provision, planning processes and even financial investment. We will try to adhere to a definition of public participation that is more firmly linked to involvement in *decision-making* processes. The use of the word 'deliberative' is less problematic, arising more recently and having a more narrow usage, and can be said to refer to decision-making methods that are primarily dialogic in nature (see Hunt, Littlewood and Thompson 2003), involving information exchange, discussion, sometimes argumentation or persuasion, but always a process of the weighing up of different points of view between co-present people (see Urry 2002 on co-presence).

## **2.2 Roots of Participatory-Deliberative Public Engagement**

A number of studies in the literature refer to the Berger Commission in Canada, commissioned in 1975, as the earliest example of an innovative participatory process of decision-making, in which the views of indigenous North Americans were actively sought on the MacKenzie valley oil pipeline and on development affecting native peoples generally. For example, Kenyon (2003) claims that "[i]n this case, the participatory methods were invented as the commission proceeded since no precedent was available" (2003: 203). It can be said to have been mould-breaking in that the views and opinions of certain groups of people were actively sought and taken into account, in contrast to the traditional process of consultation, in which responses to proposals are invited. The purpose of this section of the review is not to trace a family tree or follow the development of this sector of engagement processes, but rather to offer some theoretical explanation as to the reasons why participatory and deliberative engagement has come to be an accepted way of 'doing' policy, in certain policy areas particularly, and this point in time.

### **2.2.1 *The participatory (and deliberative) turn***

Engaging the public in a wide range of policy areas, at different stages in policy development, using participatory and deliberative methods and processes, is now an accepted and legitimated practice. The literature on this participatory or deliberative turn has provided theoretical justification for the adoption of these practices in areas as varied as the health sector (Abelson *et al.* 2001), nanotechnology development (Macnaghten *et al.* 2006), natural resource management (Halseth and Booth 2003), transport planning (Bickerstaff and Walker 2001), waste management (Petts 2005), 'new' or controversial science (Pellizzoni 2003) and environmental policy (Owens *et al.* 2004). The literature also locates the originating impulses for the adoption of participation and deliberation in a wide variety of social, natural, political, scientific, institutional and cultural transformations, a few of which are sketched below. As the deliberative 'turn' has historically been subsumed within the participatory turn, it will be separated out at a later stage.

At the most abstract level, Stagl (2006) argues that the increasing complexities involved in the evolution of both social and natural systems lead to a fundamental difficulty in decision making. This difficulty is caused by a de-coupling of identifiable causes and effects in natural systems, and an increasing multiplicity of value systems and worldviews in an increasingly pluralist society (2006: 54; Hodgeson 2002; Funtowicz *et al.* 1999). Wittmer, Rauschmeyer and Klauer (2006) utilise similar premises in arguing that "environmental conflicts are characterised by the combination of two types of complexities, ecological and social" (2006:1).

Representative democracy and the application of single perspectives are argued to be incapable of coping with this complexity in decision-making, and so the inclusion of multiple perspectives including those of the public is sought through participation in 'post-normal science' (cf. Funtowicz and Ravetz (1990)), and through deliberation in policy making (cf. Dryzek 1990). At the societal and institutional level, Petts (2005) observes a frequently reasserted political concern about the loss of trust in institutions, those of governance and science in particular, in the areas of environmental and risk-centred decision-making (Stern and Fineberg, 1996; RCEP, 1998) as a justification for involving the public through participation. This is again linked to a search for a pluralistic decision making process in order to reflect the nature of contemporary societies (Petts 2005: 404; Bloomfield et al. 2001: 501). Collins and Burgess summarise the socio-cultural aspects of contemporary society that frame the deliberative turn as encompassing "(i) socio-cultural pluralism; (ii) the gathering sense of powerlessness; [and] (iii) the shifting social and realist constructions of the environmental crisis" (1999: 2).

Lancaster University is known as a key promoter of public input into policy-making, in the form of 'upstream engagement' (e.g. Macnaghten *et al.* 2006), advocated on the basis of the uncertainties inherent in technology development and environmental issues in particular. Another strand of the Lancaster approach to decision-making is the assertion that experts and lay people bring different forms of knowledge to bear on (particularly) scientific questions and problems, and that policy would be wise to incorporate these lay knowledges (Wynne, 1996). Horlick-Jones *et al.* (2004) similarly trace and map a series of institutional and scientific responses to controversies involving science and risk as the framing for the increasingly institutionalised calls for participation and deliberation in areas such as the regulation of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). In this framing, stakeholder and public engagement is seen as embodying a combination of 'governmental modernisation' discourses (Bickerstaff and Walker 2001), risk management in the face of previous failures, and a reinvigoration of trust in scientific and governmental institutions (Horlick-Jones *et al.* 2004: 14). Behind all these formulations is the model of contemporary society and its effects on the environment as being qualitatively new and different, complex to the point where 'risk society' involves causes and effects crossing any attempted theoretical boundaries, and similarly the institutions traditionally charged with ameliorating the effects of these developments have proved incapable of doing so (cf Beck, 1992), creating "a period of rapid change, and a sense of powerlessness among citizens in the face of distant economic and political forces" (Bloomfield *et al.* 2001: 501).

Other theorists link the participative turn: to a spread of managerial discourses and practices into every sphere of social organisation (Taylor 2001: 124); to 'Third Way' reconfigurations of dialogue between the state and its citizens (Collins and Burgess 1999: 3); or to an ongoing process of the redistribution of politics from the state to the market and civil society as a result of new risks, discursive changes towards an acceptance that 'pollution prevention pays', and ecological modernisation (Bulkeley and Mol 2003; Van Tatenhove and Leroy 2003). Fischer (2000:112-119) instead locates the impulse for more participation as arising from the new social movements of the '60s and '70s, where a convergence of environmental, feminist and civil rights concerns stressed the importance of communal decision-making and consensus, models which are implicitly or explicitly based on the right for all affected parties to be involved in decisions that affect them personally. When this model is

combined with the above mentioned cross-cutting complexity of contemporary society and nature, a strong argument for citizen involvement in policy emerges, and one which seems to be intrinsically tied in theory and in practice to the consideration of broadly environmental issues.

A high degree of diversity converging around central themes of *complexity*, *plurality*, *consent*, *trust* and *legitimacy* is therefore found in identifying the aspects of contemporary society that have generated the participatory turn.

### **2.2.2 Technology appraisal**

Within the focus of this project on technology in particular, there is also a need to trace the ways in which the participatory turn has been particularly applied to technology appraisals and assessments (in addition to the environmental focus noted above). The differences between the forms of appraisal discussed below, and those involved in the development or implementation of RET will be drawn out later in the paper.

There is unanimity on the source of the participative turn in the appraisal or evaluation of technological and policy decisions as residing in the failure of the proceeding ‘technical-rational’ forms of policy assessment, and therefore their rejection, adaption, or transformation. Even when the realisation of concrete benefits from the participatory turn is questioned (for example in Owens 2000; Henkel and Stirrat 2001), there is a consistent rejection of the old paradigm of decision-making, represented by such techniques as Cost-Benefit Analysis (COBA), as being theoretically, politically or practically inadequate even on their own terms (Owens *et al.* 2004: 1947).

The idea that such techniques represented an ‘objective and scientific’ assessment of technologies and policies is argued to have been undermined by contributions from the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK) and Science and Technology Studies (STS), and Owens *et al.* (2004) spell out the conclusions of these attacks. *Theoretically*, the model of a positivistic science producing value-free ‘facts’, that are fed to decision-makers who exercise judgement of relevant political, ethical or social ‘values’ in a ‘separation of powers’ has been under attack in these theories for some time. *Politically*, “techniques that are ostensibly neutral may in fact have an in-built tendency to support particular outcomes [...] ethical and political choices masquerade as technical judgements” (1994: 1946). When such observations become dominant (as in the case of transport management based on COBA and ‘predict-and-provide’ models for example), the techniques’ outcomes may no longer be publicly acceptable, and thus the techniques themselves are rendered *practically* inadequate too. Much current literature thus discusses ways in which a combination of technical assessments and a deliberative element or elements can be operationalised,<sup>1</sup> particularly in the environmental policy area.

### **2.2.3 Participation in policy documentation**

In the UK, the acceptance of participation as a preferred aspect of policy-making can be seen in the ‘grey’ literature from a number of policy areas. The Skeffington Report of 1969 is frequently seen as introducing participation to the work of local authorities

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. the articles in *Land Use Policy* 23/1 (January 2006): Resolving Environmental Conflicts: Combining Participation and Multi-Criteria Analysis.

and in particular planning. Specifically deliberative techniques of public participation can be found in the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions guidance to local authorities (DETR 1998). In the arena of transport, the introduction of participation to local government policy was supposedly formalised in the change to the production of Local Transport Plans (LTPs) at the turn of the century (see Bickerstaff and Walker 2001). The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution report of 1998 is often cited as establishing a participatory approach to technology policy and assessments, with the Royal Society stressing the need for early (or 'upstream') engagement (on nanotechnologies, another innovatory science) in 2004 (Chilvers *et al.* 2005: 4) and the Energy White Paper of 2003 and the Energy Review of 2006 have both been based on consultation processes that included participatory and deliberative strands

## **2.3 Rationales of Participatory-Deliberative Public Engagement**

Given these varied explications of the participatory (and deliberative) turn, we can also identify a number of different rationales that are offered for the benefits that participatory or deliberative approaches can offer to decision-making and policy formation or appraisal. These were classically characterised by Fiorino (1990) as falling into three categories of *normative*, *substantive* and *instrumental* rationales.

### **2.3.1 Normative rationales**

The writings of Habermas (1975; 1984) are quoted by numerous writers (e.g. Renn, Webler and Weidemann 1995; Hunt and Szerszynski 1999; Petts 2005; Stirling 2006) as the theoretical source of normative arguments specifically for *deliberation*. Habermas' writing functions as a critical reassessment of democracy itself and a call for the extension of both participation and inclusion through deliberation. In his theory of 'communicative action', Habermas specifies the conditions for 'ideal speech' (for summaries see Webler 1995; Van den Hove 2006), and other writers have seen these as approachable (although perhaps not attainable, as Habermas himself acknowledges) through the use of deliberative processes (Dryzek 1990). Coming from a critical viewpoint, Habermas is attempting to offer redress for the power inequalities present in most forms of communication between decision-makers and the public, by specifying the ideal conditions in which communication should take place, in "a form of rational deliberation where strategic (interested) action is suspended, and actors seek to motivate each other towards understanding rather than influence each other" (Hunt, Littlewood and Thompson 2003: 9; see also Bickford 1996). When these are combined with Rawlesian conceptions of 'public reason' (Rawles 1993; 1997), a political philosophy grounding for the democratic rationale for public participation in deliberation is presented (Stirling 2006: 96) in which participatory deliberation in the sense of reasoned discussion between decision-makers and the public achieves the twin goals of widening democratic practice, and pursuing a common or public 'good'.

In this model, the inclusion of more citizens in participatory and deliberative processes is seen as an end in itself, notwithstanding claims for the subsequent production of better policy or decisions. Citizens are seen as disenfranchised by technical forms of assessment, values are seen as important inputs to decision making, and it is felt that participatory and deliberative processes are normatively justified on the grounds of democratisation and empowerment alone (Fiorino 1990).



