

# **New Instruments of Citizen Participation**

Núria FONT

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the most controversial challenges that western democracies must face is how to simultaneously deal with both the increasing complexity of modern societies and the loss of legitimacy of political institutions. On the one hand, western democracies are faced to changing social and political scenarios where policy problems and options become less and less manageable as new trends of complexity interfere with political practice. Such trends include, for instance, the emergence and change of scale of many social problems, the highly bureaucratic and technical nature of policies, the scientific uncertainty characterizing many policy-making processes, the ethical implications of many policy problems and options, the increasing amount of information available or the increasing social and territorial imbalances, to mention a few. On the other, there is some evidence that most western democratic institutions are undergoing a loss of legitimacy and citizens are dissatisfied with political practice. Take as indicators, for instance, the decline in voting in many western democracies or the distrust expressed by many citizens in opinion polls when asked to assess their democratic institutions.

Problems of social complexity and political distrust are often associated to discussions of political participation. While there is no single definition of political participation, it can be conceptualized as an overarching category of political phenomena covering all kind of relationships between citizens and political institutions (Putnam, 1995) allowing citizens to both elect their representatives and influence public policies. Beyond agreements or disagreements on how political participation should be defined, Langton (1987) points that the controversial question on political participation is how much and of what kind. From a conservative approach, a high degree of political participation is conceived as an indicator of social dissatisfaction. Thus, democracies tend to work better with low degrees of participation (Berlson et al, 1954; Huntington, 1975) and citizens involvement in politics should be limited to the electoral practice. Wildawsky (1992), for instance, claims the need to reinforce the representative institutions while expresses critical opinions to political participation other than the election of representatives.

Conversely, advocates of citizen participation claim the necessity to strengthen the instruments of public involvement. From this view, non-participation is an indicator of dissatisfaction and participation is desirable as it improves the amount and quality of dialogue between government and society. To this respect, Barber (1984) introduces the idea of strong democracy, as opposed to weak democracy. In his view, liberal democracies are weak as they

undermine citizenship, whereas the idea of strong democracy is closely linked to concepts of inclusive participation and citizenship. From a different perspective, Putnam (1993) findings on his study of the Italian regions show that there is a positive correlation between social capital, which is closely linked to the idea of citizen involvement in community activities, and institutional performance.

But even when assuming that a high degree of political participation is desirable, a central question on who participates and how is raised. On the one hand, one might be tempted to assume that pluralistic structures to a great deal allow social interests to reach the political arena. However, whether pluralistic structures channel citizens' interests is difficult to assess given that these structures hardly meet the principle of equality. Both pluralistic and citizen participation approaches depart from the common assumption that the well-functioning of democracies requires that political participation goes beyond voting. However, each approach has different conceptions on both the subject and the end of participation. Pluralistic structures are based on well-organized groups representing their members' interests and attempting to reach the political agenda. Instead, citizen participation structures are an end in itself because participation is conceived as a factor of democratic education (Pateman, 1970). From the citizen participation point of view, participation in pluralist structures is articulated around groups that do not necessarily channel citizens' opinions but vested interests, and often lead to elitist policies. In addition, pluralist structures present the risk of agency capture by those groups with more resources available. From the citizen participation approach, the convergence of interests between groups and citizens is not straightforward. This approach claims the creation and implementation of instruments of citizen participation allowing common citizens to deliberate on policy-relevant issues, frame their opinions and translate them to policy-makers. In short, it emphasizes the need to bridge the gap between citizenship and the politico-institutional, social and technical arenas (see Figure1).

The question on how much participation should be desirable is also controversial. Traditional instruments of citizen involvement, such as referenda, initiatives, public hearings, public meetings or access to information, for instance, have proved to be unsatisfactory channels of communication between citizens and government. The implementation of certain participatory instruments have often become routine, while other instruments have prioritized organized interests or been more accessible to the higher socioeconomic and economical status.

While there are still many questions unanswered on citizen participation, new practices and experiences allowing citizens to communicate with

governments become more and more appealing. New instruments of citizen participation are meant to complement traditional instruments of decision-making by promoting political deliberation and allowing citizens to translate their opinions to the decision-makers, while being equalitarian. However, there are some questions regarding citizen participation that do not have an univocal answer. For instance, how much participation is needed, who participates, what is the effective influence of citizens' opinions, what kind of problems could be addressed in these participatory forums, or how citizen participation correlates with political efficacy, to mention a few.

