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MODELS FOR THE EVALUATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAMMES

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The quest for a greater degree of public participation in planning and policy-making became one of the major social movements of the later 1960's and the early 1970's.¹ To an important extent the movement continues in North America, Europe and elsewhere, but its future remains uncertain. Proponents of public participation have welcomed the increasing opportunities for the public to comment upon plans and policies, and to identify issues that require attention. They remain skeptical, however, of the extent to which inputs of the public actually influence decisions. Some proponents such as Estrin² believe that the public still lacks a voice in policy-making. Existing mechanisms for facilitating participation, supporters of the movement claim, fail to ensure that all relevant viewpoints are taken into account. On the other hand, opponents of an expanded role for the public are increasingly apprehensive of the mounting costs of participation programmes.

Inquiries regarding construction of airports, nuclear power developments, or oil or gas pipelines have cost as much as four million dollars and have involved more than two years of studies. Cognizant of these huge expenditures and the associated delays in arriving at decisions, as well as adverse reaction to some of the public participation programmes, politicians and government agencies are becoming less supportive of increased involvement.

The major question remains: how useful is increased public participation? Unfortunately, there is a scarcity of objective evaluations of past and ongoing methods and levels of participation. Although government agencies have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on participation programmes, they have generally been unwilling to allocate any funds to the evaluation of the effectiveness of such ventures. Appraisal has also been hampered by the deficiency of frameworks for analysis. There has been uncertainty as to which

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1. A. UTON, W. SEWELL & T. O'RIORDAN, *NATURAL RESOURCES AND A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING* (1976).

2. D. ESTRIN, *The Public is Still Voiceless: Practical Aspects of Public Hearings in Environmental Decision-Making*, *PROCEEDINGS OF THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION* (forthcoming, Spring 1979).

parameters should be taken into account and how these elements ought to be measured. In recent years, however, a number of attempts have been made, notably in Canada and the United Kingdom, to develop frameworks for evaluation.

The purpose of this article is to examine the frameworks proposed to date and to comment on their strengths and weaknesses. A number of case studies will be reviewed which evaluate experiences in Canada, noting the perceived purposes of public participation, criteria proposed for evaluation, and the conclusions reached. Suggestions are offered for the development of improved frameworks for analysis.

MODELS FOR EVALUATION

Several frameworks have been proposed during the past four or five years for the evaluation of public participation programmes. Four of these models—those of Vindasius, Hampton, Farrell, and Homenuck³—have been selected for discussion here because they represent the range of sophistication evident in such evaluation. Some of these models have been designed to evaluate experience in the urban field, and others have been created to appraise experience in the resources and environmental fields.

(1) *Vindasius*

One of the earliest formal evaluations of a public participation programme in Canada was undertaken by Dana Vindasius of the Socio-Economic Studies Section of the Inland Waters Branch of Environment Canada.⁴ Her task was to assess the public involvement programme that had been established in connection with the Okanagan Basin Study, a river basin planning investigation funded jointly by the federal government and British Columbia. Comparable participation programmes were also set up as part of the studies in the Qu'Appelle and St. John River Basins. To date, however, only the Okanagan participation programme has been reported upon.

The overall purpose of the Okanagan venture was to increase the

3. D. VINDASIUS, *Evaluation of the Okanagan Public Involvement Programme*, Water Planning and Management Branch, Environment Canada (1965); W. HAMPTON, *Research into Public Participation in Structure Planning*, in PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING 27-42 (1977); G. FARRELL *et al.*, INVOLVEMENT: A SASKATCHEWAN PERSPECTIVE. REPORT FOR THE SASKATCHEWAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT BY CONSULTANT GROUP LIMITED (1976); and P. HOMENUCK, *Evaluation of Public Participation Programmes*, PROCEEDINGS OF THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (forthcoming, Spring 1979).

4. Vindasius, *supra* note 2.

acceptability and efficiency of water resources planning. To this end, three specific objectives were identified in the programme:

- (1) the provision of information to the citizenry (Information Out)
- (2) the receipt of information from the citizenry (Information In)
- (3) incorporation of the inputs into the planning process.⁵

Success in attaining these goals was measured in terms of effectiveness (the extent to which a given objective was actually accomplished) and efficiency (the costs of pursuing a given objective). Finally, the programme was assessed in terms of the potential influence of the process on the results. The "process" of participation was defined as the impact of clear objectives, adequate budget and staff, communication and accountability relationships, and compatibility between the planning process and the public involvement programme. The Vindasius framework relies upon the perceptions of key actors involved in the programme, that is, agency staff, programme personnel and community leaders, to evaluate the degree to which the above objectives were achieved.

The Vindasius approach to evaluation has several merits. It is simple and can be rapidly undertaken. Its data requirements are relatively small and the costs of carrying out such an evaluation are correspondingly low. Therefore, agencies which are reluctant to commit large amounts of resources or time to evaluation of a public involvement programme may decide to undertake a Vindasius-like assessment rather than no assessment at all. The framework does have some important limitations, however. It is biased toward the view of the agency as to what are (or should be) the objectives of public involvement. Because the data for evaluation are based on information sources closely associated with the programme, the results are likely to be favorable rather than critical toward the programme. The Vindasius model focuses upon techniques used in the programme and offers little guidance as to how effective these are when compared with other options. The satisfaction derived by the citizenry from the involvement process is not an important consideration in this model and its usefulness is limited.

(2) Hampton

A second model of evaluation has been developed by William Hampton for the assessment of public involvement in the formulation of structure plans in the United Kingdom.⁶ It is designed to be

5. *Id.* at 23.

6. Hampton, *supra* note 2.

applicable to participation programmes in general, rather than to evaluate a specific case study. Because Hampton perceives the purpose of public participation in much broader terms than does Vindasius, his framework for analysis is correspondingly more sophisticated. For Hampton, the purpose of citizen involvement is not only to improve the planning process, but also to increase the citizen's power in the decisions that are made. He also sees the satisfactions of the citizen to be at least as important as those of the agency or the planner in assessing the success of a public participation programme.

