
PUBLIC MANAGEMENT FORUM

Citizens Panels: A New Approach to Citizen Participation

Ned Crosby, Center for New Democratic Processes

Janet M. Kelly, University of North Dakota

Paul Schaefer, Center for New Democratic Processes

Discouragement over modes of political participation seemed matched in the 1960s–70s by a hope that new and viable forms of participation might be found. Disillusionment with the political process was summed up in the statement that “participation through normal institutionalized channels has little impact on the substance of government policies.”¹ Several observers concluded that this disillusionment translated into a “society wide uprising against bureaucracy and a desire for participation.”² This desire for direct participation was furthered by the attempts of the federal government to mandate participation at the local level (starting in 1964 with the Equal Opportunity Act’s call for “maximum feasible participation”).

The result was a considerable growth in citizen participation at the local level. Federally mandated aspects of this development have been enumerated (around 150 by an Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations count);³ the movement aspects have been praised by many;⁴ and the phenomenon as a whole has been studied in considerable depth.⁵ The findings are not especially encouraging:

1. Lack of representativeness of the participants is a real shortcoming of those programs which appear to be more successful.⁶
2. The most successful citizen inputs are found in programs which seem to require the least expertise.⁷
3. Overall, the impact of citizens groups has been limited.⁸
4. Most participatory programs are geared to intervention at the local administrative or delivery level, leaving the vast reaches of agenda-setting and policy prescription relatively untouched.⁹

Since 1974 a small group has been working at the Center for New Democratic Processes to develop a new form of citizen participation which can overcome some of the above problems. Built on analogy with the jury system, the process is simply called a “Citizens Panel,”

■ *Despite an increase of citizen participation at local levels during the 1960s–70s, a growing literature indicates that these efforts are having only a limited impact. This article describes a novel form of citizen participation which has been developed by the Center for New Democratic Processes over the last decade. These “Citizens Panels” are modeled after the jury system and are similar to a process which has been developed independently by a team of West German social scientists. It is the belief of the authors that this process can overcome many of the deficiencies of other approaches to participation. Six criteria are suggested for a successful method of participation. These are applied to a project run throughout Minnesota in 1984, where 60 randomly selected individuals examined the impact of agriculture on water quality and made recommendations to project sponsors, including several state agencies. Although the project met some criteria better than others, the authors conclude that Citizens Panels have high potential for a variety of uses.*

with capital letters being used to set it apart from other participatory methods. We have been encouraged in this effort by the comments of Robert Dahl that political scientists “need to give serious and systematic attention to possibilities that may initially seem unrealistic, such as . . . creating randomly selected citizen assemblies . . . to analyze policy and make recommendations.”¹⁰

Interestingly, a group of German scholars has worked independently over the same time period to create a similar process. Led by Peter C. Dienel at the Institute for Citizen Participation and Planning Procedures at the University of Wuppertal, this group has conducted seven randomly selected panels on topics ranging from city planning to a nationwide project which used 24 panels in seven cities to do some long range planning on Germany’s energy needs.¹¹

This paper is organized in three parts. The first describes a set of criteria which can be used to evaluate the success of any citizen participation method. These criteria are derived from the research findings cited above and from a decade of experience at the Center for New Democratic Processes. That part is followed by a description of a Citizens Panel project on the impacts of agriculture on water quality which was run by the center in 1984. The third part of the paper evaluates the project in light of the criteria identified in the first part.

Criteria for Successful Citizen Participation

At the outset it is important to distinguish between successful methods of citizen participation and successful citizen lobbying efforts. The latter are attempts to change public policy by getting large numbers of people to contact the appropriate public officials. The assumption is that a particular view is correct and the aim is to get as many supporters as possible to express this view to the public officials. Citizen participation, as discussed here, is an attempt to do the reverse: to start with a diverse group of people, inform them on the topic, and then get them to recommend that policy option which they find most appropriate. It is an effort to put a representative group of the public in dialogue with public officials so that the officials get the reactions of "the people themselves" on a particular subject, rather than simply getting the views of those who are lobbying from a particular point of view or interest.

