



**INNOVATION IN  
GOVERNANCE**  
Research Group

# Challenging futures of citizen panels

**Critical issues for robust forms  
of public participation**

*A report based on an interactive, anticipatory assessment  
of the dynamics of governance instruments,  
26 April 2013.*

**Carsten Mann  
Jan-Peter Voß  
Nina Amelung  
Arno Simons  
Till Runge  
Louisa Grabner**

*July 2014 · Berlin, Technische Universität (TU) Berlin*

## Impressum

### **This report was produced by**

Innovation in Governance Research Group  
Department of Sociology  
Technische Universität (TU) Berlin  
Fraunhoferstr. 33-36  
10587 Berlin, Germany

The interactive and anticipatory assessment exercise on which this report is based was part of a broader research project that focused on the innovation dynamics of governance instruments in the areas of public participation methods, environmental markets and sustainability transition management.

By circulating these workshop results, we seek to contribute to a debate on citizen panel design with regard to constituting political reality in public participation models.

### **Please cite this report:**

Mann, C.; Voß, J.-P.; Amelung, N.; Simons, A.; Runge, T.; Grabner, L. 2014. Challenging futures of citizen panels. Critical issues for robust forms of public participation. A report based on an interactive, anticipatory assessment of the dynamics of governance instruments, 26 April 2013. Berlin, Technische Universität (TU) Berlin. Available online [www.innovation-in-governance.org](http://www.innovation-in-governance.org)

The underlying project "Innovation in Governance" (Grant No. 01UU0906) from which this publication derives is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Germany. Responsibility for the contents of this publication lies entirely with the authors.

Cover and graphic design by [www.active-elements.de](http://www.active-elements.de).

*Published July 2014*

## Table of contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction: Challenging futures of citizen panels</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2. Development of citizen panels: An ongoing innovation process</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. Issues: Towards an extended innovation agenda for citizen panels</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 Functions of citizen panels: A matter of worldviews and philosophies?	15
3.2 Standardization: Toward unified citizen panel practices?	18
3.3 Quality: How to control the quality of citizen panels?	22
3.4 Impact: Do citizen panels need closer links with political decision-making?	25
3.5 Representation: Which is the public that citizen panels produce a view of?	29
3.6 Neutrality: Can power asymmetries and biases be evaded?	32
3.7 Context: Is the working of citizen panels depending on situational contexts?	34
3.8 Social life: What drives and shapes the innovation of citizen panels in practice?	37
<b>4. Towards responsible innovation processes in citizen panel design</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>42</b>
<i>Appendix A: Scenarios for citizen panels</i>	45
Scenario 1: A booming market for deliberation services	46
Scenario 2: A toolkit for democracy	52
Scenario 3: The “reason machine”	56
<i>Appendix B: Workshop agenda</i>	61
<i>Appendix C: List of participants</i>	62

## Summary

This report emerged from the workshop “Challenging futures of citizen panels”, held by the Innovation in Governance Research Group on April 26, 2013, at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Berlin, Germany. The workshop was conceptualized and designed as a platform for a wide variety of actors involved in citizen panel design and implementation to identify and discuss issues and challenges for the future development of participatory methods. The workshop panel united actors with highly diverse ideas on and practical approaches to the development of citizen panels as an innovation in governance. These actors were associated with particular traditions in citizen panel design (indicated by labels such as “citizen jury”, “planning cell” or “consensus conference”) and many held different views of the nature and purpose of citizen involvement. Similar to approaches adopted by constructive technology assessment (CTA), our discussion at the “Challenging futures” workshop was triggered by scenarios depicting pathways to alternative futures. Prior to the workshop, we developed three scenarios in which the design and use of citizen panels was dominated by a particular logic: commercial, political, and scientific (see Appendix). Based on empirical research regarding the historical dynamics of citizen panel development, each of the scenarios portrays a specific social and political entanglement of model-making. By bringing in various actors from the innovation networks surrounding citizen panels and beyond, we encouraged an exchange of different perspectives on the dynamics and future paths of citizen panel development, along with a number of ambivalences, and how actors can shape this process.