The purpose of this model is to evaluate the breadth of involvement for specific groups of the public which can be achieved by various techniques. Similar to Vindasius, Hampton visualizes the main objectives of a programme as those of: (1) information dispersal; (2) information gathering; and, (3) attainment of interaction between planners and the public. Under each objective, techniques are assessed according to the nature of the information they generate and the type of public involved, that is, whether they are a major or minor elite. Here the focus is upon the determination of what *kinds* of participation take place for *whom*. The types of information which are required for such an evaluation are set out in Table 1.

The Hampton framework has many attractive features. It takes specific account of the fact that different segments of the public seek different goals, and that their motivations for and satisfactions derived from involvement vary also. Hampton is one of the few critics to view public participation and its evaluation as a dynamic process rather than a static exercise. The dispersal of some information, states Hampton, may lead to a demand for more information, and interaction will naturally follow based on this exchange. Therefore, the degree of participation is not perceived, as Arnstein⁷ suggests, to be a ladder, but rather as a series of interlocking steps. While the basic aim of the Hampton model—to indicate the extent to which satisfaction of the consumer has been improved—has merit, the method has a major weakness in its lack of concern for the costs associated with the provision of such satisfactions. As a consequence, it is difficult to determine how *much* should be spent on a given technique or on a programme of public involvement. The model is thus somewhat removed from the realities of programme implementation or evaluation.

7. Arnstein, *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*, 35 AM. INST. PLANNERS, 216 (1969).

TABLE 1
A SCHEMA FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. *DISPERSAL OF INFORMATION*

What information?

- (a) Information about decisions already taken—i.e., a single policy.
- (b) Information about discussions taking place—i.e., alternative policies.
- (c) Open government—i.e., all information freely available.

Who is informed?

- (a) Major elites—e.g., other public bodies or major commercial concerns.
- (b) Minor elites—e.g., local interest groups.
- (c) The general public as a collectivity of individuals.

2. *GATHERING INFORMATION*

What information?

- (a) Information about physical facts—i.e., census data, etc.
- (b) Information about decisions taken by other public or private bodies.
- (c) Information about public attitudes and opinions.

Who is listened to?

- (a) Major elites—e.g., other public bodies or major commercial concerns.
- (b) Minor elites—e.g., local interest groups.
- (c) The general public as a collectivity of individuals.

3. *INTERACTION BETWEEN PLANNING AUTHORITY AND PUBLIC*

What kind of interaction?

- (a) Through the widening of the debate—e.g., by the dispersion of more information.
- (b) Through the involvement of elites—e.g., working parties for interest groups.
- (c) Through the encouragement of the individual citizen.

Who is the public?

- (a) Major elites—e.g., other public bodies or major commercial concerns.
- (b) Minor elites—e.g., local interest groups.
- (c) The general public as a collectivity of individuals.

SOURCE: W. Hampton, 1977.

(3) *Farrell, Melin and Stacey*

A more sophisticated and comprehensive model for the evaluation of public involvement programmes has been formulated by Farrell, Melin and Stacey for use by the Department of Environment, Saskatchewan government.⁸ Although developed within the political context of Saskatchewan, the framework could be applied to almost any geographic area, political unit or participation programme. The purposes of public participation are defined by Farrell et al. pri-

8. Farrell, *et al.*, *supra* note 3.

marily from an agency viewpoint: (1) to enhance public acceptance of planning decisions; (2) to provide a source of data for planning activities; and, (3) to educate the public so that they will acquire skills that can be used to deal with planning problems in their own communities.

In order to achieve these general objectives, the Farrell model identifies seven different types of involvement which may have been undertaken: persuasion, education, information-feedback, consultation, joint planning, delegated authority and self-determination. The success of a programme is evaluated in relation to the type of involvement employed. Evaluation is based on the "outcomes" (the extent to which the objectives were achieved), the "process" (the degree to which programme techniques were successfully implemented) and "attitudes" (the degree to which attitudes of those involved were positively or negatively affected). Potential indicators of success for each type of involvement are presented in Table 2.

The degree of explicitness and sophistication inherent in the Farrell framework makes it a viable approach to evaluation. Farrell and his associates emphasize that, when possible, the actual evaluation should be undertaken by independent observers, that is, by individuals who have not had a direct input into the planning process or programme implementation. To facilitate this, they set out criteria which may be used for evaluation. This was intended not only to foster objectivity but also to enable comparability in the evaluation of programmes.

The Farrell approach has several merits, notably its focus on levels of involvement, and the use of a wider range of criteria of success. But it does have some weaknesses. One is that it seems to be oriented mainly towards agency satisfaction, and sheds little light on the values derived by the citizens themselves. Another difficulty is that it requires really large amounts of information, time and resources, which, in some cases may be beyond the capabilities of those requiring the assessment.