Six criteria are suggested for a successful citizen participation method: (1) the participants should be representative of the broader public and should be selected in a way that is not open to manipulation; (2) the proceedings should promote effective decision making; (3) the proceedings should be fair; (4) the process should be cost-effective; (5) the process should be flexible; and (6) the likelihood that the recommendations of the group will be followed should be high. These criteria contain many normative statements and therefore cannot be justified *simply* by appeal to social science standards.¹² The justification for the particular mix of normative and empirical statements found here goes beyond the confines of this article. The center believes, however, that the criteria suggested are sufficiently close to common procedures in the courts and legislatures that they will not strike most readers as controversial.

Participant Selection

Participants must represent the broader community and must be selected in a way which is not open to manipulation. The standard of selection held by many participatory democrats is that anyone who wants to participate should be allowed to do so. But this criterion is much more acceptable in theory than in practice. If indeed large numbers of people show up in order to take advantage of their right, this makes an effective job of decision making virtually impossible. If only a select

group shows up, then the question must be raised as to who they really represent.

A commonly used method to correct for this is through the appointment of participants by elected officials, with an attempt to ensure that the significant groups in the community are represented. This approach may be an improvement on the above, especially if respected community leaders are chosen, but it still has drawbacks. If the group is selected to represent different interests in the community, according to what criteria does one conclude that an interest or a group is properly represented? If one group is twice the size of another, should they receive twice the representation? What should be done if many people belong to more than one group? Finally, how do we know that those selected really represent the groups to which they belong, as opposed to being beholden to the official who appointed them?

What is needed is a method of participant selection which is not open to manipulation either by special interests or by elected officials and which clearly represents the broader public.

What is needed is a method of participant selection which is not open to manipulation either by special interests or by elected officials and which yields a group which clearly represents the broader public. The center argues that a process of stratified random sampling meets this goal. This is discussed in more detail below. It is interesting to note that the history of the franchise for voting in the United States is one of a movement toward methods which are not open to manipulation. If more direct methods of citizen participation in the policy-making process are to gain wider acceptance, they must move in this direction as well.

Effective Decision Making

The aim of general citizen participation, as opposed to lobbying by the committed few, means that emphasis on an effective job of decision making is necessary. Since there are no widely accepted criteria for judging the correctness of a policy choice, this criterion is stated in terms of a process rather than a particular result. Two aspects of the decision-making process can be evaluated for effectiveness: the way the decision was structured for the citizens and the way they performed within the structure. A standard criticism of citizen participation is that average citizens are not capable of making decisions on complex public policy matters. The position of the authors is that average citizens can do an effective job of decision making if the hearing format is properly structured for them.

One of the most obvious requirements is that the citizens be provided with accurate and meaningful information. The absence of this is one of the main reasons why average citizens find themselves at a disadvantage with lobbyists in dealing with public officials. Daniel Bell¹³

has noted how the rise of the "knowledge society" has contributed to a low sense of efficacy among many citizens, which in turn has led to class biases among those who choose to participate.¹⁴ The information presented not only should be accurate and relevant but should also be organized and presented in a way which is meaningful, without being patronizing.

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Other requirements for promoting effective decision making are also important. Time must be sufficient for participants to learn the information and to reflect on the values and goals relevant to the decision. The group making the decision must be of appropriate size; its agenda must be planned so that the important material is covered in an orderly fashion; the person leading the group must facilitate the discussion; and the views of the participants must be given adequate recognition. A large body of academic and applied work is available on small group decision making, and numerous facilitators are skilled in the art of running meetings.¹⁵ Note that it is this criterion which requires that a successful method of citizen participation include some sort of hearing format for the participants to learn about the issue and an appropriate deliberative format to help them reach their decision.

Fair Procedures

Obviously this is a criterion supported by those who believe in "good government." But a pragmatic reason also exists for being interested in this. If it appears that someone is manipulating the procedures of a citizen participation effort, it loses credibility. Important segments of the public may conclude that the process is not legitimate and withdraw their support. Public officials are reluctant to follow its recommendations, unless they are the ones doing the manipulating. Certainly the finer points of fairness are open to endless debate, but practical experience demonstrates that a number of requirements are rather obvious.