In the course of the workshop, we identified a wide variety of issues and challenges that emerge due to the differing positions, roles, and perspectives of actors involved in the innovation processes. These issues should receive further attention and be debated in a wider public. One basic finding was that issues often framed as questions of technical design are frequently linked to the challenge of arbitrating between different and potentially antagonistic values, worldviews, and rationalities. The methodology, design and conduct of citizen panels is thus a political issue and less of a technical problem, a matter of concern rather than a matter of fact. It therefore requires different forms for making decisions about citizen panels design and use than debate among experts and empirical testing.

In order to support the social robustness and legitimacy of citizen panels, we suggest a cautious approach which supports the discussion and negotiation of diverse theoretical perspectives on citizen panels and design standards. This shall include wider societal and political implications, along with soft impacts in terms of cultural shifts, which are linked with certain concepts and design standards for citizen panels. This is one example of what “responsible innovation” in governance would require (Owen et al. 2013; Owen et al. 2012). Discovering how functional design questions can be connected to different values and worldviews is a general challenge required to enhance the robustness of innovation. This is all the more critical for the case of citizen panels, and public participation methods more generally, as they define and shape what will be regarded as legitimate forms of political participation in the future. This is where the establishment of a global method standard attains relevance as a process of constitution building. The main promise of citizen panels is to counteract technocratic modes of governance. A key challenge for the future is to prevent the establishment of another technocracy, in this case with regard to political procedure.

The main part of this report contains a summary of the issues and associated challenges discussed by workshop participants. These issues covered a range of topics, including the perceived function of citizen panels and whether citizen panel practices could and should be standardized. Different standpoints on ensuring quality control and the implications of linking citizen panel outputs to political decision-making procedures were also discussed. Participants debated the representativeness of citizen panels, their general legitimacy to speak for the public, and the issue of neutrality, i.e. how to deal with power asymmetries and introduced biases. Various needs to adapt citizen panels to specific context conditions and maintain dynamic designs formed additional important issues. Especially the last topic induced reflexive concerns about the social dynamics of citizen panel design and the role of specific commercial and professional interests in the innovation process.

Many of the issues identified ostensibly seem to be technical questions of finding the “right” design for doing “good” deliberation. However, as underlined in the debate, most of these issues are related to fundamental differences in worldviews and philosophies. Differences in viewing “the public” in which citizen panels operate, in explaining politics or prioritizing the challenges faced

by democracy, lead to fundamental differences regarding the role and functions of citizen panels. From eliciting consensual public judgment to making plural values and trade-offs explicit or even empowering subaltern interests and perspectives, our analysis revealed numerous possibilities.

Most controversies that emerged in the workshop debates over citizen panels design were related to different views of the social and political world. These are highlighted in the respective issue sections. Some participants viewed standardizing participatory practices as a means to ensure quality control and enhance deliberative democracy; others saw it as establishing a hegemonic discourse on participation that blithely neglects the different cultural and political contexts in which participation is called on to work. Finding ways to represent the public at large was seen by some as a main function and an ideal outcome of citizen panels, while for others citizen panels mainly exist to articulate differences and alternative perspectives. Some participants shared that they strive for and believe in the neutrality of participation procedures; others emphasized that each design has its particular bias which needs to be explicitly reflected. Some stated that they generally seek to stabilize particular knowledge and institutional arrangements for public participation in order to secure a place in future governance patterns while others maintained that these designs need to be flexible and evolve dynamically with broader societal changes. The issues seldom came up separately during the debate at the workshop. The participants repeatedly noted various links and interdependencies.

As an overall result of the workshop, the “resolution” of open issues and problems in the design of citizen panels does not appear to be desirable, particularly if it would imply the closure of technical debate by establishing some consensual single reality and “one best way” of doing citizen participation. The fundamental political nature of most controversies on how to conceptualize, organize, and conduct citizen panels suggests that there is no objectively “right” or “wrong” design approach. Any decision in this context will be political: one option will be selected to the exclusion of many others. This should be made explicit to allow the participants in design deliberations, i.e. commissioners and addressees, as well as the broader public, to evaluate and engage with different options on their own terms.