(4) Homenuck

The framework presented by Peter Homenuck and associates at the Canadian Conference on Public Participation is perhaps the most sophisticated of those put forward to date.⁹ It attempts to establish a general approach to the evaluation of participation programmes, rather than to assess a specific case. This model, however, has re-

9. Homenuck, *supra* note 3.

TABLE 2

TECHNIQUES	FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION					EVALUATIVE INDICATORS
PERSUASION	EDUCATION	INFORMATION -FEEDBACK	CONSULTATION	JOINT PLANNING	DELEGATED AUTHORITY	SELF-DETERMINISM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of public involvement techniques in legitimate endeavours to change attitudes without raising participation in the planning process. <p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To convince the public of the desirability of a preconceived program or policy through positive attitude development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of information dissemination and general instruction to create an awareness of programs and issues. <p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance effectiveness of existing governmental programs. To create a foundation for future public involvement. To strengthen environmental consciousness and to effect behavioural change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The distribution, by authority, of information on a policy planning situation which the authority has a responsibility to address. Request for public feedback on that position. <p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow individuals to react in a formative - evaluative manner to a proposed management scheme. To disseminate effectively relevant information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of formal dialogue between authorities and established mutually accepted objectives. <p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate development of a consensus between the public. To allow individuals to present their own views and react to management alternatives. To demonstrate how public inputs affect alternatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared decision - making. The public is represented on departmental planning boards, is given voting, and issues should be particularly specific and understandable by local participants. <p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate a policy. To develop a management plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The transfer of responsibilities, normally associated with the authority, to the public or other levels of government. <p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To utilize an existing element of self-help or mutual aid within a community to achieve authority goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The undertaking of the planning process by the public. <p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To shift or diffuse the responsibility for the planning process from the authority to the public. To attain, at the community level, development skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of resistance expressed towards program development and program results. Number of participants reached in relation to the total population the program is attempting to affect. Number of people who have an attitude toward the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of time spent participating in some educational activity (e.g. reading, lectures, interviews). Number of educational changes which occur as a direct result of public education on environmental issues (e.g. litter on road side). Community resources relative to the planning process, e.g. libraries, community clubs, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in the program caused by citizen feedback. Frequency of contact between the public and the authority (e.g. meetings, letters, telephone calls). Participants' attitudes toward perceived influence of the program (successful programs generate acceptance). Extent to which local government participation was feedback process contribute to management decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in the program caused by citizen feedback and consultation. Frequency of contact between the public and the authority as measured by meetings, letters, telephone calls. Participants' attitudes toward perceived influence of policy (successful programs generate acceptance). Extent to which local government participation was feedback process contribute to management decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The degree to which public representatives actually influenced the group decision-making process. Number of public representatives which the public perceives it has had a voice via its representatives. Frequency of examples given of self-perception of committee representatives, e.g. new leaders in groups, previously inarticulate individuals speaking out, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether the programmes meet its objectives. Public reaction to projects, programs and problem solving skills. Frequency of initiatives and acceptance of responsibility for problem resolution by public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of programs initiated by the public and number of people participating. Perceived control over environment. Increased group formation and use of community resources for involvement purposes. Frequency of constructive interaction between groups. Frequency of travel to outside areas by individuals to act as resource personnel in their communities on similar issues.

AFTER FARRELL, MELIN, and STACEY

ceived no practical application. For Homenuck, public participation programmes contribute in part to the planning effort and the solution of a given problem, and in part to the overall goals of the agency sponsoring the programme. Both objectives need to be taken into account but must be evaluated separately.

The basic elements in the Homenuck framework are illustrated in Figure 1. As an input into the planning effort, a public participation programme is seen as performing *functions* on the one hand, and as contributing to the *process* of involvement on the other. The five kinds of functions identified in the model are dissemination of information, collection of information, response/evaluation, creation/initiation and mutual education. The five dimensions of process subsumed by a programme are the recruiting of participants, making decisions, interaction, reduction of data and establishment of boundaries. Performance in carrying out these functions and processes is evaluated by *measures*, some of which are quantitative and others of which are qualitative in nature. Functions are appraised in terms of such considerations as the quantity of information generated or dispersed, the number of people who became involved and the quality of the product (such as the accuracy of information). The process of involvement is evaluated in terms of the ways in which the techniques were used, who was reached, and what impacts they had on various segments of the public.

The Homenuck framework has much to recommend it. Certainly it is comprehensive. It is concerned not only with the output of the process but also with the process itself. In addition, the model is sensitive to the need to examine the cost-effectiveness of public participation programmes. Nevertheless, several deficiencies are apparent. If all the elements identified in the model were taken into account, the data requirements would be enormous and the costs of evaluation considerable, if not prohibitive. No suggestions are offered as to which elements of the analysis are the most critical. While collecting the data prescribed by the model, one could easily lose sight of its necessity. Like many of the other models, evaluation in the Homenuck framework rests substantially on subjective judgment which makes comparison of evaluations somewhat tenuous. Again, the focus is on the gains derived by the agency from public participation with little recognition of the values accruing to the public itself.

The four frameworks discussed above are but a sample of the attempts to develop objective measures of performance. They do, however, offer some indication of the state of the art. The increasing sophistication employed in evaluation is clearly demonstrated. The