It is important that the issue at hand not be defined so as to leave out the most important questions. A classic example is where a group of citizens is gathered to make recommendations about where a highway (or a hazardous waste site, power plant, etc.) should be located without letting them discuss whether the project is needed. This makes it tempting to say that the citizens should always be given the opportunity to deal with the important assumptions underlying an issue. This, however, could lead to endless discussions if every participant were allowed to raise what he/she felt were the important prior questions. Probably the best guideline is that if a

clear majority of the participants feels that an important underlying assumption needs to be considered, then they should be allowed to deal with it.

Similar considerations arise with the setting of the agenda and the provision of information. If an open process is followed in which everyone is given an equal chance to speak, the process may be fair, but the poor organization of material and the lengthiness of the proceedings can make decision making virtually impossible. If one were interested simply in efficient decision making, one could let the staff organize the entire activity, but that would create unacceptable risks that the biases of the staff would dominate the results. A different solution is to use advocacy presentation as is done in the courts. This can lead to well organized information which represents more than one point of view, but it also may leave out some important points of view and can at times so polarize the participants that they are unable to agree on a solution.

No perfect solution to these dilemmas exists, but a good faith effort at fairness which also considers the needs of decision making should yield a process which is viewed as legitimate by the public and officials alike. Some combination of staff input, advocacy presentation, and an open agenda must be used in order to organize the information sufficiently for decision making while at the same time being fair to the parties involved.

Cost Effectiveness

The citizen participation process should be cost effective. This is a difficult criterion to apply because the value placed upon it can vary greatly. Existing public structures have virtually no guidelines for how much should be spent making a decision. A legislature may spend as much time debating an item which costs \$100,000 as it does on a program which costs billions.

Note that the immediate costs of decision making may be low when the decision is made by "insiders," so long as one looks only at the costs of the decision *per se*. Were the same decision made by a group of citizens, the immediate costs might be considerably higher because of the number of people involved, the time it would take for them to learn about the issue, the staff required, etc. The long range costs, however, might be considerably lower if the attention paid to the issue led to a more carefully designed policy. Even if the actual policy costs were the same, the distribution of benefits might be claimed to be so much fairer that any additional decision making costs were deemed worthwhile.

Although this criterion is difficult to apply in a non-controversial way, it is still important. If one method of citizen participation turns out to cost two or three times more than another, then good reasons must be presented as to why the more expensive method is worth the cost.¹⁶

Flexibility

The citizen participation method should be adaptable to a number of different tasks and settings. A tendency is

to see most participatory mechanisms as best adapted to local and relatively simple issues. Since complex issues on the national level are often the ones which have the most significant impact on our lives, it is important that these be seen as amenable to review by participatory methods as well. If one general participatory method can overcome these perceived limitations, it will result in a significant democratic reform.

Recommendations Should Be Followed

Recommendations from the citizen participation process should have a high probability of being heeded by appropriate public officials. Despite its importance, this criterion has not been well met. Observation of federal social programs led Arnstein to state: "There is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having real power."¹⁷ She posits levels of control in a widely cited "ladder" of participation. At the lowest end of the scale is manipulation, followed by therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, and delegated power. Actual citizen control resides at the top of the list. While government officials may be unwilling to give up control, a successful participatory technique would aim toward the top of the ladder.

The likelihood that the recommendations of the citizen participation process will be followed depends to a fair degree on its success in meeting the above criteria. All the criteria (except perhaps flexibility) will be important in getting the public to see the process as legitimate. The more legitimate the process in the minds of the public, the more difficult it will be for public officials to ignore the recommendations. Flexibility of design is important because it allows the process to be adapted to meet the needs of the public officials to whom the recommendations are directed. If these officials are allowed to help design the process, then they have a stake in the results. Here again the fairness of the procedures and the selection of participants is important. If officials believe the process is being manipulated by some interest or ideology, they will be exceedingly reluctant to support the project (unless they happen to share that interest or ideology).