The 'normative theory of public participation' is a title that has also been applied to the work of Thomas Webler (e.g. Renn and Webler 1995, Webler 1995, Webler *et al.* 1995) in which the crucial qualities of a successful or justified process are those of 'fairness and competence'. These terms refer to fairness of equal access to the process, and the processing of all the relevant viewpoints and knowledges in the production of outcomes.

It would be useful here to reproduce a summary of the Habermasian theory that lies under many definitions of 'deliberation'. Van den Hove explains that a Habermasian deliberation would consist of, or aim at, the following conditions:

*“a free speech situation, which is (as much as possible) devoid of external constraint and of strategic behaviour, accessible to all, and in which only the unforced force of the best argument counts—what Habermas calls the “ideal speech situation”;*

*consistency* between discourse and beliefs as well as consistency between discourse and behaviour: each participant should be “rationally accountable” of what she says, and should commit to strive to respect what she has argued for, by offering justifications and reasons and by acting consistently;

*transparency*: each participant's references and values should be made explicit and the standpoint from which he perceives his interest should be open to others' critique;

a focus on *common interest*: participants should strive to address a common interest beyond the mere adjustment of particular interests.” (Van den Hove 2006: 12)

### **2.3.2 Substantive rationales**

Substantive rationales for the participatory-deliberative turn are based on a premise that is embodied in many of the above-mentioned theoretical sources; that decisions, policies and assessments will automatically benefit in quality from the inclusion of a multiplicity of points of view, enabling factors that previously escaped technical forms of appraisal to be captured and integrated into the processes' outcomes. In this view, engagement is viewed as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, and that end is better policy. As has been suggested, this thinking is implicit in Habermasian models, in which deliberation allows for decisions to be made through the rational weighing up of different positions in the light of a 'common good', as explained by Abelson *et al.*:

“Collective discussion is viewed as the critical element of deliberation, one that allows individuals to listen, understand, potentially persuade and ultimately come to more reasoned informed and public-spirited decisions (Fearon, 1998; Fishkin, 1991; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Manin, 1987; Bostwick, 1999; Habermas, 1984; 1996)” (2001: 8-9). A critique of this view comes from the area of 'radical Democracy' (Nieminen (2006) cites Mouffe 2000; Fraser 2005; Young 1996), which casts doubt on the existence of a “common will waiting to be discovered”, and suggests that the focus on consensus, in trying to discover one, leads to “our submittance to and/or acceptance of expert governance (implying inherent bureaucracy and secrecy) and tyranny of majority [sic]” (Nieminen 2006: 8)

Hendriks also identifies parallels with the writings of participatory democrats (e.g. Barber 1984) and civic republicanism (e.g. Sandel 1982), “particularly with its

emphasis on the need for political debate to focus on ‘the common good’” (Hendriks 2002: 68). Another strand of the substantive rationale views participatory and deliberative processes as producing policy that is qualitatively better in the sense of being more amenable to policy makers and more implementable; in part this is based on the perceived legitimacy of such decisions in the eyes of potential opponents, and shades into an instrumental rationale as discussed below.

In addition, a number of authors view ‘social learning’ as an additional important outcome of the new processes (e.g. Webler et al. 1995, Tula 1998). This seems to have different interpretations, ranging from the intensely subjective benefits argued to accrue to participants when viewed from an Arendtian perspective, those of “a sense of empowerment and agency, social intelligence and self fulfilment as well as a sense of belonging to a shared society” (Hunt and Szerszynski 1999: 31), to the idea of institutional learning. This is defined as the process through which sponsoring organisations’ experience of a process that is radically different from the old policy paradigm<sup>2</sup> stimulates institutional changes in behaviour. Focussing on the former, Stagl identifies *cognitive learning* (largely informational), *mutual understanding* (an ability to appreciate others’ values through offering and receiving justifications for normative positions), *trust and respect* in group-building, and *learning about societal needs* and the institutional changes required to satisfy them, as further aspects of social learning derived by participants from deliberation (2006: 66-68). Thus it can be seen that the substantive rationale argues for both pragmatic and more intangible benefits accruing from the participatory turn.

### **2.3.3 Instrumental rationales**

Perhaps increasingly covered in the academic literature is the issue of the instrumental rationale for new forms of decision-making. Fiorino’s seminal paper (1990) actually includes better policy as the aim of this rationale, but more importantly the aim of an instrumentally justified process is the creation of *legitimacy*. This legitimacy can be seen as being attached to the resulting *outcomes*, to *decisions* taken after participation and deliberation has taken place (even if there is little connection between the events), or to the *institutions* and organisations that sponsor, commission, or conduct such processes.

The latter is focussed on by those that identify the source of the participative turn in the collapse of *trust* in institutional authority and expertise, wherein “[f]or beleaguered institutions of environmental governance, an ability credibly to claim a commitment to broad based public engagement is an important way to sustain or restore public credibility or trust”, leading to “more effective decision justification (Collingridge, 1982)” (Stirling 2006: 98). An over-emphasis on this rationale is thought to lead to a situation where the exact nature and extent of participation required under an instrumental rationale is only that required to provide justification for decisions by fostering trust or garnering credibility for the specific decision or the process in general (Stirling 2006: 98). In other words, if legitimacy is all that is sought, then minimal participation or deliberation may be employed: this may be seen as a common public view of ‘desultory consultation’, a potential stimulus of NIMBYism.

Walls *et al.* (2005) provide a history of engagement with lay publics in the context of new technologies, locating the move to participatory and deliberative engagement within broader societal and sociological changes. These include global developments

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<sup>2</sup> Often characterised as ‘DAD’: ‘decide, announce, defend’ (Renn *et al.* 1995)

in the nature of capitalism (roughly the imposition of private sector-style models, in other words, neo-liberalism), the rise of green, consumer and lifestyle politics (and the associated rises in public expectations), and in the UK specifically, the occurrence of high profile risk-related crises such as BSE and the Brent Spar. The issue is again seen as essentially being one of *trust*, in the context of a move from a Fordist system characterised by corporatism and “a compact between capital and labour mediated by the state (Fox, 1974)” (Walls *et al.* 2005: 643), and the post-Fordist economy in which no trust in the state, in particular, can be guaranteed. However, their analysis of the engagement process surrounding GMOs in food (in the UK) highlights that strenuous efforts to engage cannot guarantee any re-establishment of trust. These issues will be returned to in discussing RETs as ‘new’ or ‘developing’ technologies. It is important to note that in most of the literature there is a consensus that public participation in policy-making, particularly when facilitated in deliberative modes, is thought to be an important response to the shifting of power or agency from the sphere of the state to those of markets and the civic society, in the move from government to *governance* through the creation of more widely legitimate consensus.

In summary then, participation by lay publics and the deliberative model of decision-making are argued to have the normative benefits of increasing democratisation, the substantive benefits of producing better and more informed policy, and the instrumental benefits of fostering trust in governing institutions and legitimating decisions. Webler *et al.* offer the following summary:

“There are three main reasons why environmental and social impact assessments include opportunities for public participation. First, the competence of the final decision is higher when local knowledge is included and when expert knowledge is publicly examined. Second, the legitimacy of the final outcome is higher when potentially affected parties can state their own case before their peers and have equal chances to influence the outcome (i.e., the process was fair). Third, public participation is identified with proper conduct of democratic government in public decision making activities.” (Webler *et al.* 1995: 443)

The majority of claims made in the literature fall within these broad categories, and there is not time within this paper to fully explore the nuances that are put forward (of which the social learning examples given above are perhaps typical). Instead we here identify a few of the key supporting arguments for the claims made.

### **3 Mechanisms and typologies of Participatory-Deliberative Public Engagement**

As has been highlighted, different studies in the literature offer different definitions of what counts as a participatory, inclusive or deliberative process or mechanism, depending on different definitions of the terms. As an example to demonstrate the variety of tools, mechanisms or processes that have been examined, Rowe and Frewer (2005) mention Rosener (1975) as listing 39, and another source (NEF 1999) as listing more than 30, ‘techniques’ of public participation. Their own summary figure (fig 2, p. 257) lists over 100 techniques, many of which overlap through differing definitions or organisational branding. Included are simple ‘tools’, proper mechanisms, and entire processes. However, when attention turns to specifically deliberative mechanisms, much more consistency is observed:

- O'Neill (2001b) lists citizens' juries, citizens' panels, in-depth discussion groups, focus groups and consensus conferences as specific new and formal deliberative 'institutions' (484)
- Bloomfield *et al.* (2001) quote governmental 'grey' literature as including "citizens' juries, focus groups, visioning exercises, issue forums, and even interactive websites" (506) in *Guidance on enhancing public participation in local government* (DETR 1998)
- Abelson *et al.* (2001) describe deliberative methods as including "citizens' juries, planning cells, deliberative polling, consensus conferences and citizens' panels" (10)
- Bulkeley and Mol (2003) give a list of types of participatory processes, along with examples of projects "including (but not limited to) consensus conferences, citizens' juries, roundtables and focus groups." (150)
- Owens (2004) quotes "focus groups, citizens' juries or panels, round tables, 'visioning', and consensus conferences" (1145) as examples of new and deliberative engagement fora.
- Rowe and Frewer (2004), in a review of participation evaluations, list "consensus conferences, citizen advisory committees, citizen advisory boards, focus groups, task forces, community advisory forums, citizen initiatives, citizen juries, planning cells, citizen panels, public meetings, workshops, public hearings, and others" (550) in this literature.
- Rowe and Frewer (2005) produce a typology of 'public engagement' techniques (discussed below) that includes within the category of 'public participation' (defined as facilitating a 'two-way communication' between 'sponsors' and 'public representatives'): action planning workshops, citizens' juries, consensus conferences, negotiated rule making, task forces, deliberative opinion polls, planning cells, and New England-style town meetings with voting (281-282).
- Van den Hove (2006) describes the field of deliberative participatory processes in the field of environment and sustainable development as including: "focus groups, citizens' juries, consensus conferences, co-operative discourse, dialogue groups, stakeholders' workshops, participatory expert workshops, reflection forums, deliberative interviews, voluntary agreements, eco-audits, policy simulation exercises, deliberative foresights, concerted environmental management, mediation, regulatory negotiation, consultative forums, deliberative conflict resolution processes, environmental negotiations, etc." (11)

These, then, are the specific mechanisms considered to fall within the definition of 'participatory-deliberative public engagement'. Before briefly outlining what each of them entails, we address the production of a typology of engagement mechanisms, which synthesises earlier work on the evaluation of such processes.

### **3.1.1 Evaluation studies and a resulting typology**

Evaluation is an important sector of the literature, in which engagement processes are assessed for their effectiveness, fairness, productiveness etc. The reasons for conducting evaluation are summarised by Rowe *et al.* as:

“financial (to ensure the proper use of public or institutional money), practical (to learn from past mistakes to allow exercises to be run better in future), ethical/moral (to establish fair representation and ensure that those involved are not deceived as to the impact of their contribution) and research-related (to increase our understanding of human and organizational behavior). As such, few would deny that evaluation *should* be done when possible.” (Rowe *et al.* 2005: 332).