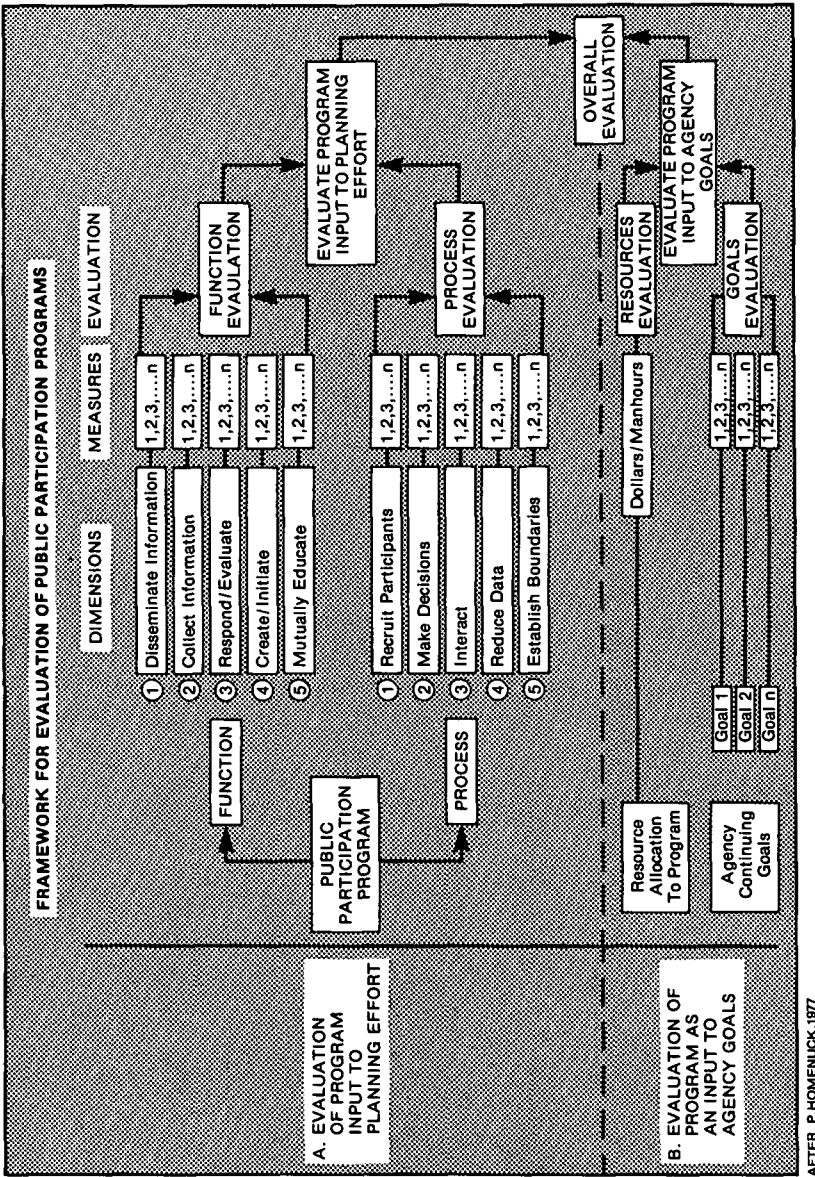


FIGURE 1

TRADE OFFS BETWEEN
DEGREE OF CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT, EQUITY, AND EFFICIENCY

models are becoming more comprehensive in coverage and attempts are being made to take account of the wide range of goals pursued¹⁰ and the impacts both on the agency and the public at large. While most of the early frameworks were developed to examine the experience in a particular case, models are now being developed which strive for universal applicability. As noted in the discussion of the models, however, all of them have deficiencies and we are still some way from the development of a "magic formula." There remain important differences of opinion as to what should be taken into account, how various parameters ought to be measured, and what weight should be attached to particular aspects of the evaluation.

DEFICIENCIES IN EVALUATION

Perhaps the most serious barrier to the creation of successful models for evaluation and to the public participation movement in general, arises from the fact that systematic evaluation has been a rarity in participation programmes. Where evaluation has occurred, particularly in Canada, it has usually been conducted by the agency which sponsored the programme. Thus, inevitably there have been biases in evaluation which resulted from narrowly defined objectives or from an emphasis on elements which demonstrate success. Some of the biases are evident in an analysis of selected case studies presented at the Canadian Conference on Public Participation.¹¹ As Table 3 illustrates, different participants in the public involvement process have different perceptions of the objectives of participation and the criteria to be used and, thus, they draw differing conclusions about the experience.

The twenty-two case studies analyzed and presented in Table 3 cover a wide spectrum of experiences, ranging from conflicts in the siting of a penitentiary to decisions about the future of the largely undeveloped area of the Canadian North. Here, even more so than in Alaska, there is a challenge of the exploitation of oil, gas, and mineral resources (which will mainly benefit Canadians to the south) and the preservation of a traditional life-style, which is desired by some native peoples, but not all. The case studies were prepared by people with differing roles in the decision-making process.¹² For the pur-

10. Farrell, *et al.*, *supra* note 3.

11. ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION COUNCIL, PROCEEDINGS OF THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (1977).

12. There are numerous groups which play a role in the decision-making process, particularly in policy-making and planning in the resources and environmental management fields. For simplicity, these may be categorized as the bureaucracy, politicians, interest groups (including political parties), technical advisors, and the public at large. In particular instances, of course, a given individual may belong to more than one of these groups.

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF APPROACHES TO EVALUATION IN PAPERS PRESENTED TO
THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Case	Nature of Issue	Public(s) Affected	Method of Involvement	Dominant Perceived Objectives of Participation	Principal Criteria Used in Evaluation	Principal Conclusions Drawn from Evaluation	Affiliation of Evaluator
Community Reaction to Neighbourhood Planning in Edmonton, Alberta	urban planning	residents and potential residents of an urban renewal project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - public meetings organized by citizen groups - briefs and reports - public opinion surveys etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pragmatic--to influence agency policy and obtain desired type of neighbourhood. idealistic--to ensure that citizens have a voice in the planning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support for interest group's position - impact of public on final outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - confrontation occurred which did not allow for compromises: there is no confrontation is not an appropriate approach to planning - the participation process has too many constraints and foreclosed options to be effective 	citizen group
Planning Municipal Housing in Toronto	urban planning	residents and potential residents of housing developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - citizen advisory committee - public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pragmatic--to secure public acceptance of agency proposals idealistic--to broaden the basis of citizen representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - degree of cooperation - degree of citizen representation - impact of citizen on final outcome - costs & benefits of the participation process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support for the agency's policies was secured - participation decreased the efficiency of the planning process - participation reinforced the existing activist elite 	agency personnel
Housing Redevelopment in the Neighbourhood of Ottawa West	urban planning	residents and potential residents of an urban renewal project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - public meetings - informal contacts with groups - citizen advisory committee etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pragmatic--to secure public acceptance of agency proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - effect of participation on the efficiency of planning - fraction of planners and politicians - support for agency's position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support for agency's position was not secured and a confrontation situation arose - participation decreased the efficiency of the planning process to the extent that the costs of participation outweighed the benefits 	agency personnel
District Planning in Central London, Ontario	urban planning	residents, businesses and potential residents of an inner city redevelopment project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - citizen advisory committee - appointment of "facilitator" to assist groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pragmatic--to influence agency's policies and to identify alternatives in planning idealistic--to strengthen democratic ideals, provide citizens with feeling of reward and improve citizen groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improvement of democratic values - quality of interaction between agency & citizenry - feeling of accomplishment attained by citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of a facilitator was successful - conflicts among agency and group objectives, and problems of staff and citizen in-experience threatens the full potential of participation programmes 	citizen group