The Citizens Panel on Agriculture and Water Quality

This section of the paper covers the 1984 project of the Center for New Democratic Processes which examined the impacts of agriculture on water quality in Minnesota.¹⁸ The project took well over a year to set up and complete; the results are still being evaluated. In the next section, the project is evaluated according to the criteria for successful participation. To the best of the authors' knowledge, the Agriculture/Water Quality Project was the first official use in the United States of a *randomly* selected group of citizens to study a social or political issue. The center has run four pilot projects on Citizens Panels, starting in 1974, but this was the first statewide project and the first time any government agencies acted as sponsors. The only other use of randomly selected panels of

which the center is aware is the work of Dienel *et al.* cited above.

The issue of agricultural impacts on water quality was chosen because of its importance in Minnesota for many years. Minnesota is the "Land of 10,000 Lakes;" its largest economic activity is agriculture. When the latter is polluting the former, the potential for intense political conflict is high. The federal government in the 1972 Water Quality Act set up requirements that each state develop plans for dealing with "non-point source" pollution. Although this led to extensive discussion in Minnesota, culminating in a series of reports, federal cutbacks in the 1980s meant that little was done to implement the plans. It was in this setting that state officials recommended a statewide Citizens Panel on the issue.

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The process began in 1983 with the gathering of 11 sponsors for the project: Association of MN Counties, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs of the University of Minnesota, MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, MN Department of Agriculture, MN Department of Natural Resources, MN Farmers Union, MN Farm Bureau, MN Izaak Walton League, MN Pollution Control Agency, MN Soil and Water Conservation Board, and MN Sportfishing Congress. Each sponsor appointed one representative to the steering committee which oversaw the project and made in-kind contributions of about \$2,000 apiece.

Informational Meetings

In January and February 1984, a series of informational meetings were held in seven geographically dispersed rural Minnesota communities. The meetings, attended by a total of 275 people, served to acquaint citizens with the project. They also gave the staff an opportunity to gather regional information on the issue and to meet key local actors. In addition, meeting participants filled out questionnaires regarding the issue. Their responses served as a basis for selecting 24 of the 60 potential panelists (see below).

Statewide Poll

In March, a statewide telephone survey of 623 Minnesotans was conducted to gather standardized information on the attitudes of residents toward both agricultural and environmental issues. A professional agency was hired to use exactly the same procedures employed by the Minnesota Poll. When combined with the survey responses from the informational meetings, the poll data provided a baseline for the random selection of the Citizens Panel participants.

TABLE 1
Panel Composition
(Except for Metro Area, which consisted only of survey respondents)

	Favors Agriculture	Balanced	Favors Environment
From the Survey	2	2	2
From Informational Meetings	2	2	2

Six persons were selected across the categories as alternates.

Selecting Panelists

Panel members were chosen on a random basis according to a somewhat unique adaptation of a stratified random sample. Rather than stratify the sample on a demographic basis, the potential panelists were divided according to attitudinal groups. These categories were created on the basis of two scales which were developed using the responses to the survey questions. These two scales were then used to divide the respondents into three equal categories: those who cared more about agriculture about the environment than agriculture (Favors Envir), and those who appeared to care equally about both (Balanced).

A further modification of pure random selection was that half of each panel was selected from among those attending the informational meetings (except in the Metro Area, where all were selected from the survey). This was done largely for pragmatic reasons. Since farmers make up only about 5 percent of the residents of Minnesota, a pure random selection process would have led to about 3 farmers out of the 60 on the Panels. This was unacceptable to the major farm organizations, without whose participation the project would have been considerably weakened.

Survey respondents and informational meeting participants were divided according to the areas of the state in which they lived, and they were numbered consecutively within each of the six categories in Table 1. The point on each list where the selection started was drawn in a public meeting by the chair of the county board for each region. Staff phoned and visited those on the list, explaining the project and seeking their participation. Names on the list were called in succession until each attitudinal category was adequately represented. This was a labor intensive but rewarding, process. Those contacted were quite responsive. Among those identified through the survey, the acceptance rate was above 40 percent in rural areas and about 20 percent in the Metro Area. Although a few alternates had to be called at the last minute, of the 60 who started, only one did not attend the full four days of hearings, and that was for health reasons.