One key challenge for the future of citizen panels is to make design decisions transparent with regard to their underlying assumptions and broader implications. Actors should clearly state their reference frameworks and objectives for conducting citizen panels. The rationalities behind deliberation processes should be explained and the limits of neutrally representing a unified public openly expressed.

Critical reflection and the articulation of ambiguities in the conduct of citizen panels in particular situations can help improve their design. This will also help adjust expectations regarding their impact and raises awareness for the social dynamics of their development. Continuing the debate among increasingly professionalized enactors of certain participation formats with other involved and critical actors will serve to test the robustness of developmental trajectories and to negotiate adaptations that ensure legitimacy and proper functioning in particular situational contexts.

Because the design discourse on citizen panels is still young, open debate and reflection may help develop participation methods that are solidly embedded in their respective societal contexts. By circulating these workshop results in form of an “extended innovation agenda”, we seek to contribute to such a debate and interactive, reflexive approach with regard to constituting political reality in public participation models.



## 1. Introduction: Challenging futures of citizen panels

Democracy is constantly “in the making”. A much debated crisis of representative democracy has sparked a profusion of conceptual and practical experiments with new formats of public involvement and new forms of democracy (Saward 2000, 2003). Citizen panels are one example of a public deliberation procedure that has become an established option in the democratic policy toolbox.

The term “citizen panels” comprises approaches used to convoke small groups of randomly selected citizens to deliberate a given issue based on provided informational materials and expert testimony. The panels’ objective is to formulate a consensual recommendation for public policy. Such organized citizen deliberation practices have spread around the globe and become a ready-made option for enhancing public participation. “Citizen panel” has emerged as an umbrella term for a class of very similar methods of public participation such as citizen juries, consensus conferences, and planning cells. Although each of these methods emerged in a different political context and from discussions on different issues in different fields such as civic education, technology assessment, or urban planning, they all propose a near-identical procedure for accessing and developing a “public” perspective on contested political issues.

Citizen panels date back to the 1970s. They have since spread widely throughout Europe, North America, Australia and Asia. However, their diffusion has stagnated in recent years. Given the fragmented landscape, there have been ongoing attempts to integrate heterogeneous fields, close debates, and articulate a theory and standards of a ‘technology of participation’ (Chilvers 2012; Chilvers and Evans 2009; Felt and Fochler 2010; Laurent 2011a, 2011b; Lezaun and Soneryd 2005). New steps to promote transnational citizen deliberation in the European Union and to push standardization with initiatives such as Meeting of Minds, European Citizen Consultations, or CIPAST (Abels and Mölders 2007; Goldschmidt and Renn 2007; Karlsson 2010). These initiatives are actively backed by the European Commission. Other initiatives for global citizen deliberation include World Wide Views on Global Warming and World Wide Views on Biodiversity (Rask et al. 2010).



In this context, different approaches and practices of citizen participation become integrated through common standards. Therefore, a new de facto transnational reality of civil society engagement in democracy is installed.

At the same time, organized participation and standardization of procedures have become hotly debated, also within the professional community. Scholars have articulated a new critique of participation methods as “second order technocracy”. Social movement researchers and activists criticize the distinction between the public that has been invited to the table and the “other public” believed to be excluded by design (Della Porta 2013; Wynne 2007). In France, a radical protest movement is taking shape which flat-out rejects organized participation and strategically disturbs public dialog (on the topic of nanotechnology) (Laurent 2011a).

These and other developments show that citizen panels imply challenges for society, which is called on to live with, make sense of, embed and adapt to new deliberative formats. This is where our approach comes into play: We argue that negotiating designs and procedures for citizen deliberation and its role within democracy is not an apolitical or technical process. Instead, it implies negotiating the forms and processes of political decision-making. It defines which voices shall be heard and the degree of democratic legitimacy that can be claimed. This is a struggle about different values, norms, and interests that define the public and its role in modern democracies, as well as justification systems for political decision-making.