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Case	Nature of Issue	Public(s) Affected	Method of Involvement	Dominant Perceived Objectives of Participation	Principal Criteria Used in Evaluation	Principal Conclusions Drawn from Evaluation	Affiliation of Evaluator
Participation in Issues under the Pollution Control Act of British Columbia	environmental planning and management	public at large across the province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -public hearings -public information meetings -task forces 	<p>pragmatic—to reduce conflict between the public, industry and government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to secure public acceptance of government decision-making 	not specified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the formal hearings have generally been successful in reducing conflict, but tend to receive representation only from special interest groups and discourage the public at large 	agency personnel
The Berger Inquiry into Location of a Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline	resources planning	native peoples in Northern Canada and gas consumers in the South of Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -public hearings -public meetings 	<p>idealistic—to involve native peoples in decisions</p> <p>pragmatic—to identify the route with least social and environmental costs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -degree to which the public had access to information -degree of representation -impact of public on eventual outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -participation succeeded in identifying the most acceptable route -success was due largely to the use of direct contacts and provision of information rather than formal hearings -provision of funds enabled minority groups to participate 	independent observer (university)
United States Forest Service Recreation Policy	resources and environmental management	recreational users of U.S. forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -study groups -informal contacts and meetings 	<p>pragmatic—to improve the public image of the agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to make the agency more sensitive to public views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -public approval of policies -public confidence in agency's managerial ability -citizen satisfaction with the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -confidence in an agency may be achieved in less costly ways than large scale participation programmes -no group made a significant contribution to final policies -some issues are not appropriate for public involvement 	independent observer (university)
Planning for Resource and Urban Development in the Great Lakes Basin	environmental planning and management	residents and users of the Great Lakes in Canada and the U.S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -facilitated workshops -citizen newspaper -task forces etc. 	<p>pragmatic—to improve future planning for the Great Lakes via public input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to make agencies more responsive to citizen needs -to help discern the underlying assumptions of technicians and planners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -impact of public on planning decisions -degree of representation -diversity of views heard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -this citizen-initiated programme is working because the citizen group requires the agency to be accountable through documentation of its actions; the group works within the existing system; it generates and has access to information and employs techniques that are flexible 	citizen group

<p>Downtown Commercial Redevelopment in Kitchener, Ontario</p>	<p>urban development</p>	<p>residents of inner city neighbourhood, businesses of downtown, residents and potential residents of metro area</p>	<p>-circulation of petitions -public meetings -referendum etc.</p>	<p>pragmatic—to secure public acceptance of agency proposals</p>	<p>-number of people involved -support for agency position -extent of 2-way communication</p>	<p>independent observer (university)</p>
<p>The Siting of a Federal Penitentiary in the Township of Uxbridge, Ontario</p>	<p>development of a public facility in a community</p>	<p>residents and potential residents of a community and its surrounding region</p>	<p>-information programme through the local media -brochures with mail-back -questionnaire -“open house” information display</p>	<p>pragmatic—to secure public acceptance of agency's proposals by providing information</p>	<p>-amount of information disseminated -extent of 2-way communication -impact of public on final outcome</p>	<p>consultant to programme</p>
<p>Recreational/Industrial Land-Use Conflicts in Hay River, N.W.T.</p>	<p>urban and regional development</p>	<p>residents and future residents of town and surrounding area; potential industrial developers and tourists to area</p>	<p>-informal meetings and interviews with groups and public -workshops</p>	<p>pragmatic—to devise a plan, based on information from public, that would secure their support</p>	<p>-information input from citizens allowed -politicians to make objective decision -participation enhanced the image of the agency and politicians -involvement reduced public's hostility</p>	<p>consultant to programme</p>
<p>Comprehensive Urban Planning for Saint John, New Brunswick</p>	<p>long-range urban planning</p>	<p>residents and potential residents of city and region</p>	<p>-delphi -brochures -task groups etc.</p>	<p>pragmatic—to set goals and direction of future development and to assess the potential impact of such development idealistic—to give every citizen the opportunity to participate in future planning</p>	<p>-degree of representation -number of issues explored</p>	<p>consultant to programme</p>
<p>Regional Economic Development in Huron County, Ontario</p>	<p>regional economic planning</p>	<p>residents and potential residents of county</p>	<p>-workshops -questionnaire to participants in workshops</p>	<p>pragmatic—to shift responsibility from planner to decision-makers -to educate decision-makers and the public -to arouse public awareness and concern</p>	<p>-attainment of planning goals -satisfaction of various actors in the decision-making process -resolution of conflicts in aims</p>	<p>independent observer (university)</p>