Agenda Setting

Held over a period of four days each, the regional panels presented several agenda setting difficulties. The

issue of agricultural impacts on water quality is an extensive one covering such problems as nitrates in ground water, phosphates in lakes, sedimentation of rivers and ditches, and the complex and poorly researched question of pesticides. Several sponsors urged narrowing the question, but there was no consensus over which aspect of the problem should be selected. Staff was reluctant to narrow the question lest they become involved in an inappropriate value choice regarding which aspect of the issue was most significant. Therefore the whole panorama was presented to the panelists, allowing them to concentrate on what they thought was most important.

The first day of the regional panels was devoted to staff presentations. The materials used by the staff were prepared in consultation with sponsors and with knowledgeable professionals. To check for the efficacy, accuracy, and bias-free nature of staff presentations, a dry run was held. Sponsor representatives, farmers, environmentalists, and other interested parties attended this session. Several major changes in both style and content of staff materials were made. Subsequent changes were also made as a result of suggestions from panel members.

The second and third day of each regional panel consisted of testimony from witnesses. Potential witnesses were identified by asking all contacts in each region to supply names. People identified were contacted by phone and often visited in person. Those who agreed to serve submitted briefs of their testimony to the staff. These briefs were used to prepare a preliminary agenda which included a description of the staff presentations along with names of witnesses and their proposed topics. The agenda was then mailed to sponsors and all regional contacts, including the witnesses, for review and commentary over a two week period. A final agenda was prepared in accordance with the revisions suggested. A number of people, including several only peripherally involved, took advantage of the opportunity to modify the agenda.

The statewide agenda was set in two ways. The first three days reviewed possible ways to deal with agricultural impacts on water quality. The agenda was set by the staff and steering committee. Four state agencies judged best able to address the issue were selected to present alternative ways to approach the problem. On the third day, the panelists decided which ideas they liked best and directed staff to make up the agenda for days four through six. Staff came up with several frameworks to guide the panelists in their final three days of decision making.

Running the Panels

The five regional panels were run at one-month intervals in the summer and fall of 1984. Given the time necessary to select participants and set the agenda, staff found itself at any moment running one panel while setting the agenda for the next and selecting the participants for the third. The panels were run on two consecutive Fridays and Saturdays. Panelists were paid \$75.00 a day for attendance. As noted above, the first three days of the regional panels were devoted to presentations by the staff and by witnesses. On the fourth day, members were asked to respond as a group with recommendations about the significance of the issue, the need for action, spending provisions, funding sources, and specific actions to be taken by appropriate authorities. Participants also selected three from the panel to go to the statewide panel.

In deliberating over their recommendations, panelists found it difficult to reach conclusions. Two panels strongly resisted the process. The performance of chairpersons (chosen by the panel members) varied from good to very poor, so that staff was tempted on occasion to intervene. While some staff, in the interests of a well-formulated set of conclusions, felt it was appropriate to give panelists considerable guidance in putting together a set of recommendations, others thought that in the interests of avoiding bias and giving panelists a sense of efficacy, panel members should be given free rein.

The statewide panel met for two three-day sessions with a break of 10 days in between. Attendance was 100 percent except for one person who failed to make the first day of meetings and had to be replaced with an alternate. The first three days of presentations by the four agencies and the agenda setting for the last three days went as planned. The last three days were devoted to panel deliberations and the preparation of a plan to address the impacts of agriculture on water quality. Preparing a plan was a process novel to all panelists. This led the staff director to fear that their recommendations would not be well enough organized to be taken seriously by the legislature and the agencies which would review them. As a result, staff prepared several "frameworks" for the panelists to use in formulating their decisions. The participants decided to use these frameworks (in making their last decision, they asked staff to leave the room), but, like the regional panels, they found reaching conclusions difficult.