Abelson *et al.* (2001) consider that the majority of evaluation studies focus on developing and applying ‘evaluative criteria’ by which processes can be judged, and these in the main deploy variations or extensions of Webler’s (1995) framework of fairness and competence criteria, including Petts (2001), Rowe and Frewer (2000), Pratchett (1999), Beierle (1999), Beierle and Konisky (2000), McIver (1998), Smith and Wales (1996) and Crosby (1995). These criteria are summarised as consisting of:

1. “decisions about representation;
2. the structure of the process or procedures;
3. the information that informs the process; and
4. outcomes and decisions arising from the process” (Abelson 2001: 22)

The first two of these groups of criteria can be seen as reflecting the normative dimensions of democracy and fairness, and the last two those of substantive issues of the quality of the decision. Webler (1995) explicitly asserts that the first three forms of assessment are purely about the procedures adopted in conducting deliberation as a primarily communicative moment, and they therefore ignore to some extent the ways in which such communications fit into broader policy-making. The fourth set of criteria is an addition intended to deal with such ‘outcome’ issues, and Abelson *et al.* derive it from Beierle (1999), who they say spells out the necessary outputs of a fair and competent process as being that it:

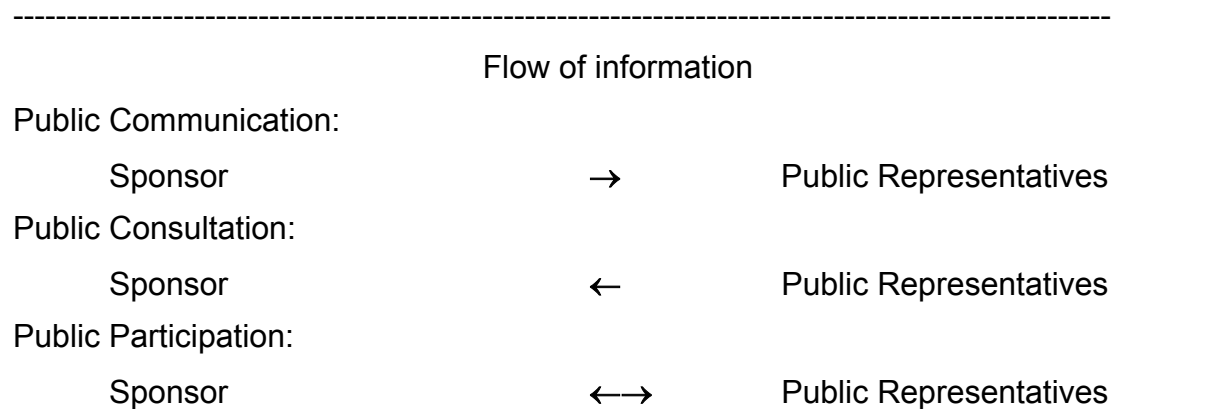
1. “inform and educate the public;
2. incorporate public values, assumptions and preferences;
3. increase the quality of decisions;
4. foster trust in institutions;
5. reduce conflict among stakeholders; [and represent]
6. cost effective decision-making” ((Abelson 2001: 22-23)

In a sense, these criteria, if fulfilled, are thought to define a ‘legitimate’ participatory-deliberative process in terms of its outputs.

Rowe and Frewer (2004), on the other hand, argue that defining an ‘effective’ process in terms of its outputs is highly problematic, raising a number of questions. These include firstly the question of whether universal criteria of ‘effectiveness’ can be applied across different mechanisms, which they see as generating ‘fuzzy’, unhelpful and (by implication too subjective) criteria such as “being perceived as fair by all involved”. Secondly, they ask in whose interest ‘effectiveness’ is being judged; participants, stakeholders (if these are different), the external public, those conducting the process or the sponsors? Thirdly, they question the possibility of satisfactorily identifying ‘outcomes’, or even ‘end-points’, of such processes as a basis for evaluation. The recommendations of a participatory exercise might be adopted years after it was conducted, for example, and so they prefer to concentrate

solely on procedural issues. They conclude that the most useful typology of participatory mechanisms would in turn rest on typologies of both research/participation 'contexts' and definitions of 'effectiveness' in order to answer the question of 'what works best, when?'. This question would indeed seem to be of the highest importance for the attempt to create a 'framework for public engagement' in the TSEC project, however instead the authors have produced a typology of the mechanisms themselves. The issues of how to define the 'context' of engagement will be returned to later in this paper, although it is worth pointing out that Rosener (1975), Glass (1979) and Nelkin and Pollak (1979) are quoted as useful early attempts (2005: 260-261) at matching engagement types to contexts.

The typology produced by Rowe and Frewer (2005) is based on categorising their 100+ identified mechanisms of 'public engagement' at two levels. The reasoning is worth reproducing in some detail, as it is logical and systematic. They first draw a distinction based on the flow of information, reproduced below.



**Figure 1. The three types of public engagement** (reproduced from Rowe and Frewer 2005: 255)

This model nicely distinguishes different aspects of (formal) public ‘engagement’, and yet still seems to mis-categorise certain aspects of mechanisms. For example, ‘consultation’ is portrayed as consisting solely of information flowing from the public to sponsors, and yet a key aspect of ‘consultations’ is that they seek *responses* to what the authors call ‘public communication’ (e.g. consultation documents).

The mechanisms under consideration are sub-divided into categories on the basis of well-argued “key attributes” (procedural ones) that rest on a declared definition of ‘effectiveness’ *as information flow and processing*, one which they claim subsumes other issues such as ‘learning’, ‘obtaining public views’ or ‘representation’:

“Using the language of our information flow model of *public engagement*, it [competence/fairness/efficiency] refers to *maximising the relevant information (knowledge and/or opinions) from the maximum number of relevant sources and transferring this efficiently to the appropriate receivers*” (2005: 263).

Additional factors are given as relevant to consultation and participation, including the maximizing of the transfer *and processing* of relevant information, and the *aggregation* of participation ‘information’ (views and opinions). The authors’ list of key, between-mechanism process variables that are used to derive their typology are as follows:

- Participant selection method: Controlled or uncontrolled?
- Facilitation of information elicitation: Present or not?
- Response mode: Unlimited/open or limited/closed?
- Information input [from sponsors]: Set or flexible information provision?
- Medium of information transfer: Face-to-face, or not [at a distance/virtual]?
- Facilitation of aggregation: Structured or unstructured? (adapted from 2005: 265)

There are a number of quibbles that can be raised regarding this model, not least that it is produced from the viewpoint of a highly quantitative and rigorous social science approach that values certain characteristics of data over others (are values

and opinions really ‘information’?). However as the authors themselves claim, it appears to be the most systematic attempt to provide a typology of participatory mechanisms extant in the literature. As mentioned above, they categorise action planning workshops, citizens’ juries, consensus conferences, negotiated rule making, task forces, deliberative opinion polls, planning cells, and New England-style town meetings with voting, as ‘participation’ (i.e. deliberative) mechanisms. Interestingly, focus groups and citizens’ panels are dismissed by Rowe and Frewer (2005) as forms of ‘consultation’ (defined as one-way communication from citizens to policy-makers), on the basis that “there is no significant sponsor information” (280) in the case of focus groups. No such reason is given for citizens’ panels<sup>3</sup> being considered as a consultation method on their own, but it may be possible (although only just conceivable) that some such panels are convened with no ‘sponsor information’ as input, making them consultation methods in this typology. These exceptions aside, the typology otherwise largely concurs with the literature sampled at the beginning of this section in listing those mechanisms that are agreed to be participatory and deliberative.

### **3.1.2 Summary of participative-deliberative methods**

The following description of methods is taken from a DEMOS paper arguing for ‘upstream’ public engagement in science and technology (Wilsdon and Willis 2004):

*“Deliberative polling:* In a deliberative poll, a large, demographically representative group of perhaps several hundred people conducts a debate, usually including the opportunity to cross-examine key players. The group is polled on the issue before and after the debate.

*Focus groups:* A focus group is a qualitative method used widely in commercial market research and increasingly in academic social research. Typically, a group of eight to ten people, broadly representative of the population being studied, is invited to discuss the issue under review, usually guided by a trained facilitator working to a designed protocol. The group is not required to reach any conclusions, but the contents of the discussion are studied for what they may reveal about shared understandings, attitudes and values. Focus groups may also help to identify the factors (which large-scale surveys rarely do) that shape attitudes and responses, including trust or mistrust. They also help in the design and interpretation of quantitative public opinion surveys.

*Citizens’ juries:* A citizens’ jury (or panel) involves a small group of lay participants (usually 12–20) receiving, questioning and evaluating presentations by experts on a particular issue, often over three to four days. At the end, the group is invited to make recommendations. In the UK to date, local authorities, government agencies, policy researchers and consultants have convened over 200 citizens’ juries on a wide range of policy issues.

*Consensus conferences:* By convention, a group of 16 lay volunteers is selected for a consensus conference according to socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. The members meet first in private, to decide the key questions they wish to raise. There is then a public phase, lasting perhaps three days, during which the group hears and interrogates expert witnesses, and draws up a report. The main

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<sup>3</sup> Citizens’ panels are defined by the authors as focus groups with standing or rotating membership, being consulted longitudinally on different topics



differences between a consensus conference and a citizens' jury or focus group are the greater opportunity for the participants to become more familiar with the technicalities of the subject, the greater initiative allowed to the panel, the admission of the press and the public, and the higher cost.

*Stakeholder dialogues:* This is a generic term applied to processes that bring together affected and interested parties (stakeholders) to deliberate and negotiate on a particular issue. Stakeholders can range from individuals and local residents to employees and representatives of interest groups.

*Internet dialogues :* This term is applied to any form of interactive discussion that takes place through the internet. It may be restricted to selected participants, or open to anyone with internet access. The advantages of internet dialogue include the ability to collect many responses quickly and to analyse them using search engines. Similarly, they can combine the benefits of rapid exchange of ideas (brainstorming) with a complete record. On the other hand, participation may be self-selecting and unrepresentative, and the anonymity of the internet may encourage impulsive rather than considered responses. Anonymity may make it difficult to investigate the provenance of information provided.

*Deliberative mapping:* This is a process in which expert and citizen assessments are integrated. In a deliberative mapping exercise, citizens' panels and specialist panels are convened and interact with each other, allowing participants to interrogate each others' views and knowledge, and exposing framing assumptions made by both sides. Deliberative mapping seeks to bring together the views of 'experts' and 'public', through face-to-face deliberation between these two groups. The approach was pioneered through a consortium of research institutes in the UK, and applied to the specific problem of organ transplant options." (Wilsdon and Willis 2004: 42-44)

## **4 Critiques of Participation and Deliberation**

In this section, there is discussion of the main critiques applied to the use of participatory and deliberative discussion. The critiques that have been applied tend in the main to reflect the three rationales, arguing that in theory or in practice, the model of participation and deliberation does not deliver the goods that are promised. A summary of the critiques would state that normatively, too few citizens are involved in participation for it to have a truly democratising effect, substantively it is not clear that qualitatively better policy is produced, or that the cost and effort required can be justified in efficiency terms, and instrumentally, other factors in the surrounding policy arena may negate any trust and legitimacy generated by the processes. The normative critiques are discussed in addressing democracy and representation, and the following sections concentrate on critiques of the substantive effectiveness of such processes, and on their instrumental role.