What controversial issues do citizen panels raise that are relevant to broader society? We aspire to raise these issues for debate by a broader public, i.e. beyond immediately involved professionals, expert designers, and contractors. We believe that they must be matters of public concern. With the present report, our objective is to constructively examine current practices of technically framed expert design, wherever they prevail, along with the futures that they anticipate. This report offers insights into an example of participatory technology development which can be reflected under the heading of “responsible innovation” (Owen et al. 2013; 2012).

In this sense, this report, together with the workshop discussions, aims to prevent pre-reflexive and premature closure as regards fundamental aspects of political organization, which are often framed as technical questions of superior design alternatives, quality control, standards, etc.

To achieve these ambitions, we analyzed past and recent developments in the history of citizen panels, including any friction involved in this process. We created a series of scenarios as potential “futures” which highlight challenges for both the design process and society at large. We then organized a workshop that brought together various design experts with users and affected parties, including skeptics and critics. We identified these actors in our research on citizen panels as spokespersons for different perspectives and concerns related to citizen panel development. Prompted to consider potentially challenging issues associated with the provided scenarios, these actors spent time identifying, articulating, and discussing several different issues at the workshop. These ranged from specific technical quarrels to challenges related to the broader contexts within which citizen panels are to work, and all the way to fundamental philosophical considerations linked to the design’s basic premises and purpose. Based on 25 issue descriptions prepared by the participants (“issue briefs”) to document the workshop and transcripts of the workshop discussion, we identified a connected bundle of key issues which reflect main lines of the debate and their intersections.

This report is structured as follows: After this introduction, we offer an interpretative perspective in section 2 that illustrates how citizen panel design and experiments with this format are part of a larger process of reinventing democracy, as a distributed process of de facto constitution building that is currently cutting across national borders. As the centerpiece of the present report, section 3 presents the issues and challenges for the future development of citizen panels that were debated in the course of the “Challenging futures” workshop. In our conclusion, we argue for the application of an extended innovation agenda and an improved embeddedness of citizen panel designs in their specific contexts in section 4. Further background information on the Innovation in Governance Research Project, the scenarios that stimulated the workshop debate, as well as a list of participants can be found in the appendices of this report.

## 2. Development of citizen panels: An ongoing innovation process

We study innovation in governance and the particular innovation of citizen panels as a socially constructed phenomenon. The processes that give rise to certain formats and applications of citizen panels result from the interactions of multiple actors, within and across diverse sites such as research laboratories, think tanks, advocacy groups, grassroots movements, government departments, regulatory agencies, consultancies, and professional associations. These interactions both drive and shape the development of citizen panels. When actors engage with citizen panels, they bring different backgrounds, perspectives, skills, resources, and expectations to the table. Academic scholars, for example, may design a theory as an ideal model of deliberation; other actors may have political, business, or ideological interests related to specific deliberation practices and embedded in specific situations. These interests motivate them to support certain forms of citizen panels and their advocates.

Like other innovations, the development of citizen panels may become “settled” on a certain path and increasingly a matter of negotiation among in-group experts. “Open” interaction around a certain form of governance may gradually become more exclusive and come to center on a specific paradigm or discourse, with established institutions that regulate general access, as well as relatively closed infrastructures for planning, implementation, measurement, and evaluation. These practical tools inscribe a variety of decisions into a particular design. Stabilization and closure produce momentum for the creation of new forms of governance on a large scale. At the same time, they imply that the process of designing and developing forms of governance becomes decoupled from interactions taking place in the broader societal and political environment. Innovation processes may thus become less responsive to ongoing changes in the contexts in which they will be applied (Rip et al. 1995; Felt et al. 2007; Owen et al. 2013). Thus, a new policy “instrument” is born – and at this moment it is easy to forget its history of interactions, i.e. its social construction.