Panel Conclusion

The statewide panel's plan was issued as part of a project report given to the sponsors and other appropriate organizations, key members of the legislature, and the media. A subcommittee of panelists was invited to testify before two legislative committees. Staff were asked to make presentations before the governing boards of each sponsor and the state's Environmental Quality Board and were asked to speak to a number of farmer and environmental organizations about both the issue and the process. The report stimulated one sponsoring agency to set

up a special committee of its board to deal with nonpoint source pollution. It has also served as a stimulus to a major piece of legislation dealing with the "setaside" of marginal lands.

Meeting the Criteria for Successful Citizen Participation

Participant Selection

The use of random selection greatly reduced the possibility that the choice of the participants for the Citizens Panels could be manipulated by special interests. This was not the case with those selected from the informational meetings. Certainly if some interest had mobilized sufficiently, it would have been possible for them to stack the meetings with its members. The idea of drawing participants from the informational meetings was deemed necessary in view of the importance of gaining support from the agricultural groups. In light of the novelty of the process, this appears to have been a reasonable decision. It is assumed, however, that as the process becomes better known, it will not be necessary to use this deviation from random selection in order to select participants.

Use of the survey to divide potential participants into three categories meant that the panelists were representative of the general public in the state, although the informational meetings led to an overrepresentation of farmers and those with special concerns about the environment. The fact that staff took considerable care to explain the selection process at the outset of each panel and on numerous other public occasions did a great deal to allay suspicion of bias in the choice of panel members.

Effective Decision Making and Fair Procedures

These two categories are considered together since in the planning process one could not be dealt with apart from the other. The agenda setting method described above, wherein large numbers of people were provided opportunity to influence the proceedings, served as a useful check against staff bias. It also provided the organization necessary for clear presentation of information. At one of the regional panels, a group of people came to the proceedings convinced that the panels were an attempt (by "environmentalists," or worse) to make an end run around farmer opposition to state regulations on tillage practices. By the end of the second day of testimony, however, they had put away their tape recorders and otherwise relaxed their vigilance. As the panel closed on the fourth day, one of their number complimented staff on the fairness of the proceedings.

With regard to the presentation of information, while panelists complained of poor work by particular witnesses, they pronounced themselves satisfied in general with the format which included presentations by both staff and witnesses. The latter included a deliberate mix of professionals, such as chemists and hydrogeologists, and lay persons, such as farmers and those inter-

TABLE 2
Responses of Panelists to Final Evaluation Questionnaire

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	TOTALS*
In general how do you feel about your participation in the Citizens Panel?						
Regional Panels	37 (63%)	19 (32%)	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	—	59 (100%)
Statewide	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	—	—	—	15 (100%)
Do you feel satisfied that the staff acted in an unbiased way?						
Regional Panels	41 (72%)	14 (25%)	2 (3%)	—	—	57 (100%)
Statewide	6 (40%)	9 (60%)	—	—	—	15 (100%)
Do you feel satisfied that there was a balanced group of witnesses?						
Regional Panels	26 (46%)	27 (48%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	—	56 (100%)
Statewide	7 (47%)	8 (53%)	—	—	—	15 (100%)

*Although there were 60 regional panelists, one was taken ill and did not finish the process, and a few others did not answer some questions.

ested in sports.¹⁹ The combination yielded an interesting and useful mix of hard data and anecdotes which served to inform and hold the attention of the panelists. Time spent on presentations generally seemed adequate, although some panel members complained of having to absorb too much information in the three days allotted.

The greatest difficulty encountered with regard to fairness and decision making occurred during the panel deliberations. As noted above, panelists' problems in reaching conclusions, whether in one day (at the regional level) or in three (at the statewide level) resulted in some intervention by staff. A questionnaire filled out by panelists at the end of the meetings reveals that while staff were credited with low bias at the regional panels, such was not the case at the statewide hearings (see Table 2). The more staff intervened, the more they were seen as introducing their biases into the proceedings.

Cost Effectiveness

The cost effectiveness of the project is not easy to determine. When compared to the many millions of dollars being spent to address the problem, the \$120,000 cost of the project is miniscule. To the degree it begins to correct the problem, it is clearly money well spent. Reactions from state officials and sponsors varied, generally in accordance with how they liked the recommendations. Those pleased with the results thought the sum spent was comparatively small. Those less comfortable with the recommendations were apt also to remark on the project's expense.