Different instruments of citizen participation address these questions differently. There are many types of instruments of citizen participation that could be classified according to both their objective and procedure. Regarding their objective, they may have a deliberative, consultative or resolute goal. Some instruments of citizen participation aim to promote discussion and dialogue on policy issues among common citizens. Others are commonly promoted by both representative bodies or public agencies when they want to know citizens' opinion on a policy-relevant topic. Finally, there are some instruments that have a problem-solving orientation. Those are commonly set up reactively by public agencies as an alternative mean to build consensus on certain policy problems. These distinctive goals, in practice, are not exclusive as, for instance, consultative instruments of citizen participation often involve a high degree of policy deliberation.

Regarding the procedure, there are as many possibilities as one could imagine, as a wide range of formulas regarding the number of participants, the selection criteria or the sequence of the process can be combined. The number of participants and the selection criteria are central issues when political equality is pursued. For instance, when there is a high number of participants and they are randomly selected, instruments of citizen participation are expected to be more representative than when the number of participants is low and they are self-selected or nominated. The sequence of the process is also an interesting issue, as participatory processes taking place at a very short period of time avoid the problems related to the participatory curve, that often proves to be decreasing along time. Instead, those participatory processes that take a long time may be troublesome as citizens become less and less stimulated to be involved in the long run.

Taking some of the participatory trends and implications mentioned above, this article will describe five innovative instruments of citizen participation:

Deliberative Opinion Polls, Citizens Juries, Consensus Conferences, Discussion Fora and Consultative Citizens Committees. A general view of both the objectives and procedural trends of each of them will be given. In addition, a critical assessment focusing on the extent to which they are effective and equalitarian, as well as the weaknesses of each model will be highlighted.

## **THE DELIBERATIVE OPINION POLL**

The Deliberative Opinion Poll (DOP) is an innovative instrument of citizen participation that attempts to encourage deliberation among citizens while meeting the principle of political equality. It has been designed by Professor James Fishkin, from the University of Austin (Texas). The DOP consists of gathering together a national random sample of the electorate during a few days and subject it to a process of discussion on certain policy issues. In this way, it gives all citizens the chance to be represented in a selected sample and allows participants to take part in a process of intense discussion on policy issues (Fishkin, 1995). During the DOP process, participants deliberate in small groups and have the possibility to pose questions to experts and politicians (Fishkin, 1996). The DOP process can be broadcasted on national television, so that citizens are able to follow the deliberations of the representative sample participating in the DOP. Participants are surveyed both at the beginning and end of the process on the policy issues object of discussion. Double-surveying participants allows measuring the extent to which their initial opinions have changed as a result of the deliberative process.

The underlying hypothesis of the DOP is that citizens change their political opinions when subject to a process of information and deliberation. Therefore, considering that the participants in the DOP are representative of the population, all citizens would reach the same conclusions of those of the sample if they were immersed in an informative and deliberative process. Therefore, the DOP goal goes further than that of traditional opinion polls, where citizens express irreflexive opinions. The DOP allows a microcosm of the country to issue recommendations after being subject to a deliberative process.

To-date, the DOP has been put into practice twice, one in Manchester in 1994 and the other one in Austin in 1996. The Manchester DOP gathered together a sample of 300 randomly selected citizens to discuss on the rising crime issue in the United Kingdom. The challenge for the experiment was whether participants would change their opinions over the course of the DOP weekend

(Fishkin, 1996). Faced to the question: "Rising crime: what can we do about it?", 38 per cent of the participants answered that it was necessary to send more condemned to prison. This figure contrasts with the results of an identical survey addressed to the population, where 57 per cent of citizens shared this opinion. According to Fishkin (1996), 38 per cent of the total population instead of 57 per cent would reach the same conclusions on the crime issue if the country were populated by ideal citizens, that is to say, by well informed and policy-motivated citizens.