### **4.1 Critiques of normative legitimacy: democracy and representation**

#### **4.1.1 Democracy**

Normative rationales for participation and deliberation rest on calls for greater democracy, as argued above. Crucial to these calls is a claim that existing methods of policy-making privilege certain groups and interests, those of entrenched elites. In the areas of science and technology, the privileged groups are 'experts' and 'scientists', whose input has been treated as the only relevant information in the

technical-rational model, based on a model of the public as being 'information deficient'. The democratic argument suggests that in the 'laboratory without walls' represented by the implementation of new technologies, affected citizens must have a say in their implementation, as "the influence of power undermines rationality (Flyvberg, 1998)" (Carson and Martin 2002: 106) and instead, as mentioned, the 'common good' should prevail (Mansbridge 1990). Their relevant knowledge is in the areas of values, social practices, and science in action in the real world (e.g. Wynne 1996), but their voices *should* be heard as 'affected citizens'. The arguments run that interest group models of policy-making<sup>4</sup> are no longer appropriate, and should be supplanted by some form of pluralism, best attained by allowing access of a diversity of views. In this sense, deliberative processes are argued "to create a neutral deliberative space beyond the conflictual and competitive environment in which interest groups conventionally operate. It is the very fact that these processes work outside the state and outside the forces of interest groups, which make them effective for the democratic project (Dryzek 2000b: 83)" (Hendriks, 2002: 69). Referenda are sometimes mentioned as the ultimate extension of a democratic mandate to all affected citizens, and O'Neill (2001b) offers a literary parallel in discussing the 'Alejandro' solution<sup>5</sup>: like the perfect map being the same size as the territory, the perfect representative congress of mankind is mankind. In political terms this is linked to the concept of 'direct democracy', and O'Neill comments that "one version of the idea represents a form of democratic anarchism that is attractive" (2001b: 485). However the information deficit model still holds sway, particularly amongst those with power over decision-making, and it is more often thought appropriate that only *informed* citizens can effectively deliberate on the issues, and therefore offer relevant informational input.

#### **4.1.2 Representation**

Normatively, the argument that citizens should be actively involved in taking decisions that affect them is often presented uncritically as a self-supporting democratic principle. O'Neill (2001b) provides perhaps the best discussion of the arguments lying behind this claim, and crucially examines the issue of *representation*. Accounts such as Carson and Martin (2002) and Rowe and Frewer (2005) explore the specifics of how to achieve representativeness within participatory mechanisms, but O'Neill questions what such mechanisms are attempting to achieve. His primary distinction in looking at the issue is to identify the 'social science' models of representation and democratic ones.

In the former mode, it is often claimed that small deliberative groups are 'unrepresentative' of affected populations (Kenyon *et al.* 2001), however this criticism appears to be based on the ideas of social science validity, in which a researcher cannot make generalisations from too small a sample: "the argument runs, small scale qualitative techniques in social science, if they are supposed to tell us how citizens are going to respond, will be inadequate" (O'Neill 2001b: 487). He characterises this as the 'deductive-nomological' model of the aim of the primary role

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<sup>4</sup> This model is characterised as 'at the table' bargaining, where powerful interest groups and industry representatives hold sway in many policy areas, either through literally being present where decisions are made, or through more circumspect lobbying activities (Hendriks 2006)

<sup>5</sup> The name comes from a novel, *The Congress*, by Borges (1979).

of social science as being to discover law-like regularities in a population, and to offer advice on the *effectiveness* of different policies for achieving a certain aim.

Rowe and Frewer appear to subscribe to a similarly quantitative model in discussing validity and reliability with reference to assessing the effectiveness of participation (2004), and in initially suggesting that (*ceteris paribus*) affected populations, sample sizes and active participant numbers should all be maximised (2005). O'Neill suggests that such accounts ignore the stress on explanation, which involves not just spotting regularities but offering interpretation of views through attention to the meanings of citizens' responses, treating the subjects "as communicative agents, rather than objects (Habermas, 1984)" (2001b: 488), and deriving explanatory insights into why people act as they do. Thus even unrepresentative samples of citizens (for example, in a demographic sense) can offer meaningful and useful data in the form of their reasoned views and opinions, ones that are likely to reflect wider public understandings.

Rowe and Frewer (2005) settle for arguing that the purpose of participatory mechanisms is to maximise the collection of relevant information from citizens, and to this extent a *controlled selection* of participants is preferable (as opposed to e.g. the uncontrolled manner in which anyone can respond to a written or on-line consultation document). Similarly, it is argued by Carson and Martin (2002) and others that the fact that the smaller samples in deliberative forums are *informed* publics (by value of receiving and discussing a diversity of information on the subject during the deliberative process) they are therefore more likely to offer *relevant* input. A well-known but still intrinsic dilemma in the design of participatory processes is the trading-off of the extent of participation and the competence of those involved or their depth of understanding. Attempts to resolve this include televotes in Australia (Carson and Martin 2002), deliberative polling (Fishkin 1991; 1995 ;2000) and 'Discussion Groups' (see CoRWM 2006 for a recent use of this method), but the problem of the level of informed deliberation in these methods still pertains.

Despite the arguments that small samples cannot truly be statistically representative (and perhaps do not need to be), it is normal for selection to be based on demographic characteristics wherever possible. However, if deliberations are intended to reflect likely interest- and value-based disagreements, and aim at their resolution or accommodation, then perhaps we should concur with Webler that "to be done correctly, random selection would chose a number of people dependent on the distribution of interest and value positions among the population, so that no position is under-represented" (1995: footnote to p.53). This would address the issues of political rather than social scientific representation raised by O'Neill (2001b), and certainly the Habermasian basis of deliberation as communicative action, in which "discourse should not merely focus on including a great number of people, but also on getting all points of view represented (Webler 1995: 61).

In the democratic models, O'Neill (2001b) dismisses certain characteristics of the public as not needing representation, as being irrelevant. He raises the 'politics of presence' as being problematic, as individuals have many different 'identities', and people may for example reject the label assigned to them in e.g. focus groups, and points out that being a member of a group doesn't make one a representative of it. Neither are participants democratic representatives in the sense of having been authorised to speak on behalf of others, as delegated and MPs are, and they are not in any way comparably accountable to their supposed 'constituencies'. The escape

from this seeming denial of any democratic weight to participatory exercises is the method of selecting participants. Random selection is thought to have the advantage of creating a group of participants who are less likely than self-selecting citizens to be biased or susceptible to interest group capture or representation<sup>6</sup> and the random selection itself in theory can insulate the process from accusations that any other citizen was excluded from the *possibility* of participating (Carson and Martin 2002). On similar lines, an ‘Athenian’ model of democracy is sometimes referenced, in which positions of power were filled by the drawing of lots, creating in theory “a social order of equals where citizens take turns in positions of power [...] power is not distributed to those who desire it and [...] both power and responsibility circulate amongst citizens” (O’Neill 2001b: 494, see also Hansen 1991). Similar to the Athenians in this system, participants as ‘representatives of the public’ may not be accountable, but are usually in temporary positions of influence, again reinforcing the likelihood of offering disinterested contributions towards the common good.

Normative arguments thus tend to rest on the idea that participatory and particularly deliberative engagement mechanisms allow ordinary members of the affected public to offer their reasoned and disinterested views in decision-making forums, which views are assumed to be generally reflective of the wider population’s views as citizens. In addition, the fact that such participants are preferably selected from the general populace in a controlled, random and demographically representative manner offers a defence that such participation is ‘democratic’ at least in an Athenian sense.

#### **4.2 Critiques of substantive effectiveness: better policy?**

It is widely acknowledged, even by its advocates, that the conduct of participatory and in particular deliberative processes of public engagement is time-consuming, costly, and effort intensive. As Renn *et al.* comment (1995), it is unlikely that anyone would agree to go through such effort unless it is likely to aid them in a meaningful way. The preceding discussions of the difficulties in establishing a satisfactory definition of ‘effectiveness’ for the purposes of evaluation highlight the ease with which critiques of effectiveness can be made.

The most simple and straightforward critiques rest on issues of cost-effectiveness, and are best answered by stress on the intangible benefits that are claimed to accrue from deliberation, namely legitimacy, trust, social learning and so forth. Accusations that such processes are deployed in a similar manner to traditional ‘desultory’ consultation (i.e. that they are used purely instrumentally and have no outcome on the resulting policy) are complicated by definitions of how to identify ‘outcomes’. Further discussion of the potential for strategic ‘use’ of participation and deliberation are addressed in the next section.

A more theoretical critique of the participatory turn in both development policy (Henkel and Stirrat 2001) and technology appraisal (Owens 2000), has developed that characterises the process as a knee-jerk reaction to the acknowledged failings of the previous regime. This critique draws parallels between the shortcomings of participatory development or appraisal and their antecedents, and represents the

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed, random selection processes can specify that participants are not to be recruited if they are specifically ‘interested’ in the topic at hand e.g. they are members of relevant industries or pressure groups, see CSEC 2005: 4

participatory turn as in which “there is no systematic ideology underlying this new orthodoxy. Rather it consists of a set of loosely connected ideas and approaches developed in response to what its proponents see as an older misguided orthodoxy or development.” (Henkel and Stirrat 2001: 169).

Hajer and Kesselring’s (1999) evaluation of the different processes used to arrive at innovative transport policies in Munich are considered by a number of authors (see for example Petts and Brooks 2006) to offer evidence of a direct comparison of participatory and traditional public engagement or consultation, in which the more inclusionary processes come out worse. In fact, it would be more accurate to describe the competing processes as being two strands of a deliberative public and stakeholder engagement, in which the stakeholders produced the more creative solutions for addressing Munich’s transport problems.

### **4.3 Critiques of instrumentality: strategic uses of participatory-deliberative public engagement**

The chief critique aimed at the instrumental rationale for participatory-deliberative engagement is that of ‘decision justification’ (Stirling 2006), in which it is pointed out that such processes can be used by different actors in order to provide legitimating support for particular outcomes. The following is an *extremely* condensed summary of a paper<sup>7</sup> written comparing a literature critiquing ‘participatory development’, the dominant model of delivering development packages to communities in the developing world since 1991 (see Cernea 1991; Francis 2001), and the author’s experience in facilitating deliberative methods in projects addressing the management of radioactive waste<sup>8</sup>. It outlines the potentialities for different actors, from the sponsoring organisations and the deliberation practitioners to the interest group and public participants, to use strategic behaviour within such deliberations, in ways that are to a degree antithetical to the Habermasian ideal.

An initial observation is that the conduct of participation or deliberation is an area in which there is a great deal of *scope* for strategic behaviour: in the decision to fund and set up such processes; in the establishment of expertise in the conduct of such processes; in the negotiations over the design of the processes; in the selection or self-selection of participants; in the decision to participate, or not; in the decision to disrupt the process, or not; in the facilitation of the process; in the production of ‘outcomes’ from the process, and; in the decision to incorporate the outcomes, or not, into policy or decisions.

#### **4.3.1 Strategic behaviour by sponsors.**

In literature on participatory development (chiefly taken from Cooke and Kothari 2001: *Participation; the New Tyranny?*), the following critiques of strategic uses of participation have been discerned.