Today, the current state of citizen panels can be depicted as a fragmented landscape of various design schools. The discourse on design is divided between actors who encourage participation in science and technology, viewing citizen deliberation as a form of policy and technology assessment, and actors who prefer a more political bent, viewing citizen deliberation in the tradition of participatory and deliberative democracy. Additionally, citizen panels are developed and employed in relation to different issue areas such as infrastructure planning, regional development, health and environmental problems, science and technology development. Technical controversies over citizen panel design point to underlying differences in perspectives and assumptions. They are linked with different realities and different understandings of the functions of citizen panels.

Resolving these differences presents a political challenge of negotiating between a plurality of worldviews rather than a technical challenge of objectively testing what works. Actors often take the existence of different worldviews for granted. Based on this perspective, they pursue individual “objective problem-solving” approaches. As a result, their conclusions lead to different design principles for governance and different perspectives on technical design questions. They favor different configurations as more “rational”, “practical”, “promising”, etc. This diversity of worldviews is a diversity that is actually at the very heart of politics: it is the multiplicity of values, aspirations, and views of the common good, etc. which must be negotiated and balanced in ongoing processes of pragmatic decision-making and contestation. However, these differences cannot be resolved in a neutral and objective way. In this sense, designing or selecting for citizen panels is a question of establishing a particular political constitution – in a limited and local manner, but with aggregate effects for shaping more general ideas and practices of politics, and thus reconstructing the practice of democracy formats.

In order to address hidden agendas in citizen panel design, we developed the “Challenging futures” format to understand and experience how the meanings of democracy, representation, and the role of the public in political decision-making are negotiated in the design and development of citizen panels. Furthermore, it aims to stimulate reflections about design and development processes in the history of innovative policy instruments.

To accomplish these objectives, we invited selected persons involved in the development of citizen panels – from practitioners to critical observers from different nations – to share their thoughts about the ongoing dynamics in this field. Pre-defined future scenarios were sent out to the participants in advance. The scenarios portrayed different future pathways and raised issues of concern for the future of citizen panels (see Appendix B). The objective of this exchange was to gain greater transparency regarding the wide variety of positions, as well as issues of agreement and controversies. The outstanding issues presented in the next section illustrate this diversity.

### **3. Issues: Towards an extended innovation agenda for citizen panels**

The themes, issues and challenges for the future of citizen panels identified and discussed by workshop participants are described in the following section. Core statements and direct quotes are marked with reference to the workshop session and line number in our transcripts: OD = opening discussion; BL = briefing letter; Fin = final discussion; group work: yellow, red, and green. The issues are not presented in any particular order; instead, they should be imagined as a “network” of issues. All issues mentioned are important in the current and future process of citizen panel development as they are likely to have a strong impact on the design, functions, and implications of this format. With this innovation agenda, we want to provide an impetus for reflecting, constructively acknowledging and debating the issues presented here, along with their implications, intentions, and debatable points. Increasing the visibility of different perspectives and visions on citizen panel design and conduct helps increase the future societal embeddedness of citizen panels. This is why it is particularly important that they receive more attention and debate.

### **3.1 Functions of citizen panels: A matter of worldviews and philosophies?**

The different worldviews, values, and philosophical underpinnings of citizen panels influence understandings of what they are good for, i.e. their “function”, which in turn determines their “quality” and specific “evaluation criteria” (Red; Fin 169; BL 9). What is viewed as “good” citizen panel design, along with methodological questions such as the selection of participants, ultimately depends on philosophical questions, e.g., what does the world in which citizen panels operate look like? How do politics work; what is the fundamental challenge of democracy? What do ideals such as deliberative democracy and participatory democracy mean in practice? What is the relationship between knowledge and politics? What is the purpose of holding citizen panels? Or, as one participant put it: “If we accept and are aware that there are a multitude of normative elements that underpin the way we are dealing with citizen panels we will also accept large differences in functions and related designs” (Fin 337).