The Manchester experiment was the precedent of DOP celebrated in Austin in 1996. The DOP, called the National Issues Convention (NIC), attempted to know citizens' opinions on three topics: US foreign policy, economic policy and the role of American family. A representative sample of 600 citizens was initially selected, although 141 of them (around 25 per cent) refused to take part in the Austin experiment. Participants were interviewed on the three topics and received some written related-materials previous to NIC weekend. Along the process, they discussed the three issues in small groups and had the chance to pose questions to representatives of the Democratic Party (Al Gore) and the Republican Party (Richard Lugar). The NIC was broadcasted on the CBS national television and generated considerable expectations among the media. At the end of the process participants were asked on the three policy issues. Variations in the answers ranged from 0 to 19 per cent. According to Fishkin, these variations prove that the population would come to the same conclusions as those expressed by the participants in the DOP if they were subjected to a deliberative process.

While many scholars highlight the high level of discussion among participants and their ability to both understand complex issues and be concerned on collective problems, the DOP has also provoked critical reactions regarding both its methodology and underlying philosophy. Regarding the DOP methodology, Ladd (1996) and Mitofsky (1996) have observed that the opinions of the citizens participating in the DOP cannot be generalized to the whole population. This is due to non-representative nature of the sample of participants as, in the case of the NIC, 25 per cent of the initial sample decided not to take part in the experiment. Mitofsky (1996) identifies a second methodological error when reaching conclusions on the change of opinions of participants in the NIC. He points out that in order to isolate the explanatory variables of this change a control group formed by the same number of citizens non attending the Austin NIC would have been needed. Another critical issue related to the change of opinions refers to the so-called "Hawthorn" effect. This phenomena appears when people change their normal behavior because they know that they take part in an

experiment and are observed. According to Adair (1996), the DOP reproduces this effect, as participants have been isolated from their daily environment and know they are observed by both the organizers and the television audience. In general terms, most critical opinions on the DOP point out that changes of opinions do not result from one-hour conversations with politicians on, say foreign policy, but are rather evolutive processes where there is a strong influence by the family and social environment, own experience and mass media (Mitofsky, 1996).

Beyond the methodological weakness of the DOP's, its underlying philosophy is also object of intense criticism. Some authors conceive the DOP as a social artifact that could have dangerous consequences. For instance, Ladd and Trigali note that the NIC agenda-setting was highly selective and the topics dealt in Austin were biased and did not correspond to the main issues of the 1996 presidential campaign. But beyond the possible bias of the procedure, some critical questions concerning the implications of the DOP for democracy are raised. Some authors observe that the changes of opinion of the participants in the DOP are non-important as they represent an ideal state in which citizens are immersed in a deliberative and informative process. Instead, common citizens' opinions express impressions, fears and interests of citizens in their "real life", and democracy must be assessed in real life (Newport, 1996). But beyond this argument, the DOP detractors consider that Fishkin makes a value judgement on democracy when assuming that citizens vote with insufficient knowledge of the political alternatives and that non-informed opinions are less valuable than those informed in the policy-process. Trigali (1996) wonders on the necessity that voters need to have perfect information, if this is a requisite of democracy and if less-informed opinions are less relevant for the democratic process. For Trigali, the definition of democracy includes the right to choose among political options with limited information.

## **CITIZENS JURIES**

Citizens juries are innovative instruments of citizen participation consisting of gathering together a reduced group of randomly selected citizens to discuss on certain policy issues during a few days. Citizens juries are inspired in the traditional citizens juries. However, they differ from traditional citizens juries in three senses: first, they are not integrated into the criminal justice system; second, discussions in the citizens juries are conducted by a neutral facilitator, whose role is totally different from that of a judge; and finally, citizens juries do not

issue a compelling verdict but a recommendation on the topic of debate once the different alternatives considered have been subject to deliberation.