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Case	Nature of Issue	Public(s) Affected	Method of Involvement	Dominant Perceived Objectives of Participation	Principal Criteria Used in Evaluation	Principal Conclusions Drawn from Evaluation	Affiliation of Evaluator
Flood Control Works in Canmore, Alberta	environmental (natural hazard) management	residents of township and region	-citizen advisory committee -"open house" meetings -public meetings etc.	pragmatic - to devise a management plan that is acceptable to the public -to generate mutual education between citizen and government	-influence of public on final outcome -support for agency position	-an acceptable management plan was implemented -the participation programme was effective because it was undertaken in phases -citizen advisory committee was successful vehicle for mutual education	joint report: agency personnel & citizen group
A Comparison of Environmental Planning in Thousand Islands, the Waterfront and Parkland of Kingston, Ontario	resources and environmental management	residents and potential residents of the city and region; tourists to the area	-public meetings -discussion groups -public demonstrations	pragmatic - to increase public awareness of the planning process -to ensure type of management desired by community	-influence of public on final outcome -degree of citizen satisfaction	-the citizen groups were successful in influencing final decisions (due to their persistent efforts to have issues debated, their public education campaign, commitment to group goals and political clout	independent observer (university)
Resource and Land-use Planning in Northwestern Ontario	resources and land-use planning	residents, potential residents and industries of region and province	-public information document -public meetings -citizen advisory committee etc.	pragmatic - to secure public acceptance of government plans and proposals	-amount of information exchanged -public acceptance of government proposals	-participation was successful because the public accepted the government's proposals -advisory committees are a useful method of public involvement	agency personnel
Land-use and Resource Development in the Rocky Mountain Eastern Slopes, Alberta	resources and land-use planning	residents and industry of the province; tourists to the area	-public hearings -information centres	pragmatic - to ensure public acceptance of a management scheme	-degree of accuracy and technical level of information exchanged -degree of representation -impact of the public on the final outcome	-participation was dominated by elites and did not adequately involve the public at large -the information provided was not adequate, nor was it used effectively by the public	independent observer (university)

<p>The Role of Public Hearings in Environmental Planning for Alberta</p>	<p>environmental planning and resource development</p>	<p>residents, potential residents and industry of the province</p>	<p>public hearings</p>	<p>pragmatic—to secure public acceptance of government's plans realistic—to reinforce democratic principles by giving the public their right to participate in decision-making</p>	<p>degree of representation ratio of experience to public views heard at hearings</p>	<p>the hearings on resource development of the Rocky Mtn. Eastern Slopes were effective because the views of the public and the expert were equally represented in many cases, the structure of the agency and the terms of reference have discouraged involvement</p>	<p>citizen group</p>
<p>Community Recreation Master Planning in Alberta</p>	<p>resource management</p>	<p>residents and potential residents of the province; tourists to the province</p>	<p>public meetings public opinion surveys Search conferences etc.</p>	<p>pragmatic—to develop public awareness and agency understanding of public wants to secure public acceptance of agency's proposals</p>	<p>existence of a definite, structured process of participation development of leadership at the community level</p>	<p>community recreation planning in Alberta has generally been acceptable to the public and resulted in better plans effective participation must not only be carried out, but be carried out by a definite structure of events</p>	<p>agency personnel</p>
<p>Master Planning for Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba</p>	<p>resource management</p>	<p>residents of the region and province; recreationists in the Park; public at large across Canada</p>	<p>small group discussions public meetings newsletters etc.</p>	<p>pragmatic—to secure public acceptance of agency's proposals to build confidence in the agency</p>	<p>attainment of planning objectives response acceptance of agency's proposals</p>	<p>the programme created agreement on a Master plan regional input dominated the process while national involvement was difficult to attain</p>	<p>agency personnel</p>
<p>International Joint Commission Hearings on the Management of the Great Lakes</p>	<p>environmental planning and management</p>	<p>residents and users of the Great Lakes in Canada and the U.S.A.</p>	<p>public hearings</p>	<p></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>

Source: Based on case studies presented at the Canadian Conference on Public Participation, Banff, Alberta, October, 1977.

pose of analysis, the various papers have been categorized by the authors into three groups: agency personnel, citizen group representatives and private citizens, and independent observers. In this way, the inherent biases of various actors in the evaluation process are more readily identified. These different actors tend to be clearly divided on three components of evaluation: the goals of participation, the criteria to be used for evaluation and the conclusions drawn about the experience.

a) Perceived goals of public participation

Agency personnel and representatives of citizen groups differed considerably in their perceptions of the purposes of public involvement. For most agency representatives, participation was seen as a means to develop programmes which would have broad public acceptance, to enhance the efficient performance of agency responsibilities, and to improve the agency's image. In contrast, citizens perceived a much broader set of objectives. They viewed public participation as a means to reduce the power of planners and the bureaucracy and to ensure that people affected by government policies have influence over their design and implementation. Independent observers, while cognizant of both the philosophical and educational rationales of public participation programmes, tended to emphasize the pragmatic, agency-oriented aspects.

b) Criteria used in evaluations

Specific criteria for the assessment of public participation programmes were seldom identified in the case studies noted above. It is evident, however, that agency personnel tend to measure success in terms of the extent to which a programme is accepted by those involved in it and by the extent to which the image of the agency has been improved.¹³

In contrast, citizen groups generally appraise programmes in terms of the success they have had in preventing or modifying a proposed course of action or the attainment of a broader recognition of the group or the public at large in the decision-making process.¹⁴ Independent observers generally focused upon the extent to which the programme met its objectives, the degree of representation and the

13. Hoole & Tyler, *Public Participation in Park Planning: the Riding Mountain Case*, in ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION COUNCIL, *supra* note 11.

14. Jackson, *A Community Relation to Neighbourhood Planning*; Collins, *A View from the Other Side: Citizen Participation in Planning Municipal Housing Projects*; Hodge & Hodge, *Comparisons of Public Participation in Environmental Planning at Three Levels of Government in Eastern Ontario*.

accuracy of the information gathered. Costs of programmes—time, effort, resources—were used as criteria by some agency representatives, but they were seldom mentioned by citizen groups or independent evaluators.

c) Conclusions from the experience

From their assessments, the three groups of evaluators drew distinctly different conclusions about the role of public participation. In general, citizens groups tended to be suspicious of the entire process of participation, particularly if they felt they had been co-opted or if they perceive that no real options ever existed.¹⁵ For the most part, interest groups appeared to prefer participation as an adversary process.