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<sup>7</sup> Cass (2006) *Strategic Behaviour in Participatory-Deliberative Public Engagement: an overview of potential for abuse* (unpublished)

<sup>8</sup> Specifically public meetings, focus groups, citizens’ panels and MCDA processes within the Ministry of Defence-sponsored ISOLUS project (Interim Storage Of Laid-Up Submarines) and several rounds of the public engagement processes of CoRWM (the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management).

- ‘Desultory consultation’: The most common critique of participatory-deliberative engagement processes is that they have no more influence on decisions than traditional forms of ‘desultory consultation’, in which public views are collected, but not acted upon, in that they simply seek support for previously determined policy agendas, in what Stirling (2006) calls ‘decision justification’. In this view “Far from being a transformative process in which local people are able to exert control over decision-making, participation becomes a well-honed tool for engineering consent to projects and programmes whose framework has already been determined in advance” (Hildyard *et al.* 2001: 59-60). The deliberative literature also identifies this critique as being well-established, if only as a cynical attitude, amongst public participants (Coote and Lenaghan, 1997; McIver, 1998; Lenaghan, 1999; Dunkerley and Glasner, 1998; Abelson *et al.* 2001: 17). Clearly this often-met criticism needs to be countered if participatory-deliberative engagement is not to be dismissed as simply tokenistic (cf. Arnstein 1969).

- Providing empirical support for broader agendas: ‘Government by focus group’ is a common popular critique of Blairite ‘Third Way’ governance<sup>9</sup>, and this critique is found in the developmental literature where the, perhaps analogous, concern is the translation of ‘real’ needs into those that development agencies can realistically provide (Mosse 2001: 22). Christoplos (1995), writing about Participatory Rural Assessments<sup>10</sup> in Vietnam, pointed out that the reports “did not reveal an alternative to the official view [...] but served to further legitimize (the official) discourse with farmer testimonies” (1995: 17-18). In deliberation, it has been claimed that governmental bodies in particular: “frame public ‘consultations’ in terms which accord with what they feel to be potentially digestible, politically and administratively [...] a consequence may be to occlude, distort, and ultimately misrepresent how people, the objects of the consultation, actually understand and relate to the matter at issue.” (Collins and Burgess 1999: 3-4).

- Garnering institutional legitimacy: The desire for the reinvigoration of trust between institutions and the public (see Rowe and Frewer 2000; Petts 2005; Stirling 2006; Walls *et al.* 2005), is a rationale for carrying out participation that is openly admitted as an instrumental rationale, however, such an instrumentalist position can be viewed as cynical, by participants in particular. In contemporary society it can be viewed as another aspect of decision justification, in which the decision is justified by the transformation of its originating institution into a ‘participatory’ body, one that is seen to go beyond desultory consultation as traditionally practiced.

- Co-opting and enrolling potential opponents: The practice of bringing particularly oppositional NGOs into deliberative processes can be viewed as the co-option and ‘taming’ of radical threats to policy development, disguised as their ‘enrolment’ to aim smooth policy implementation. The development literature quotes a long history for the academic discussion of co-option (see Selznick 1953; Anthony 1977) that suggests that the use of participation for the co-option of dissent has existed for at least half a decade as a managerial orthodoxy (Taylor 2001: 127).

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<sup>9</sup> E.g. “Mr Blair - the focus-group premier — never leads but follows public opinion”, Phillips 2003.

<sup>10</sup> PRAs are the mechanism through which development agencies are required to work with local communities in the developing world, in order to together devise development strategies, see Cernea 1991.

Abelson *et al.* (2001: 18) suggest that similar processes are at work in the new participatory-deliberative processes.

- Discouraging or ignoring more radical participation: Some writers critiquing participatory development see the formalisation of 'participation' through the institution of highly regulated procedures as a conscious attempt to deny legitimacy to those other, informal and often more radical, forms of public engagement, through invoking "the seductive yet ultimately vague rhetoric of 'empowerment' associated with participation [...] to justify the activity [...] of outside agencies, ignoring autonomous organization, resistance and self-empowerment" (Cooke 2001: 105; Stirrat 2001). The definition of legitimate participation as residing in formal engagement processes thus has the corollary of de-legitimising other forms of engagement with the state; including those informal forms that constitute what are characterised as 'NIMBY' responses.

- Shifting the responsibility for decisions: In involving the public in the decision making process to a greater degree, the sponsoring organisations are also involved in implicitly ascribing responsibility for the decisions that are subsequently taken, and "managing administrative or political exposure to any blame that may arise if the decision were to go awry (Horlick-Jones 1996, Hood, 2002)" (Stirling 2006: 101). Thus even in situations where the public's involvement cannot be held strictly responsible in the policy failure of a unitary prescription, the use of participation itself is seen as transferring responsibility away from the decision makers, also seen by some as a form of governance of the participants (Henkel and Stirrat 2001: 179).

- Encouraging identification with the powerful: A mark of some of the most highly lauded participatory mechanisms in operation<sup>11</sup> (see concluding section) is their combination of deliberation and a formal or technical assessment process, in which public participants (or stakeholders) often mirror or approximate the decision analysis processes undertaken by the authorities themselves. The result, it is suggested, is that: "once exposed to the complexities of the system, participants become sympathetic to the challenges faced by decision makers who deal with these types of issues on a daily basis [...] they may lose their lay perspective and their views may become more closely aligned with those of the 'professionals' (Mullen 2000)" (Abelson *et al.*, 1995).

- Discursive uses of 'participation': It is argued (particularly in the developmental literature) that the discourse of 'participation' has been used rhetorically to link processes with historically powerful discourses of 'empowerment' and 'emancipation' (see, for example Francis 2001: 85-6; Freire 1973; Boal 1992), in a strategic move to disguise the desultory nature of consultation actually taking place. The historical example of employee involvement and participation (EIP), a managerial discourse of practice of the 1960s onwards, has been offered as an analogy in a comparison between western employees and developing world 'participants', arguing that "participatory discourse and practices are part of a wider attempt to obscure the relations of power and influence between elite interests and less powerful groups [...] within global capitalism." (Taylor 2001: 122-123).

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<sup>11</sup> These include MCA (Multi-Criteria Analysis), DMCA (Deliberatory or Decision-focussed Multi-Criteria Analysis), MCDA (Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis) etc.

- Framing the process: Stirling (2006) claims that the ability to frame the problems or issues, and the right to determine the processes of participation, are in themselves major opportunities for the exercise of power. The following list is worth reproducing for its comprehensive catalogue of the opportunities for strategic action that are available to those who commission participation processes:

*“The choice of policy questions, the bounding of institutional remits, the prioritising of research, the inclusion of disciplines, the accrediting of expertise, the recruitment of committees, the setting of agendas, the structuring of enquiries, the forming of hypotheses, the choice between methodologies, the interpretation of uncertainties, the setting of base-lines, the exploring of sensitivities, the definition of metrics, the characterising of decision options, the prioritising of criteria and the constituting of ‘proof’, all provide ample latitude for contingency or agency” (Stirling 2006: 101).*

#### **4.3.2 Strategic behaviour by practitioners**

On a more reflexive point, the point has been raised in the literature that that promotion of participatory-deliberative mechanisms serves to the benefit of those who are ‘expert’ in conducting such processes, “be they academics, practitioners or policy-makers, whose ability to create and sustain this discourse is indicative of the power they possess [...] in the construction of a particular reality - one that at root is amenable to, and justifies, their existence and intervention within it” (Cook and Kothari 2001: 15).

Stirling provides a similarly comprehensive account of the factors through which participatory practitioners can, consciously or otherwise, influence the outcomes of the processes that they enact:

*“Relationships with sponsors, the constitution of oversight, the design of the process, the choice of focus, the partitioning of perspectives, the engagement of stakeholders, the recruitment of participants, the phrasing of questions, the bounding of remits, the characterising of alternative, the provision of information, the medium of discourse, the conduct of facilitation, the demeanour of practitioners, the personalities of protagonists, the dynamics of deliberation, the management of dissensus, the documentation of findings and the articulation with policy, all provide ample scope for contingent variability, inadvertent bias or the exercise of deliberate conditioning influence” (Stirling 2006: 101).*

Stirling uses this analysis to suggest that there is no necessary *a priori* difference between technical analysis and participatory deliberation in terms of their susceptibility to being used instrumentally for decision justification

The following section offers examples of the opportunities for strategic action by professional deliberation practitioners.

- Consolidation of position in network: Beginning at the most abstract level, the emergence of an ‘epistemic community’ of participatory and deliberative practitioners, defined as “a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant information within that domain or issue area” (Haas 1992: 3; see also Haas 1990) has been identified in the domain of ‘public views on the environment/technology’ during the mainstreaming of participatory-deliberative processes as a legitimate, or *necessary*, aspect of policy-



making (Chilvers 2006). To borrow a concept from Actor Network Theory, there is a sense in which participation practitioners have thus inserted themselves into the network of policy making as an 'obligatory passage point' (Callon 1986), a node in the network through which knowledge *must* be passed. Francis (2001) uses quotes from the key document in which 'participation' was adapted as the dominant paradigm in the World Bank's model of development (Cernea 1991) to illustrate a similar point: "The social scientist is the only kind of expert who is professionally trained to 'listen to the people'. Social knowledge thus developed becomes a 'hearing system' able to amplify the listening for managers and policy makers, too" (Francis 2001: 75).

- Cooptation into/identification with the powerful: It is important to note reflexively, in passing, that the facilitators of participatory and deliberative processes may be viewed as co-opted by the sponsoring organisations in becoming part of the policy delivery process. This is of particular relevance to the TSEC project if 'public acceptability' is explicitly the major policy aim. There is a concern that in undertaking this role, practitioners may be accepting "the poisoned chalice of being expected to deliver resolution of these conflicts; since this often appears to mean – "deliver a compliant public to science, industry and government"" (Wynne, 2006). In other words, process sponsors may co-opt these actors, and make the success of their intellectual projects and (more prosaically) their careers dependent on the success of the implementation of the agendas and projects of the sponsors.

- Process design: If one accepts another of Stirling's hypotheses, that "[e]ven without postulating direct and deliberate efforts at manipulation, then, it is difficult to rule out the possibility that the design or implementation of participatory analysis will be subject to implicit, but potentially powerful, conditioning pressures" (Stirling 2006: 98), including the anticipation of certain outcomes, then practitioners may be co-responsible for process design that favours the preferred policy of incumbent interests.. The 'steering group' is a potentially important 'independent' counterbalancing factor in the design of participatory processes, but may itself be a site of struggle or power (see Sam 2006).

- Information provision and 'expert' selection: The role of providing neutral and objective information to be used as the basis of deliberations by participants, and of selecting interest group representatives and experts in some mechanisms, is fraught with the potential for accusations of strategic behaviour. In the UK 'GM Nation?' engagement process the materials used as prompts for deliberation have been evaluated as a problematic mixture of facts and values, in the face of which accusations of bias are always possible (Horlick-Jones *et al* 2004).