In general terms, citizens juries are meant to engage citizens in the deliberation on complex policy issues and legitimate and improve traditional decision-making processes (Dienel, Renn, 1995; Crosby, 1996). They may cover a wide range of issues, including territorial, urban, environmental, health and agricultural policies, and can work at a local, regional and national levels. First experiences on citizens juries took place in Germany and United States at the beginning of the seventies. More recently, citizens juries have also been promoted in the United Kingdom, Spain, Switzerland and Australia. As a matter of fact, the term Citizens juries encompasses a wide range of similar jury models that have been developed in the United States (Citizens Jury process), the United Kingdom (Citizen's Juries) and Germany (*Planungszelle*). In general terms, the jury procedure is similar in all models. Participants attend plenary sessions where experts, stakeholders or interest groups express their points of view. Participants also have the chance to take part in the discussions and deliberate in small groups. Once participants have both explored the range of alternatives under examination and exchanged points of views, they issue some recommendations.

In general terms, citizens juries are innovative instruments of citizen participation that both allow citizens to take part in the decision-making processes and reinforce the legitimacy of political decisions. However, citizens juries present some limitations. First of all, there is a generalized opinion among scholars and practitioners that citizens juries lose legitimacy if they do not secure an unbiased procedure with respect to the role played by the facilitator, the agenda-setting or the definition of the rules of the game.

The second criticism looks at whether citizens juries are representative of the population. This criticism concerns two points. On the one hand, the number of participants and the selection criteria may affect the representativeness of the jury. To this respect, cross-national variations have been detected. In the American and English models, a representative sample of participants is selected out of a wider sample of citizens selected through random phone calls. In the Spanish citizens juries, that are inspired in the German model, participants are randomly selected from the municipal census. The number of participants may also vary, as it ranges from twelve in the English model to twenty-five in the German one. To this respect, citizens juries may be more representative if some of them are held simultaneously. On the other hand, given that the attendance is voluntary, only around 30 per cent of the selected citizens decide to attend a jury



process (Garbe, 1986). As a result, there is often an over-representation of certain groups, such as students, housewives and the unemployed, whereas professionals or the eldest people are under-represented.

Closely linked to the representation issue, citizens juries do not overcome the conflict between general and specific interests (Seiler, 1995). Citizens juries are meant to represent general interests. However, this goal comes into conflict with those political systems with a pluralist tradition, such as the United States, where decision-making processes rely upon the interaction and competition between organized interest groups and where consultation to stakeholders is institutionalized. While citizens juries allow interests groups and witnesses to express their points of view, these groups have little incentive to do so for fear of losing both their "monopoly" or interest representation and their credibility if citizens reach conclusions contrary to the groups' interests. Whether interests groups rejection to take part in the citizens juries may undermine the legitimacy of the process is difficult to assess. Hence, citizens juries face the challenge of conciliating general with specific interests.

Another critical aspect concerning citizens juries refers to citizens' opinion. This topic relates to whether citizens change their opinion after taking part in a jury process and whether their opinion is relevant in the policy-making process. Regarding the first question, it must be stressed that it is difficult to assess whether citizens change their opinion, as no control mechanism allows knowing citizens' previous opinions. Moreover, even in case a change of opinions could be measured, assuming that the deliberative process is the only factor accounting for the change would be over-simplifying, as other variables should be taken into account. For instance, the groups dynamics or the type and amount of information that the juries receive, to mention a few. Regarding the second question, it could be argued that if juries' opinions do not change, then they do not provide additional input to the decision-making process and might be needless. However, this assumption disregards that, while juries may not provide substantive input to public decisions, they may reinforce their legitimacy.

However, evidence shows that in many cases juries opinions are scarcely relevant in the policy-processes. This is especially true in the case of American citizens juries. For several reasons. First, the American citizens juries, which are promoted by the Jefferson Center of New Democratic Studies, have constituted a means to denounce the American political system and as a result have prevented citizens juries from generating the necessary political trust among public institutions. Second, in the United States, the initiative to promote citizens juries

mainly comes from society, namely private foundations, whereas in Europe they are mostly promoted by public institutions -i.e. local governments or public agencies-that are committed be responsive to citizens' opinions. To this respect, the British model presents the advantage that, once the juries' recommendations have been delivered to the promoting authority, the latter is compelled to report an answer. Notwithstanding, to-date the extent to which citizens juries may exert influence upon decision-making processes is still limited. In general terms, both in the United States and Europe, the institutionalization of citizens juries has made little progress.