The costs can be reduced considerably for projects on the local level. Currently, a way is being designed to use Citizens Panels on the level of rural county government for a cost of \$10,000 to \$20,000. This would involve training local residents to fill some of the roles which were played by staff in the statewide project.

Flexibility

The Citizens Panel method is clearly quite adaptable to a wide range of tasks and settings. While the project on agriculture and water quality was the first large-scale application of the process in the United States, it has been used here successfully on pilot projects dealing with peacemaking, public health care, and the 1976 presidential election. The experiences in Germany show that it can be used on projects ranging from city planning to long-range, national energy planning.

Three areas of flexibility are particularly important. First, there are a number of ways to combine the use of a survey and random selection processes so that a balanced panel can be chosen in a public way which would be difficult to manipulate. Pragmatic adaptation can be made to meet the needs of cost and the political scene while still meeting goals for participant selection. Second, presentations by staff may be combined in various ways with presentations by witnesses and advocates to meet the requirements of fairness and effective decision making. Balance is difficult to achieve, but the process is rich in possibilities. Third, and perhaps most important, Citizens Panels offer a structure which can be adapted to problems ranging from the local to the national level. The two-tiered approach used in the project showed how the views of panels with good ties to local communities can be combined into a set of statewide recommendations.

The Recommendations Should Be Followed

The project was designed to ensure that the Citizens Panel recommendations would be given a meaningful hearing by the proper officials. Sponsors for the project were chosen because of their ability to influence events in the area of agriculture and water quality. Each sponsor

agreed, in signing on to the project, to have its governing board or similar body pay "serious attention" to the panel's recommendations. Furthermore, the choice of the issue itself was a major factor in seeing that the findings were heeded; i.e., because the issue was controversial, and at an impasse, many public officials were eager to see what a group of citizens, including farmers, would recommend be done with the problem. Finally, legislators were informed of panel progress and were invited to participate at appropriate stages.

The center's evaluation of the results is that it is a successful start and can be built into a process which is satisfactory over the long run. The sponsoring agencies did indeed give the recommendations serious review and detailed responses were sent to the center by the heads of the agencies. As already noted, one of the agencies set up a new subcommittee of its board to deal with non-point source pollution and added staff to the relevant division of the agency. Also a bill passed the Minnesota Legislature which contained elements of the recommendations, but with no funding to carry them out. All of this is positive, but the bulk of the recommendations of the Citizens Panel were not adopted either by the Legislature or the agencies. In future projects the center staff believe this can be improved.

Conclusions

Studies cited in this article show that the upsurge of citizen participation in the 1960s-70s had limited impacts on institutionalized structures. The authors believe it is important to differentiate between citizen lobbying efforts and procedures for allowing a broad range of citizens to participate in public policy making. To this end, six criteria are suggested which should be met if citizen participation is to be successful.

The 1984 project described above made a start in meeting these criteria. We believe it made a unique contribution in dealing with the problems of participant selection, broad-based decision making, and fair procedures. It is also a flexible process, well adapted to complex issues on a statewide or even national level. The process was relatively expensive, but clearly costs can be reduced considerably for local projects and kept within acceptable limits for larger ones. The area where the most work remains is in getting the recommendations adopted by those in power. As the public learns about the process and the way it meets the first three criteria, they may view the process as legitimate and may begin to support its use on important public policy issues where other approaches are deemed inadequate.