- Facilitation: In effect, the purpose of the facilitation of deliberation is expressly to counter the possibility of strategic behaviour, especially in preventing the discursive dominance of individual participants or 'experts', and in 'maximising the amount of relevant information' (in Webler's (1995) terms). However, there is the potential for this 'powerful' role to be abused, and for the facilitator themselves to act strategically.

- Translation and filtering of information, before, during, and after the process: To some degree the presentation of deliberations in a textual format always involves translations, filtering, and selection, and the predominant criterion for such processes is that of policy relevance (Mosse 2001; Christopoulos 1995). In the arena of participatory development, Uma Kothari points out that in such processes "the

production and representation of knowledge is inseparable from the exercise of power.” (2001: 143), related again to the inescapable situation of ‘speaking for’ others as a translator or spokesperson. A key dilemma in the reporting of deliberations is the existence of implicit or explicit drives towards *consensus* or *conflict reduction* (see Van den Hove 2006), and thus the question of how to acknowledge minority views. Visual or numerical data are still privileged by many decision-makers (see Latour 1987 on ‘immutable mobiles’), as are the ‘representative’ models of democracy, so that the presentation of the ‘results’ of deliberations are an area with much latitude for strategic behaviour, in which minority views can easily be ‘squashed’ even though their identification may be the most important role of deliberation. This is particularly true when deliberation aims to explore issues such as trust in institutions and the public acceptability of policy options.

### **4.3.3 Strategic use by participants**

In participative-deliberative exercises, there are generally two varieties of participants: the selected members of the public, and the specialists who appear in certain methods to represent interest-based views or expertise. In the case of the former, the latitude for strategic behaviour is fairly limited, but a number of possibilities can be raised:

- Firstly, there can be a rejection of the process itself, or a disruptive attitude towards deliberation, for a number of reasons. Public participants may reject the neutrality of the practitioners, and identify them with the sponsoring organisation, leading to, or based on, a suspicion that deliberative processes are a newer, more sophisticated version of ‘desultory consultation’. They may repeatedly question the information being presented to them as ‘spin’, as biased, and so forth. These are all valid concerns that should be listened to and reported, but in the short term, this behaviour can be inimical to an ideal deliberative situation.

- Secondly, public participants can choose to ‘free-ride’, consciously refusing to contribute their thoughts or opinions when prompted. Good facilitation requires the rights to silence and to not be coerced to be respected, and so there is no genuinely useful response to such strategic behaviour, beyond acknowledging it as genuinely representative of some public attitudes.

- Thirdly, public participants may secretly hold interested positions and thus in a sense deliberate dishonestly.

- Finally, specific tools within deliberative processes, particularly those that incorporate aspects of technical assessment, can be strategically influenced by intelligent participants. Again, facilitators or other citizens are often capable of identifying such behaviour and rendering it impotent simply by making it transparent.

The work of Carolyn Hendriks (e.g. 2002; 2006a, 2006b) is important in addressing the strategic behaviour of interest groups in deliberative processes. Central to her thesis is the proposition that interest groups differ in their willingness to participate in deliberations, and that this willingness (or lack thereof) is largely due to instrumental judgements about the benefits accruing to themselves; that is to say, that the choice to participate itself is strategically determined (Hendriks 2006b). She suggests that interest groups may respond by engaging or disengaging, and by doing so positively or negatively, and that these choices are often based on structural differences in the groups themselves. To generalise, Hendriks (2006b) argues that the differences

between the roles, players and conditions involved in deliberation and the 'old paradigm' (of decision-making through 'interest group pluralism' and traditional lobbying activities 'at the table') make it more likely that less powerful or policy-connected groups will want to participate, and less likely that interest groups that already have a place at the policy table will want to. This might be thought of as a redressing of power imbalances, were it not for the requirement that deliberation allows access to a diversity of different interest positions, and thus the disengagement of one group of interests will in practice force the disengagement of others in the interests of impartiality.

Hendriks also points out that the role played by interest representatives is an intriguing compromise. Despite the fact that "citizens' forums pose fundamental challenges to the way most interest organisations conceptualise 'the public' and democracy, in the end most decide to participate or at least support citizens' deliberations" (2006b :572-573). She suggests that this is in part because the nature of deliberation permits representatives of such organisations to fulfil their role of promoting interests: "[i]t engages partisans not as deliberators, but in different roles where they are not required to let go of their strategic goals" (2006b :594). Strategic behaviour by these actors both in the decision to participate and in their contributions, then, are contained and in a sense neutralised through the deliberative process.

Having considered the potential for strategic behaviour in the conduct of deliberative and participatory public engagement, we now turn to explore a number of issues surrounding the context of such processes.

#### **4.4 Participatory-Deliberative Public Engagement within broader political processes**

As was mentioned in discussing the difficulty of evaluating process 'outcomes' or 'policy uptake', a number of factors contingently affect the ways in which participatory-deliberative engagement impacts on decision-making. A number of these factors arise from paradoxes and dilemmas inherent in conducting such processes, that are themselves dependent on certain choices inherent in process design. Another paper produced in this literature review period<sup>12</sup> outlines these intrinsic paradoxes and dilemmas in more detail that can be accommodated here, but the essential points are summarised below.

- Opening up vs closing down: Stirling raises the paradox arising from this fundamental distinction between types of appraisal processes (both rational-technical and participatory-deliberative) as follows: "*Whilst the facility and stress of a decision maker's job may be eased by the 'unitary and prescriptive' recommendations of a closing down process, 'plural and conditional' advice in an opening up process may have the effect of enhancing the status, responsibility and accountability of decision makers.*" (Stirling 2006: 106-7). He thus suggests that the choice of whether or not to pursue consensus and/or conflict resolution in process design fundamentally changes the nature of the 'outputs' produced, raising the question of where the moment of decision making is located (2006: 105-107)? When 'unitary, prescriptive' recommendations are produced (the product of a consensus), it is within the process, which may lead to suspicion of strategic behaviour and 'decision justification'. When

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<sup>12</sup> Cass (2006) *Paradoxes of Participation, Dilemmas of Deliberation* (unpublished)

multiple viewpoints or conditional advice are produced, it moves beyond the process, with the attendant suspicions of decision-makers being able to 'cherry-pick' favourable aspects, reducing the process once again to 'tokenism' or 'desultory consultation'.

- Consensus vs diversity: Clearly linked to opening up and closing down, and to the processes through which minority viewpoints are 'squashed'. Consensus is an implied aim of many participative-deliberatory processes and yet this aim counters their 'openness': there may not be an ideal/rational solution. In reporting, the preservation of minority views may be problematic if decision makers privilege certain forms of 'outputs', as discussed below.

- Successful implementation and patronage vs deep involvement and participation: From a critique of participatory development (Mosse 2001), it is suggested that when the instrumental (successful implementation) and normative (deep involvement) roles have both been achieved, there is a stress on publicising and promoting the linkage between the two, even though there may not be a real connection. Success in participatory development (and perhaps in participatory processes linked to RET?) often results in a relation of 'patronage' being set up between sponsors and the public, which is perhaps inimical to genuine or continuing participation.

- Pure publics, informed deliberation, representation and distancing: As outlined above, citizens are expected to contribute to deliberation on a *disinterested* basis, but the assumption is that only *informed* citizens can make 'rational' decisions for the common/social good. Once informed, citizens frequently define themselves as distanced from a 'pure public' and translate their own values in making judgements, reproducing for example information deficiency models that participatory exercises are intended to circumvent. This can manifest as public participants making distinctions between their contributions and the likely responses of an 'uninformed' public, meaning that the value of their contributions in O'Neill's (2001b) 'deductive-nomological' model (as predictions of likely public responses to policy) are problematic.

- Openness vs comparability and methodological rigour: In many forms of participatory-deliberative processes, but particularly in the case of MCA/MCDA, citizen input is considered as important the further 'upstream' it takes place, e.g. in establishing evaluation criteria, or in framing and problem definition ('opening up' the policy discourse again). However, if more than one set of citizens participate, the contingency of the framings may make comparability of outputs problematic. This may only represent a problem when technical-rational forms of policy appraisal are integrated with deliberations.

- Empowerment vs efficiency: It has been suggested that normative goals for participatory processes intrinsically clash with substantive aims of effective or efficient policy-making. In participatory development "this limited approach to participation gives rise to a number of critical tensions or paradoxes. While we emphasize the desirability of empowerment, project approaches remain largely concerned with efficiency." (Cleaver (2001), 53). Evidence of normative outcomes are partially provided by O'Neill (2001a) who found that ex-citizen jury members "frequently go on to become more involved in their workplaces or communities" (Carson and Martin 2002: 112).

#### **4.4.1 Incorporation into policy**

If Stirling's (2006) account of the manner in which processes can be strategically used for 'decision justification' is correct, then the outputs of processes should be amenable to smooth incorporation into policy. However this is clearly not the case in many instances.

The relevance of the wider policy context is brought up by Stirling, who points out that incumbent interests *per* definition hold sway in this arena. Stirling suggests that process design may even subconsciously sway participatory processes through an anticipation of certain actions or outcomes resulting, thus 'back-engineering' the decision-making process in order to pre-post-justify outcomes that are policy-amenable. Stirling links these concerns to van den Hove's (2006) highlighting of the impulse towards consensus, and draws the conclusion that such processes may automatically "suppress dissent by upholding the particular values and interests of incumbent powerful constituencies" (Stirling 2006: 101).

However, what happens when the processes bear results that appear to confound this account, as they sometimes do? One example raised in the literature by Renn (2006) is the case of a German waste facility siting decision that suggested a site near a 'regional administration centre'. It is claimed that this decision was consciously made in order to increase the likelihood of the facility being operated correctly and safely and yet this decision was not acted upon. Zurita (2006) points out that the environmental recommendations of consensus conferences are also routinely ignored. The most satisfactory process in the world is unsuccessful if its recommendations are ignored, and this is, we would argue, one of the chief reasons for a reduction in the legitimacy of participatory processes, especially if their ineffectuality is either understood or perceived by the participants themselves.