There are at least two more critical questions related to citizens juries that remain unanswered. Citizens juries are still in an experimental stage. This means that a lot of improvement must be made on the definition of the rules of the game or the adoption of mechanisms of democratic accountability. To this respect, some authors wonder whether the outcome of juries is better than those derived from the traditional participatory processes (Seiler, 1995) and whether citizens take the right decisions (Burton, Duncan, 1996). In response to this criticism, however, one must take into account that citizens juries are not meant to replace but complement traditional decision-making processes, while providing citizens with the opportunity to deliberate and translate their own opinions to decision-makers.

## **CONSENSUS CONFERENCES**

Consensus conferences are deliberative fora where a reduced group of common citizens deliberate on socially and politically relevant issues on science and technology, interact with experts and build consensus on the discussed topics (Joss, Durant, 1994). Consensus conferences were first organized in Denmark, where more than 20 have been organized since 1987. More recently, other countries such as Great Britain, the Netherlands and United States have followed the path.

Danish consensus conferences have been promoted by the Technology Panel, a parliamentary agency responsible for evaluating technological policy. In order to select the participants, the Panel selects a group of fifteen volunteers who have previously answered to an advertisement in local newspapers (it must be noted that citizens participating in the consensus conference organized in the United States were randomly selected). The group is expected to be demographically representative of the Danish population. Participants meet three

times along the process. During the first two meetings, that take place over the course of two weekends, participants discuss on the general aspects of the topic of debate and pose questions to be addressed in the public forum, that constitutes the third meeting. In addition, they may recommend the organizers to change the agenda-setting of the public forum. During the forum, participants are provided with the opportunity to listen and address questions to experts, academics and representatives of interests groups. After a process of deliberation, participants issue a report that is highly publicized in a national press conference. The report is often delivered to the Parliament.

The Danish consensus conferences present the potential of allowing citizens to take part in complex policy areas that are traditionally exclusive of policy-makers and experts. However, it presents some limitations. Some of the critical aspects of the consensus conferences have much in common with those of the citizens juries. For instance, consensus conferences are scarcely representative of the population. This trend is particularly remarkable in the Danish case, where initial selection has not a randomly but a voluntary basis. However, it must be remarked that consensus conferences do not aim to be representative of the population.

But beyond the question of representativeness, the most critical aspect of the consensus conference is that it assumes that common citizens are capable of giving sound opinions on complex technological policy issues, while experts and policy-makers have to deal with the problem of scientific uncertainty. The consensus conference held in Denmark in 1989 to discuss the research of human genoma sheds some light to this respect. The conference was held after the Danish Technological Agency issued a report according to which the main topic to be dealt was how to allocate resources among different lines of related-research. Instead, panelists taking part in the consensus conference reached the conclusion that there was a necessity to allocate resources to analyze the social consequences of scientific research. In addition, they put some ethical and substantive aspects in the agenda. While the results of this consensus conference cannot be generalized, the case gives evidence that common citizens are not only capable of understanding and facing complex problems, but also providing with sound and innovative input to the policy-process.

## **DISCUSSION FORA**

Discussion Fora are instruments of citizen participation where self-selected citizens take part in discussions on policy-relevant issues. Discussion fora are not meant to directly influence policy decisions, but foster dialogue and deliberation among citizens. There are many different types of discussion fora. The National Issues Forums (NIF) is one of the most outstanding participatory instruments of the United States falling into this participatory category.

The National Issues Forums is a type of discussion forum that allows common citizens to express their policy opinions and go beyond technical, ideological and political positions (Mathews, 1994). They are a network of around three hundred American civic and educational organizations -universities, schools, libraries and churches, to mention a few- that, in 1981, decided to coordinate each other and deal the same topics at a national level. Since then, around 3,200 NIFs dealing with three selected policy issues are celebrated annually. Some of the topics dealt over the last years cover a wide range of issues, including the role of American family, the global role of the United States, Affirmative Action or the reform of the civil justice system.

NIFs are inspired on focus groups. These consist of gathering together a reduced groups of citizens that will discuss some policy issues for two or three hours. The NIF differ from focus groups on the fact that the latter reunites a homogeneous groups of people, whereas the former does not, given that citizens participate on a voluntary basis. Previous to the discussions, participants receive written materials on the selected topics and answer to a questionnaire. Experts and politicians eventually attend the meetings and express their opinions. At the end of the meetings, participants decide whether to answer to a questionnaire, whose aggregated results are eventually sent to political institutions at the local, state and national levels. Local NIFs usually choose representatives that would take part at national NIFs.