Notes

1. Robert Alford and Roger Friedland, "Political Participation and Public Policy," *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 1 (1975), p. 472.
2. Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) p. 365.
3. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, *Citizen Participation in the American Federal System* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1980). This work identified 150 citizen participation projects.
4. See for example, Harry Boyte, *Backyard Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).
5. For excellent overviews see Marilyn Gittell, et al., *Limits to Citizen Participation: The Decline of Community Organizations* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980) and Robert W. and Mary G. Kweit, *Implementing Citizen Participation in a Bureaucratic Society* (New York: Praeger, 1981). Other interesting works include Joan B. Aron, "Citizen Participation at Government Expense," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 39 (September/October 1979); Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *American Institute of Planners*, vol. XXXV (July 1969); Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder, *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda Building* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Richard Cole, *Citizen Participation and the Urban Policy Process* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1974); Stephen D. Cupps, "Emerging Problems of Citizen Participation," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 37 (September/October 1977); Stuart Langton (ed.), *Citizen Participation in America* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1978); Kenneth C. Laudon, *Communication Technology and Democratic Participation* (New York: Praeger, 1977); Judy B. Rosener, "A Cafeteria of Techniques and Critiques," *Public Management*, vol. 57 (December 1975), pp. 16-19, and "Making Bureaucracy Responsive: A Study of the Impact of Citizen Participation," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 42 (July/August 1982), pp. 339-345; and Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, and Jae-on Kim, *Participation and Political Equality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978).
6. Joseph Falkson, *An Evaluation of Policy Related Research on Citizen Participation in Municipal Service Systems* (Washington: TARP Institute, 1974); Gittell, et al., 1980.
7. Falkson, *op. cit.*
8. John H. Strange, "The Impact of Citizen Participation on Public Administration," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 32 (September/October 1972), pp. 457-470; Milbarth, 1980; Marilyn Gittell, "The Consequences of Mandating Citizen Participation," *Policy Studies Review*, vol. 3 (August 1983) pp. 90-95, and Gittell, et al., 1980.
9. Kweit and Kweit, *op. cit.*
10. Robert A. Dahl, "On Removing Certain Impediments to Democracy in the United States," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 92 (Spring 1977) p. 17.
11. The major work on the theory and practice of what Professor Dienel calls "planning cells" is Peter C. Dienel, *Die Planungszelle* (Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen, West Germany: 1978). The use of the "planning cells" to explore energy futures for Germany is described in Ortwin Renn, et al.: "An Empirical Investigation of Citizens' Preferences Among Four Energy Scenarios" in *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, vol. 26 (April 1984), pp. 11-46. This description concentrates on the attitudes of the participants and plays down the citizen advisory role which Dienel finds so important. Those interested in

the details of Dienel's work can learn what has been published in German by contacting the Center for New Democratic Processes (612-333-5300).

12. This is not meant to imply that the social sciences do not make use of normative standards. The structural-functional approach can be viewed as normative in that certain functions *ought* to be performed if a system is to be maintained. Such an "ought" is not moral, but is justified on the grounds of empirical research which demonstrates that the social system cannot be maintained if the function is not performed. The criteria in this article, however, present a mixture of empirical and moral claims. The requirement of effective decision making can be based on the empirical claim that without it, the recommended policy is unlikely to accomplish its intended goals. The requirements of fairness, however, often must be justified through a normative discourse which is analyzed through the standards of meta-ethics rather than of the social sciences (appeals can also be made to empirical data about what promotes legitimacy in the eyes of officials and the public).
13. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
14. Verba, Nie, and Kim, *op. cit.*; and Gittell, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
15. Anyone wanting to see the mass of work done on small group decision making should glance through the pages of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. How helpful this will be for those interested in complex social issues is another matter. Michael Saks, in an extensive review of the literature on complex decision making, concluded that most of the research is not relevant to the sorts of problems faced by jurors in a complex trial (*Small Group Decision-Making and Complex Information Tasks*; The Federal Judicial Center; 1520 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20005; 1981).
16. Robert W. Aleshire, "Planning and Citizen Participation: Costs, Benefits and Approaches," *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, vol. 5 (March 1970), pp. 369-393.
17. Arnstein, *op. cit.*, p. 216.
18. The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Carolyn Emerson, Karen Husby, and Mary Kearney for invaluable assistance on the organizational aspects of the project. The participation of panelists and sponsors in the project is gratefully acknowledged, as is financial support through a grant from the Joyce Foundation of Chicago.
19. Lay witnesses provide an essential leavening in the presentation of complex information to panelists, who can be awed by, and simultaneously suspicious of, many professionals. Lay persons also may have information which professionals do not have. Unfortunately, some professionals experience great difficulty in rendering their data for public understanding.