Stagl (2006), in addressing the use of participatory multi-criteria evaluation in UK energy policy, points out that "the success of a policy choice at implementation also depends on its legitimacy in the eyes of people outside the process (informed through press coverage, publicised reports or personal contacts with participants) and of course on the lessons learned by policy makers" (2006: 65). In this sense, then, other actors outside the formal realm of the participatory process can strongly influence the outcome, so that the ignorance of outcomes becomes not merely a matter of political power or expediency, but also possibly the result of a critique from other actors, specifically of legitimacy. Stagl also reflects the cynicism of the public participants regarding the integration of participatory outputs, or general political commitment to this specific exercise in stating that:

"[s]cepticism about the commitment of the public authority to public participation is quite common. Perhaps the main obstacle, which had to be overcome at the beginning of the workshops, was that several participants did not believe that their input would make a difference. They expressed scepticism about the government's intentions. For example, "Will the government take notice?" and "I don't think that what we say has any influence". Some voiced a suspicion that the White Paper had been written already. One participant wondered conspiratorially whether the government had already decided to increase nuclear energy and was testing this idea with the public." (2006: 69)

These issues of the policy uptake of process outcomes are directly linked to the accusation of 'desultory consultation' which the adoption of deliberative methods is

attempting to counter. It may be that the results of a process are simply viewed as too challenging or radical for policy-makers, in the face of other imperatives. In the case of *GM Nation?*<sup>13</sup>, the outcomes of a major innovation in public engagement was seen by a team of evaluators as problematic, as the “predominantly precautionary message about GM coming from all three strands of the debate process undoubtedly poses difficulties for the UK Government, committed as it is to producing an innovative and flexible post-Fordist economy (Burrows, 1994)” (Walls *et al.*, 2005). Another group of researchers looking at this major participation exercise pointed out that the state’s role as sponsor, combined with on-going debates in the policy world and civil society “had the potential to undermine the credibility of the debate process. This effect may go some way towards explaining widespread cynicism among both participants and the wider public about the likely impact of the debate on government policy.” (Horlick-Jones *et al.*, 8)

It is undoubtedly important to respond to cynicism about strategic *post hoc* behaviour regarding the outcomes of participatory-deliberative processes, in which citizens might “discover that their input has no chance of ever being used because the final decision is made by a group of decision makers who may be pressured to respond to other influences or perhaps because there was never any real commitment to involving the public in the first place.” (Abelson *et al.* 2001: 20). One answer is to consciously ‘plug in’ the outputs to policy decisions (see Hunt and Szerszynski 2003) by specifying in advance exactly how outputs will be incorporated, however, this raises other concerns about the closing down of policy discourses, ‘decision justification’, and other forms of strategic behaviour further ‘upstream’ in the process (Stirling 2006). Both Abelson *et al.* (2001: 23) and Stirling (2006: 97) note a trend for ‘policy uptake’ to be used as a criterion in evaluating deliberations, and yet this alone cannot satisfactorily resolve the inherent tensions.

There are other aspects affecting the degree to which the ‘outputs’ of deliberative processes may be incorporated into policy by sponsors. These can only be mentioned briefly here for reasons of space, but they involve a form of strategic behaviour by sponsors and include: the ‘cherry-picking’ of useful results; the privileging of quantifiable or visual results; the ‘squashing’ of minority opinions (based perhaps on a continuing attachment to ‘representative’ paradigms of democracy); and the mis-representation of complex qualitative data (the nuanced views and opinions of public participants), perhaps aided by the need to make outcomes easily understandable using ‘immutable mobiles’ (Latour 1987).

The question of to what degree outcomes *should* be ‘plugged in’ to policy is also affected by the context of the issue at hand, and O’Riordan summarises Hunt and Szerszynski as outlining a simple tripartite typology of Deliberatory Inclusive Processes:

“Type A DIP: plugged into a specific set of decisions and policies in order to legitimate an outcome.

Type B DIP: not specifically plugged in, but a guide to a troublesome and evolving policy arena, both to legitimate and to create opportunities for more meaningful participation.

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<sup>13</sup> The UK’s ‘Big Conversation’ on the regulation of GMOs in agriculture, conducted as a multi-strand technical assessment and public/stakeholder engagement process. The deliberative aspects took place in June – July 2003.

Type C DIP: not plugged into a specific outcome, but designed as a progressive learning and participatory experience for civil empowerment. This approach is beginning to be tried out in Local Agenda 21 settings.” (O’Riordan 1999b: 25)

Here we see elements of an attempt to draw out ‘what works, when’, and a differentiation between policy contexts with some degree of certainty (deserving ‘plugging in’ of outcomes to policy), the exploration of what are sometimes referred to as ‘wicked’ policy issues (wherein uncertainty or controversy are present), and the conduct of participation for more normative reasons. Weblor *et al.* (1995) produce in their final chapter a diagrammatic representation of a ‘policy area’, comprising different degrees of certainty and controversy, for example, and plot upon it the different deliberatory mechanisms as appropriate. This might be conceptually useful when determining what level of type of deliberation might be appropriate for different RET.

## **5 Renewable energy technologies and experience with public engagement**

Chilvers *et al.* (2005) represents the most recent summary of engagement exercises carried out in the UK in the area of energy. It is a report of a desk-based study, roughly assigning the exercises to a typology<sup>14</sup> distinguishing traditional consultation from more innovative participatory or deliberative processes, by sector. Academia were found to have employed the greatest number of innovative and more properly participatory or deliberative methods of engagement, and to have used multiple processes including those which used ‘analytical-deliberative’ methods (usually employing a form of MCA). In addition, academia had concentrated more than other sectors in addressing multiple energy sectors and types. Government were found to have predominantly utilised traditional consultation methods, with the exception of the processes supporting the production of the 2003 Energy White Paper. In industry too, the majority of engagement exercises proved to be based on the provision of information, and in many cases were focussed on a marketing approach.

To focus exclusively on studies involving RET and deliberative methods in *academia*, the work of the Tyndall centre and the SuperGen project are cited as best practice, along with an EU project on energy-to-waste and bioenergy, addressing public acceptability (Framework V Energie). Renn and Weblor are cited as the inspiration for most ‘analytical-deliberative’ processes of ‘cooperative discourse’. Stakeholder scenario-type DMCA<sup>15</sup> deliberations were used for visioning a de-carbonised society (see Anderson *et al.* 2005), and in looking at bioenergy futures, although it is pointed out that consensus was impossible to achieve in expert deliberations due to contestations and the presence of entrenched values. Citizen DMCA was used again (by SuperGen) to explore bioenergy, but in the vaguer context of sustainable futures and scenarios. The DMCA process is assessed as highly complex and time consuming, especially for citizens. Citizen engagement also involved the use of focus groups, or focus groups and questionnaires, with some evidence of new techniques involving computer aided travel analysis being utilised. Energy from waste and biomass were included in the focus group deliberations. Other identified citizen

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<sup>14</sup> The typology is said to be based on Wilcox (1994) and Petts and Leach (2000).

<sup>15</sup> Deliberative Multi-Criteria Analysis

engagement was more traditional, including surveys. A citizen's panel-style methodology (over 5 sessions on the 'in-depth group' model of Burgess and Harrison in the case of carbon capture) was identified, in public perceptions research addressing the non-RET but 'upstream technology' areas of underground gasification and carbon capture. Stakeholder engagement seemed to focus on seminars, networking and workshops, with SuperGen working on developing networks around Biomass and Bioenergy, and similar activity planned around Hydrogen.

In terms of the energy types being researched: "[n]early half of the projects identified focus on the three categories of renewables, bioenergy, and the broader category of new sustainable energy technologies" (Chilvers *et al.* 2005: 16-17). It is interesting that Hydrogen and energy from waste are excluded from the categories of 'renewables' or new sustainable technologies in this study. The majority of studies were focussed on specific technologies, rather than a holistic spread, with the exception of the South East England Sustainable Energy Project., which looks highly relevant and deliberative (using DMCA with citizens and stakeholders). 'Community energy' is quoted as an isolated example of research *on* engagement.

Renewable energy was not found to be a focus in *industry* engagement, even in the marketing of organisations that offered a mix of carbon and renewable products or services. Industry were seen to 'engage' before submitting planning applications, on the basis of traditional consultation methodology and information provision. Partnerships with NGOs are described as a *strategic* use of these organisations, in order to draw on the public's trust in them, and renewable energy provision through partnerships (e.g. Npower and Greenpeace) is seen as a moot example of strategically achieving 'core' business aims. The BWEA (British Wind Energy Association) and NIA (Nuclear Installations agency) are seen as engaging mostly in order to battle the negative public perceptions of their respective industries, and "other renewables are only minor players, with perhaps limited resources to engage the public. In general, it can be said that trade associations are particularly focused on engagement with government decision makers" (2005: 20) rather than the public, findings which seem to mesh with those of Hendriks mentioned above.

*Schools* initiatives are described as in the main fairly prosaic, involving information provision and especially questionnaires. In terms of a renewables focus, 'energy sustainability' and renewables were the main focus in this sector (unusually), in 10 out of 21 studies, with energy efficiency and climate change close behind (in 7/21), being seen as driven by sustainable development and LA21 agendas. It is interesting that the least engaging techniques were used the most in the sector that is furthering most engagement with RET and sustainable energy areas.

In the governmental arena, the DTI are seen as representing best practice in their preparation for the Energy White Paper (2003), although the development of the West Midlands Energy Strategy is also lauded. In fact, only the DTI targeted the public rather than stakeholders in the government-sponsored exercises identified by the study. Again, sustainability and RETs were overwhelmingly the focus of this sector (in 10/33 cases), and biofuels, microgeneration and CHP were omitted from the renewables category. The topics of the studies were predominantly multi-energy types or strategic rather than specific projects. The authors suggest this may be due to the cost and time, but also surely because the government is responsible for these 'upstream' agenda-setting exercises.



The Energy White Paper (2003) consultation is considered a milestone and said to have spurred most of the other innovations. Public engagement consisted of questionnaire surveys, focus groups and workshops with DMCA (for the latter, see Stagl 2005), with the express intention being: “to explore the effects that flowed from greater information provision to citizens over an extended period of discussion” (2005: 25). The public’s views were said to match those of the experts and the policy makers, perhaps raising a question of whether this represents evidence of ‘successful’ engagement, or steering public opinion, or of the creation or revealing of consensus?

In summary, academic engagement on RETs is perhaps setting the standard, whilst the government and industry are said to follow a ‘bottom line’ (do minimum) approach to consultation and engagement, except in processes addressing broad multi-energy or strategic issues. Schools are suggested as a potentially inappropriate venue for deliberation, although it is also suggested that the voices of youth should be heard. Chilvers *et al.* (2005) find no evidence of participatory-deliberative techniques being used in the implementation of specific RET projects.

### **5.1.1 The overseas experience**

Exercises in other countries are frequently lauded in the broader literature. Denmark and Germany are singled out as having successfully developed mature RET industries (including manufacture: several studies (e.g. Ronne (2005)) point out that around 50% of wind turbines are made in Denmark). Lund (2000) stresses that Danish energy policy has been characterised by conflicts with the representatives of old energy technologies, that have been resolved through “constant interaction between parliament and public participation, in which descriptions of new technologies and alternative energy plans have played an important role” (2000:249). He stresses that an ‘awareness of choices’ engendered through the engagement of conflicts has been important in this process.

At the level of specific projects, Khan (2004) and Soerensen *et al.* (2001) detail to different degrees the presence of public ‘participation’ in the siting and implementation of RET projects. Khan describes the siting of biogas and wind in Sweden, and advocates that early engagement with the public works to create trust and avoid costly or disastrous oppositional responses, suggesting, like Soerensen *et al.* (2001) and Hinshelwood and McCallum (2001) that exact locations and designs of RET projects should ideally be amenable to public input.

Denmark is also the place of origin of the consensus conference, and it might perhaps be valid to suggest that the co-development of this seminal deliberative method and a mature RET industry may be attributable to contingent social and cultural factors including a political preference for consensus and a corporate political model that seeks to include dissenting opinions. These may be generalisable Northern European characteristics, as seen in a study of Sweden’s active attempts for mobilize for ‘participatory democracy’ (Amnå 2006) in which “the Swedish Commission on Democracy [...] argued for ‘more participatory democracy with stronger deliberating qualities’ (Demokratiutredningen 2000:243)” and “asked for an attitude of open dialogue from the disobedient as well as from the establishment and warned the latter against ‘mistaking the friends of democracy for its enemies’ by not taking advantage of the engagement manifested in civil disobedience (Demokratiutredningen 2000: 205–6)” (2006: 599-600). This attitude might be salutary in addressing engagement with the public on RETs in this project.