#### ***Different views of functions and underlying worldviews and philosophies***

During the workshop discussion on the relationship between the worldviews, values, and functions of citizen panels, participants highlighted different philosophies that guide and frame the functional understanding of citizen panels. We can distinguish between three distinct philosophical orientations:

- ▶ The first philosophical orientation revolves around the idea of rational consensus. Largely inspired by the Habermasian “ideal speech situation”, citizen panels are viewed as methods to achieve a consensus about controversial issues through rational arguments (Habermas 1995). Thus, the public is seen to exist within a shared rationality, forming a super-individual reality which can be ascertained through communicative action and with the help of deliberative processes. Hence, creating “good” citizen panels means finding the right methods and design in order to tap into this objective knowledge reservoir. As preconditions for rational citizen deliberation, participants must be unbiased and ready to engage in non-coercive communication. Their decisions must respect objective information and reaching a consensus should be the central objective.



Taken further, this view might lead to an understanding of citizen panels as a model for deliberative democracy which could substitute elections, representativeness, or direct democracy. Here, quality and impact are judged by the production of a consensual statement.

- ▶ Another philosophical orientation is based on the interactive tradition of Dewey (Dewey 1954). It differs from the consensus perspective as it acknowledges pluralism among various societal perspectives. In this view, citizen panels mediate and reflect diverse positions, existing controversies and conflicts in order to enable collective learning (Evans 2000). “The public” is regarded as a relational phenomenon that emerges in contested interactions between particular worldviews. Different publics are constituted around specific issues and situations and as such they are localized and temporal. The consequence of these conceptual underpinnings is that “the public” cannot be discovered or produced by a third party. Instead, it must come into being based on local initiatives, emerging and taking shape through multiple interactions. One central outcome of citizen deliberation according to this orientation is that no consensus is required among the various actors, but that panelists mutually adjust their perspectives by acknowledging diversity (Fin 417).
- ▶ A third philosophical orientation fosters a critical view of society and its fabric, and relates to the notion of power in discourse and truth regimes (Mouffe 1999). This view holds that there is no such thing as a single cohesive “public” that can be described by common norms or rationalities. Instead, society is seen as a constellation of power. The objective of citizen panels is to reveal societal power structures in discourse, language, and truth regimes. The motivation for setting up citizen panels is empowerment of the marginalized, as elaborated by Freire, for example (Freire 1998). Historical progress, Freire argues, means giving power to the poor, to empower the oppressed and provide them with an education and a space to articulate their view in opposition to the mainstream (Fin 305). Citizen deliberation formats serve to re-open previously settled discourses, articulate dissenting views, and develop alternative visions to contest (or counterbalance) the dominant public perspective, i.e. the view of the powerful.

Citizen panels are thus seen as an additional form of civil protest and civil disobedience, and not as a tool for democratic integration or participatory decision-making (Fin 1324) (Freire 1998). The quality and impact of citizen panels are largely based on societal change (Fin 1372).

### ***Conflicting views on functional plurality versus universality, on theory versus practice***

The workshop sparked in-depth discussions about the diversity of existing philosophical orientations that inform understandings of citizen panels and their functions. However, despite the functional differences sketched out above, there were some objections from participants who asserted the existence of universal functions. These functions can be defined independently from philosophies and there are numerous examples in relevant literature. The clear separation of philosophy and function is seen as a challenge for the future development of citizen panels (Fin 235).

Furthermore, participants addressed the topic that there is not only a difference between function and philosophy, but also among various philosophies, functional theories of citizen panels, and “making things work” in practice. When implementing these models, underlying concepts cannot be applied in pure form, for example. Instead, elements are – or must be – assembled in different ways to make citizen panels work in practice (Fin 410). As such, the design of citizen panels rarely follows a single theoretical/philosophical orientation but can also be influenced by practical considerations that bring up additional challenges for citizen panels design.

In summary, fundamental functional differences were discussed in relation to different philosophical underpinning. Different views of society, i.e. what society is and how it functions, are primary determinants in defining what citizen panels are good for: seeking consensus, reflecting pluralism, or empowering marginalized voices. For the future design of citizen panels, the challenge will be to make these philosophical underpinnings and their relations to the expected function of citizen panels explicit.