Agency representatives, on the other hand, held reservations about the level of intensity of public involvement that is desirable and about the escalating costs of the process.¹⁶ Generally, they would prefer to institutionalize the process of participation, setting out which issues may be considered and in what manner, and identifying who may participate. The unaffiliated observers occupied a mid position between the overall assessments of the representatives of the citizen groups and those of the agency. Although they considered the expansion of citizen involvement a positive development, they are critical of some of the techniques which have been used.

In addition to the inconsistency of application illustrated above, another serious deficiency exists in present models of evaluation. Little attention is paid in such assessments to the satisfactions that are derived by the participant himself. Some sociologists and, indeed, some representatives of citizen groups stress the therapeutic values of participation *in addition* to the pragmatic values. The satisfactions derived from the opportunity to air one's views is often regarded as highly as the satisfactions of the decision being made in one's favor.¹⁷ Citizens, however, are seldom given the opportunity to evaluate participation programmes and their needs have rarely been considered in evaluations conducted by agencies or their advisors.

A final deficiency in evaluations of public participation programmes is the failure to consider the problem of tradeoffs. Implementation of a public participation programme is not an all or nothing situation. It involves a series of tradeoffs among objectives,

15. Estrin, *supra* note 2; Shalinsky, *An Evaluation of Public Participation in the Kitchener Market Fight, 1971* in ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION COUNCIL, *supra* note 11.

16. Dale, *Citizen Participation in Ottawa West: Process and Evaluation*.

17. Cartwright, *Citizen Participation from a Citizen's Perspective*; Collins, *supra* note 14.

resources of the agency or citizen group, and segments of the public. Frequently, three basic parameters or objectives are ideally desired in a public involvement programme: a high degree of citizen involvement, a high degree of equity among the public, and high cost efficiency for the agency. However, it is not possible to attain a maximum level on all three parameters simultaneously; tradeoffs, therefore, must be made. Figure 2 illustrates the interaction among these three parameters and the compromise positions that may be reached.

The degree of citizen involvement, in terms of both numbers of people and degree of individual commitment, is an important element to be considered in evaluation because it is closely tied to participant satisfaction. The level of involvement that is possible in a programme of participation depends upon the techniques employed, the nature of the issue, attitudes of the public and various power relationships. It is often difficult to attain both high intensity of participation and involvement of large numbers of people because most techniques cannot facilitate both simultaneously. The evaluator is thus faced with value judgments such as, which is the more effective kind of participation—1,000 people participating once or 100 people participating ten times each?

The second important dimension of a programme is the degree of equity achieved. This is defined as the relative degree of representation, that is, the extent to which all potential opinions and values were heard. Efficiency of participation is the third element. It is defined as the amount of time, personnel and other agency resources required to reach a given decision. The smaller the amount of such resources, the more efficient the decision-making is said to be. It is clear, however, that high efficiency may not be compatible with the attainment of high levels of citizen involvement or equity. In fact, as Figure 2 depicts, it may not be possible to achieve the three maxima simultaneously. Consequently, government agencies have to trade off each of these goals against the others.

Recent experience in Canada suggests that from an initial emphasis on efficiency there was a move toward a higher degree of citizen involvement, and in many instances toward a greater measure of equity. Mounting costs of public involvement programmes, lengthy delays in arriving at decisions, and adverse experience with some techniques of involvement have caused a reevaluation of the weight given to the degree of involvement and equity, and a move back towards efficiency considerations. The same situation may exist in the United States, the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

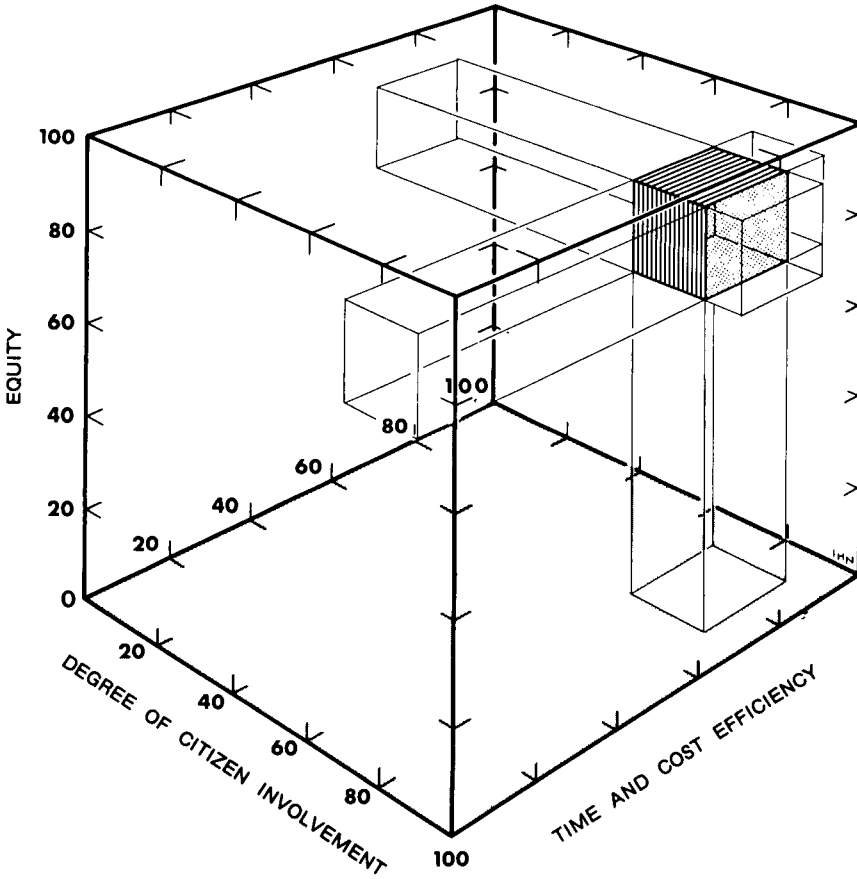


FIGURE 2

Trade Offs Between
Degree of Citizen Involvement, Equity, and Efficiency

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Undoubtedly, there has been a gradual improvement in the sophistication of frameworks proposed for the evaluation of public participation programmes. As yet, however, there is no universally applicable or generally accepted model. Even the most sophisticated of the present frameworks have serious deficiencies. This analysis highlights some of these weaknesses and implies several directions in which one might proceed. There are at least four major needs which must be dealt with in the immediate future.