In general terms, NIFs are positively assessed as they provide citizens with the opportunity to engage in collective deliberative processes. In addition, the fact that participants are not exposed to the influence of interests groups allows them to express their own opinions spontaneously, while the forum becomes genuinely deliberative. However, Crosby (1996) notes that the absence of interest groups and witnesses limits the inputs received by participants. Their presence would allow citizens to deeply analyze the policy topics of debate. In addition, he observes that deep evaluation and discussion is not possible as participants do not meet enough time, as two or three hours are not enough time to allow citizens to assess the pros and cons of several policy options. In addition, it is difficult to

assess the outcome of the discussion if participants may choose whether to answer the questionnaire at the end of the process or not. As some of them decide not to, probably those less interested in politics, the concluding aggregated opinions, that reach political institutions, are likely to be biased.

In addition to these critical aspects, NIFs are said not to be representative of the population and not legitimate the general public. This aspect is highlighted in the national NIFs, where participants are selected among those taking part in the local NIFs. However, when assessing the NIFs one should take into account that they are not meant to be representative, but deliberative. In this sense, NIFs meet the goals of engaging citizens in a deliberative process, and criticisms concerning external inputs, time and composition could be considered as minor limitations.

## **CONSULTATIVE CITIZEN COMMITTEES**

Consultative citizen committees are instruments of citizen participation that reunite an variable number of citizens, representatives of civic organizations and public powers. They pursue the collective research of problems and are meant to become a guideline for public powers in the planning process. Consultative citizen committees are not a well-defined model of citizen participation but an overarching category of instruments of citizen participation whose composition and procedure varies according to territorial, socio-economic and specificity of the problem to be dealt. Given the difficulty to generalize on consultative citizen committees, two illustrative experiences will be briefly described.

The first experience refers to the implementation of the so-called Ithaca model, which is described by Boyd and Gronlund (1995). This model was designed in 1994 by the Ithaca-Tompkins County Metropolitan Planning Organization (ITCTC) when faced to the problem of securing citizen participation in the elaboration of a strategical transport plan. The model consisted of interconnecting an innovative with a traditional participatory procedure. The innovative procedure consisted of the setting up of seven task teams. The task teams were formed by a number of 5-7 citizens that participated on a voluntary basis. Participants were recruited from two sources. On the one hand, citizens answered advertisements in the local papers, radio and television where the ITCTC requested volunteers. On the other hand, the ITCTC also contacted civic groups. Once the ITCTC received the answers, it distributed participants among the task groups. Over seventy meetings were held along the following five

months. Along this process, three traditional public hearings were celebrated. The first one aimed to know the general public opinions, the second one was attempted to deliver the task groups reports, and the final one to presented the transportation plan. According to Boyd and Gronlund (1995), the task groups recommendations and discussions were reflected in the plan.

The second experience was promoted by the Metropolitan Transportation authority of Austin (the Capital Metro) in 1983. The committee, as described by Wulkan (1986), was meant to set up a participatory process in the adoption of a plan to reduce traffic problems and overcome deficiencies of public transportation. The committee differs from the Ithaca model as, from the beginning, the promoters wanted to avoid traditional public hearings, as they had generated negative feelings among the population. The Capital Metro set up committee with restricted participation. However, after some weeks, it enlarged the participation up to one hundred and thirty representatives of local governments, civic organizations, industrial groups and the main opinion leaders. The committee, which was structured in three sub-committees, met six times in seven months. During this period, the committee and sub-committees formulated a transportation plan that was presented in a public hearing. Citizens expressed their support to the plan in the referendum celebrated shortly after (Wulkan, 1986).