### **5.1.2 Examples of the recent use of analytical-deliberative methods**

The literature in recent years has concentrated on the integration of technical-rational methods of assessment or appraisal and deliberative methods. In practice, some of the methods developed seem to rely on a 'division of labour' in which the traditional specialists are still relied upon to provide technical expertise, and the public are used as 'value consultants', as discussed earlier.

Stagl (2005) describes 'social multi-criteria analysis' as being employed in a number of recent European research projects including the Tyndall Centre's work on carbon reduction and the ARTEMIS project<sup>16</sup>. Austria is the site of this project applying participatory multi-criteria evaluation to different energy technology 'futures' and 'scenarios' at the national and regional/local levels, and is described as having leading expertise in both RET (e.g. biomass and solar, both thermal and PV) and in the evaluation techniques. Another project undertaken by an international consortium led by the University of Aegean in Greece claims to have refined software representing "A Multi-Criteria Software Decision Analysis Tool for Renewable Energy Sources (MCDA-RES)", and to have employed it in a number of case studies in Greece, Spain and the Netherlands, on wind, hydro, geothermal and PV projects<sup>17</sup>. However the tool appears to facilitate the application of colour-coded rankings to criteria derived from statutorily imposed guidance, by statutorily required stakeholders, rather than the public. As such, it would seem to be a novel presentation of a 'do minimum' approach to traditional impact assessment and consultation.

Multi-Criteria Mapping (MCM) has been developed by Stirling and Mayer, in which an optional element is the use of randomly-selected citizens panels "selected on a regional basis, by age, sex or some other basis to bring different lay perspectives into the debate. The panels can identify additional options, criteria and weightings themselves, and also invite a variety of specialists to score criteria under various options". It is suggested that this process is useful in a number of contexts, to provide input "to the "expert review" stages within regulatory processes, or enable companies to explore the implications of alternative R&D directions. At an early stage in development it could play a useful role in many aspects of the innovation process, as a way of identifying the broader social implications of new products or new technologies. (see Vines: 5; Burgess *et al.* 2004 on 'deliberative mapping'). Malcolm Eames has also been using a form of 'deliberative mapping' in a project exploring future scenarios for Hydrogen with a variety of stakeholders (Eames *et al.* 2006). The DTLR itself has produced a handbook (Dodgeson *et al.* 2000?) for using different forms of multi-criteria analysis in policy appraisal, that has been adapted for a number of recent engagement exercises including the CoRWM PSE processes (e.g. CoRWM 2005).

Two other mechanisms that are represented in recent work are deliberative polling and mechanisms involving the use of the internet (e.g. Keskinen [on-line publication – no date given]; Coleman and Gøtze 2001). James Fishkin is the ubiquitous advocate of the former, and the technique has been used to address energy issues specifically (see Fishkin *et al.* 2000; Carson and Martin 2002; Fishkin 2006). Deliberative polling is carried out with larger numbers of public participants than most

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<sup>16</sup> See [www.project-artemis.net](http://www.project-artemis.net)

<sup>17</sup> See [www.exergia.net/mcda](http://www.exergia.net/mcda)

other methods (typically 200+), and shows some evidence of the public's ability to deliberate, and to transform and defend their views at the end of the process. Fishkin (2006) claims that the method also has instrumental benefit, claiming that a 1996 case of working with the electrical utilities in Texas resulted in large investments in wind energy in the state, "directly and consciously as a direct result of these Deliberative Polls" (Fishkin *et al.* 2000: 10), "transforming Texas into the second leading state (after California) in wind energy" (Fishkin 2006).

## 6 Conclusions and Implications

Thus some studies appear to demonstrate the effects of deliberation on people's views. This effect is perhaps most marked at an 'up-stream' stage, identifying policy targets or priorities at a national or regional level. It might be asked whether the results (in which, for example, deliberative polling (Fishkin 2006) has shown citizens' willing to pay more for 'green' energy investment and products) are meaningfully different to polls showing generalised 'support from the general public' for energy from RET.

International experience suggests that what does influence the popularity of projects in implementation is rather *participation* in the sense of having a stake...it is noted that the issues of scale and ownership are complicated using the Danish and German exemplars, in which it is hard to disentangle these issues in the contingent policy contexts of those countries (Toke 2005). There is strong support for the value of this participation including deliberation, and particularly in the sense of 'plugged-in-ness', where public input is used at the design stage of project implementation, for example to make decisions about the number of wind turbines or the pattern of their positioning in a farm.

Although informal public engagement is beyond the remit of this literature review, it seems clear that the literature is identifying that certain issues are key in creating negative protest engagement, and perhaps key amongst these is the factor of 'outsider' imposition of projects, and the positive exploitation and strengthening of social capital and networks in these forms of responses (Rydin and Pennington 2000 are particularly useful in this area). Key issues including locality, shared identities and ownership of landscapes play a role in these mobilisations. Participation (perhaps containing deliberation) would seem to be a potential method of similarly utilising and enhancing these key societal resources, and the applicability in the case of community scale initiatives would seem to be particularly high (Hoffman and High-Pippert 2005), fulfilling an 'Arendtian' (Hunt and Szerszynski 2001) definition of the normative rationale for deliberation. Projects that are initiated by the community itself have a particularly high chance of securing acceptability (e.g. Toke 2005; Loring 2004), but there are divisions as to who 'the community' consists of. It is noted that community development or support workers are perfectly placed to provide access to the relevant social networks in urban environments (see O'Riordan *et al.* 1999), but analogous 'community gatekeepers' may not be available in rural contexts.

The literature points out the paradox of calls for greater participation being made in the context of apparent apathy and disengagement with politics. A critique of deliberation suggests that the public are *unable* to deliberate based on ignorance or

disinterest<sup>18</sup>, but this is countered by other writing (e.g. Talisse 2006). Ackerman and Fishkin conclude from their experience of citizens' juries and deliberative polling that: "When the public is given good reason to pay attention and focus on the issues, it is more than capable of living up to the demanding democratic aspirations" (2004: 7). These and other studies (see ESOF 2006; Reykowski 2006) demonstrate that deliberation on difficult and controversial subjects is possible with citizens from many background and ages.

The 'Power to the People' report produced recently in the UK (Power Commission 2006) suggests that these constructions of the public are myths, and that political disengagement relates only to our particular form of formal, representative party politics. At other levels, and in the informal channels of civic engagement, it is claimed that public participation and engagement is growing. Whilst this may represent the success of 'roll-out' neoliberalism ("to build new institutions, designed to embed the neoliberal project more deeply in civil society (Jessop, 2002)" (Holifield 2004: 285)), it would appear to offer scope for participatory and deliberative processes to engage with existing levels of social capital and to invigorate them. Ensuring that the outcomes of such processes are 'plugged-in' to policy or project development would appear to provide a major motivation for members of the public to engage, the lack of such motivations being seen as a prime reason for disengagement with formal processes, compared to the social benefits from engagement with oppositional activity (Rydin and Pennington 2000).

There seems to be some evidence of deliberation being successful substantively in defining key concerns and values of the public, and in setting priorities in wider policy contexts, however, the literature does not seem to be rich in examples where it has been used to *develop* projects or initiatives. Deliberation on energy policy has enriched the understandings of the factors lying behind the generalised public support for renewable energy technologies, but at the level of the other 'pole' of NIMBYism (localised objection), deliberation seems to be silent. Existing statutory responsibilities as represented by the planning laws and even public enquiries seem to provide the main existing channels for deliberation of projects, at too late a stage to avoid objections, and the perceived narrowness and 'desultory' nature of these channels and of the 'consultation' efforts currently taking place around RET implementation are another cause of the responses that are characterised as NIMBYism.

The success of deliberation in exploring the contingent nature of support or renewables in wider policy contexts perhaps offers the greatest scope for a framework for public engagement with the technologies. Engagement processes that have offered opportunities for members of the public to deliberate over the wider issues of electricity generation (albeit on the basis of information provided by the government and by the electricity generating industry, with limits to the options provided for deliberation) reveal that publics are able to process the information and provide reasoned arguments for preferences for certain policy options and instruments. The public have also been able to engage with issues around responsibility for change, viewing the government as the most responsible agent in the energy network, and supporting 'dictatorial' measures (for example, the use of tax

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<sup>18</sup> Talisse references Posner and Solin, who "have recently championed an objection to deliberative democracy according to which citizens are demonstrably lacking in the cognitive abilities requisite for rational deliberation" (Tallise 2006: 2)

instruments, the imposition of renewable energy) that impact on them negatively as consumers and customers, but positively as citizens (Fishkin 2006). Whether the deliberative forum is unique in eliciting these responses, in allowing the 'public good' to over-rule individualistic and self-interested positions, remains a moot point. A comparison of 'willingness to pay' studies that are carried out in a quantitative, large-scale survey, and in more small-scale deliberative settings, might be instructive here.

The success of personal, embodied encounters with RETs (particularly site visits to wind farms, but see Carolan (2006) for a study of the value of 'tactile' spaces in environmental deliberations), have been noted as a highly successful method to overcome certain entrenched oppositional assumptions, for instance about the disturbance of the physical environment and ecology, and about noise levels. This combines with the analysis of before-and-after satisfaction surveys to suggest that familiarity does breed acceptance or even support. This might be compared to the deliberated support for decisive governmental or industry action in calls for RETs to be 'rolled-out' as soon as possible, in order to engender support for the technologies through their implementation, on the basis of which extensions could proceed<sup>19</sup>. It is hard to see how this policy approach could be reconciled with a participative or deliberative approach.

There is a discussion in the broader literature about issues of scale. The Energy Review (DTi 2006b) and the Microgeneration Strategy (DTI 2006a) both make reference to the necessity of distributed supply networks to make the wide-scale implementation of RETs a realistic possibility. If this factor (along with the academic ruminations of what this means for the correlative change in views of energy and people's relationship to it (Devine-Wright (2006) is considered a serious technical possibility and part of the broader policy map for moving towards an sustainable energy economy, then participation and deliberation could be seen as facilitating the localisation of supply and distribution networks. If regions, localities and/or communities were to be provided with some responsibility and agency over the determination of their own energy mix in a localised supply and distribution network, for example, then it is easy to see how wide participation and an in-depth deliberative process could be integrated with the setting of priorities, the agreement of an energy mix, and the identification of suitable sites and technologies within that smaller area.

The barriers to this model are well rehearsed, and in the context of the UK they are legion. Whilst in Europe the liberalisation (privatisation) of the energy market is still an ongoing process, which may disrupt in particular the success of local, often municipal, suppliers to establish participatory arrangement with host communities, in the UK the process is a *fait accompli*, and it is hard to envision how the large scale utilities and local communities might establish trust relations, except perhaps through genuine and in-depth deliberative forums. The possibility of energy supply companies to be set up in parallel with the development of specific projects is one promising possibility, and one where self-interest, consumer demand, community strengthening and securing acceptability might all congeal.

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<sup>19</sup> This exact position was put forward at the Energising Communities workshop UKERC June 12th 2006

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