(1) *The need for independent evaluation*

It is evident from the foregoing analysis that perceptions of the various participants in the decision-making process vary considerably and that these lead inevitably to biases in the formulation and the interpretation of evaluations. Agency personnel who have been responsible for the design and implementation of a public involvement program and who then proceed to undertake evaluations of that program tend to impose a narrowly defined set of objectives on the assessment, and they tend to employ criteria which demonstrate the success of the agency, such as the approval of a project, or improvement of the agency's image. Assessments which fail to take such inherent biases into account are bound to be viewed with suspicion and the credibility of the public participation process will be called into question as a result.

Ideally, evaluations should be undertaken by independent observers who are well trained in assessment techniques, and who are able to rapidly develop a rapport with those involved in the public participation programme. They should be given terms of reference which enable them to gain access to necessary information. Objectives of the programme and criteria for evaluation should be clearly spelled out. Indicators for measuring the success of these objectives should be created which do not rely entirely upon the perceptions of key actors, in particular agency staff, involved in the programme.

(2) *The need for evaluation as an ongoing process*

Evaluation is still generally regarded as a final step in a public participation programme. As such, it is able to identify deficiencies only after the entire process is complete. Sometimes the result may be the waste of hundreds of thousands of dollars on a programme that fostered alienation or failed to produce any kind of guidance for the decision-makers. A built-in process of ongoing evaluation would be a highly desirable element of public participation programmes. A set of check points should be identified as to when assessments are to be made. If the evaluations reveal weaknesses in the public involvement process, then modifications should be made to correct such deficiencies *during* plan or policy formulation rather than after it. Thus, if public hearings or opinion surveys fail to provide the agency with information it needs as the public will the satisfactions it seeks in the decision-making process, methods and procedures should be changed.

(3) *The need to broaden the basis for evaluation*

Most formal evaluations undertaken to date have been conducted from the standpoint of the sponsoring agency. As a consequence, the tendency has been to emphasize the pursuit of agency goals as the major objective of public participation. As the evidence provided in the case studies presented at the Canadian Conference on Public Participation,¹⁸ and in the experience in the United States and the United Kingdom, suggests¹⁹ however, such goals may be only one of an array of perceived objectives. Consumer satisfaction with the process may be even more important than the product. The consumers of participation—the public—should certainly have input into the evaluation of its success.

The basis of evaluation will be broadened if assessments are conducted by independent observers on the one hand, and if more sophisticated frameworks are adopted on the other. Ideally, an evaluation should be able to indicate to an agency how well its money has been spent, and it should be able to demonstrate to citizens and citizen groups what social gains have resulted from a public participation programme. The frameworks developed so far tend to focus on one or another of these objectives; models are now required to take both into account.

(4) *The need to resolve legitimate concerns*

A sifting of the conclusions of the case studies suggests that there are several major concerns about public participation over which views differ considerably. If public participation is to continue to play a useful role in decision-making, these concerns must be relieved.

While most agency representatives would claim that increased citizen involvement has led to increased inputs by the public into the decision-making process, citizens and citizen groups remain skeptical that this has in fact occurred. Even when increased input is acknowledged, such individuals or groups are suspicious that inputs of other actors (such as bureaucrats, politicians or developers) are given much more weight in the final decision-making. In most instances the public is given no indication of *whether* its views were considered, and even if they were, *how* such views influenced the final outcome.

18. ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION COUNCIL, *supra* note 11.

19. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING, *supra* note 3; UTTON, SEWELL & O'RIORDAN, *supra* note 1.

Without such evidence, public involvement programmes are bound to be viewed with some cynicism.

A second concern is that of the mounting costs of public involvement. While programmes of public hearings or opinion surveys in the past may have cost a few thousand dollars, public participation programmes today often involve expenditures of hundreds of thousands of dollars, and, in some instances, millions of dollars. This is particularly true of programmes associated with major resource development projects, highway construction or airport proposals. While it is clear that the public needs to be consulted on a wide range of issues, not all citizens wish to be consulted and certainly there are many issues that have little interest to most people. The challenge is to determine which issues require inputs from the public, what segments of the public should be consulted, and how the necessary inputs can be obtained most effectively.

The third concern derives from the second, and relates to the extent to which the process of participation should be institutionalized. Agency representatives argue that there should be a set of guidelines which set out the kinds of issues that necessitate inputs from the citizenry, that identify the relevant publics, and that outline the procedures that should be used in obtaining viewpoints. Undoubtedly this would help reduce much of the uncertainty surrounding the role of the public in planning and policy-making. But there is also the risk that institutionalization will introduce a degree of rigidity that ultimately will work against the interests of the public at large.

A final concern relates to the role of the planner in the public participation process. His "professionalism" is often flaunted to such a degree during this process that the citizen becomes alienated. Frequently, the planner assumes a "missionary" guise. In these instances, the legitimate needs, values and expectations of the citizenry and in particular, of minority groups, are not recognized. The process of public participation would be enhanced if the shrouds of professionalism and "expertism" were drawn aside so that genuine, one-on-one communication between planner, expert and citizen could take place. Workshops, task forces involving citizens, and information programmes offer important means for accomplishing this goal.

Whatever guidelines are eventually adopted for the future of public participation, they must allow for the introduction of new kinds of issues, new types of public, and new sets of procedures. Without such flexibility, public participation will have lost its most important characteristic, the right to challenge the existing order.