In general terms, both the Austin and Ithaca consultative citizens committees were successful experiences of citizen participation in the planning processes. Success is closely linked to the fact that in both cases citizens were considered as experts of the decision-making processes (Mcdowell, 1986), which led to a high level of interpenetration between the political, citizen, social and technical spheres and set the conditions for consensus building. The outcome of both experiences does not mean that the setting of consultative citizens committees is a condition for success. When there is not political will supporting them, they run the risk of having a symbolic end and become a means to delay decision-making processes. In addition, unlike the instruments of citizen participation described above, consultative citizens committees are structured in relatively long periods of time. Hence, unless participants have strong incentives to participate, these committees have to face the challenge of the decreasing participation curve. Finally, even when committees prove to be effective in terms of output, two trends related to their composition are raised. On the one hand, as other instruments of self-selected citizen participation, they are not statistically representative of the population. On the other, these committees become windows of opportunities for interest groups or stakeholders, who are provided

with a chance of having a high influence on both other participants' opinions and the final outcome.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

The instruments of citizen participation described above present important variations among each other according to their end and procedure. Figure 2 attempts to summarize how each of them relates to both aspects. On the one hand, those instruments where participants are selected randomly meet better the principle of political equality, although it must be pointed out that even in those cases certain social groups are underrepresented while others are overrepresented. Instead, those instruments where citizens participate on a voluntary basis are less representative of the population. It must be pinpointed that many of the instruments located at the bottom of the cadre are not meant to be representative. In any case, the controversial question is whether the representativeness issue matters or not. On the other hand, all instruments promote citizen deliberation on relevant policy issues. However, while this is the primary end of some of them, others have a consultative end, which also implies deliberation.

While any generalization on new instruments of citizen participation should be cautious, the following remarks on the five models described above could be highlighted:

- New instruments of citizen participation are in an emerging stage and subject to a continuous process of redefinition. Much participatory practice is needed before they become fully institutionalized.

- New instruments of citizen participation operate in different social and political environments. Evidence shows that the implementation and performance of very similar instruments presents important cross-national variations.

- The influence of the new formulas of citizen involvement on the decision-making processes is limited.

- The type of correlation between citizen participation and political efficacy resulting from the implementation of new participation instruments is not clear.

-Instruments of public involvement emphasizing the role of citizens do not always solve the potential conflict between general and particular interests.

-Instruments of citizen participation that take place in a short period of time avoid the problems derived from the decreasing participation curve.

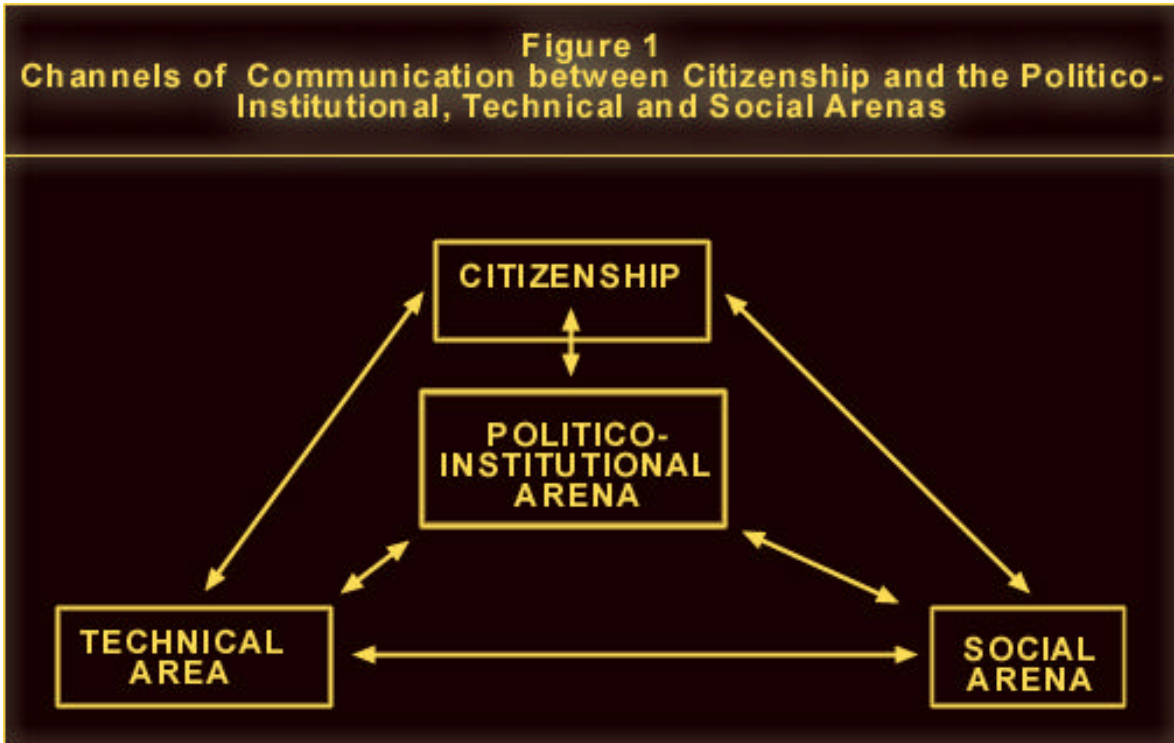
-Most instruments of citizen participation improve both the level of public deliberation and the quality of dialogue between citizens and governments.

-Most instruments of citizen participation improve the legitimacy of public decisions.

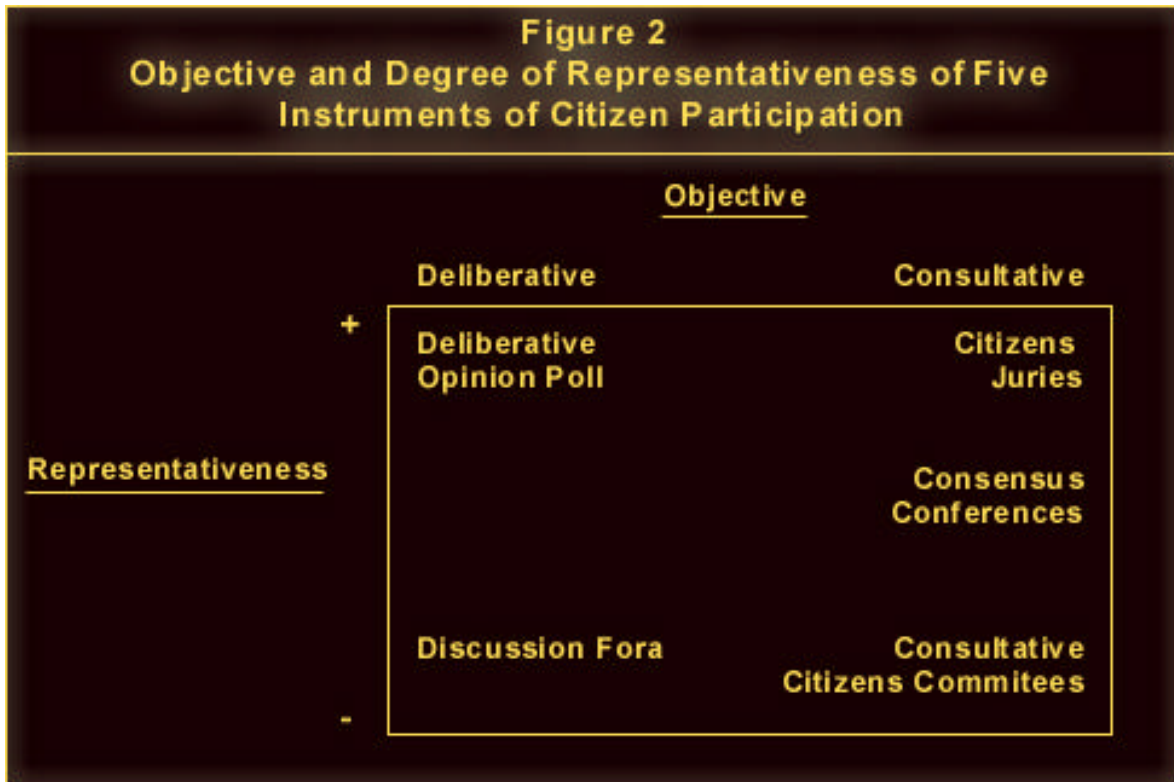


***Figure1***

**Figure 1**  
**Channels of Communication between Citizenship and the Politico-Institutional, Technical and Social Arenas**



***Figure2***



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