### **3.2. Standardization: Toward unified citizen panel practices?**

A second important issue was the possibility and desirability of standardizing citizen panel design and practices. For their general image and practicability, some participants argued that universal structures would facilitate the work of providers and increase the legitimacy of citizen panels.

However, controversial questions include whether standardization is at all attainable, given the diverse situations to which citizen panels are applied and the numerous functional expectations attached to them (see section 3.1 “Functions of citizen panels”). This then leads to the question of how politics can define specific rules and impose certain decisions in a variety of contexts.

#### ***Reasons for standards: Ensuring legitimacy and reducing uncertainty***

One line of argumentation for design standards is that they provide the added value of certainty. Standards define procedures for how to include citizens and how to organize and carry out the process of deliberation. This makes a particular procedure transparent and replicable. It becomes more or less independent of specific context conditions such as the identity of the conveners, the individual problem situation, and the public in question. Because standards are widely recognized as a “technique” and, as such, neutral and apolitical, citizen panels can also be broadly perceived, recognized, and accepted as valid (Fin 97, 503). Standards, it was argued, introduce certainty in two ways: for the public and for conveners/practitioners.

▶ Design standards provide certainty for the greater public. Because standards define a particular way to deliberate, they stand for legitimacy by ensuring uniform procedures (Green). Standards are fixed, can be consulted in handbooks or manuals, and are thus transparent and comprehensible to all interested parties. They are neither context-specific nor negotiable and as such less prone to manipulation than flexible designs. This transparency may help build up “system trust” (Fin 561) for deliberative democracy, where citizen panels function as a legitimate voice of the public. They could even come to be viewed as the “one good practice” for the accurate integration of citizen perspective.

- ▶ For organizing and convening a deliberative process, uniformity also creates certainty for the professional community in various ways. As the providers of deliberative processes are often left to decide how to proceed in certain situations, design standards bear the potential to lessen this normative responsibility (OD 1108). General standards also make for coherent markets across different regions and countries. They allow the realization of economies of scale.

### ***Difficulties with standards: Diverse contexts and diverse purpose and functions***

A contrasting line of argumentation relates to difficulties with standards with regard to the diverse contexts, formats, and purposes of citizen panels. Standardization implies that one particular way of proceeding and reasoning, including its philosophical and functional underpinnings, can be implemented over a range of different contexts and alternatives. Standards then dominate over diversity. They take precedent over numerous individual socio-cultural and political constellations and needs of implementation contexts, as well as over the many forms of practice and meanings for citizen deliberation that currently exist.

- ▶ One dimension of diversity is related to the different contexts in which citizen panels operate (see also section 3.7 “Context”). Different contexts pose different requirements for effective citizen deliberation and format design (Fin 662). This concerns, for example, the different requirements of users and contractors, different political cultures and ways for attributing legitimacy, or the degrees to which issues are articulated and politicized. Further conditions include the different backgrounds of social movements, different institutional settings and cultures of participation. These contextual specifics co-evolve with ways of discussing issues and reaching decisions (or not) over time. This co-evolution is closely determined by how citizen panels relate to other forms of decision-making and participation in different contexts (Fin 1134). Some participants critically remarked that standards assume specific context conditions in order to work properly. Thus, many workshop participants feared that design standards that forbid adaptations to local contexts would ultimately be ineffective and detrimental to the quality of citizen panels.

- ▶ With regard to contextual diversity, it has been mentioned that imposing uniform design standards may have repercussions. As they establish broader frames and norms of “acceptable, expected forms of participation” (Fin 1324), one risk is that standards, once their inscribed reasoning and political implications for participation unfold, may not fit contextual variations in cultures and requirements. This may result in unintended side effects, such as non-acceptance, protest, or process failure. Here, it was mentioned that a global design standard could be perceived in some parts of the world as a neo-colonial move or an expansion of the neoliberal regime of governance – with the counterproductive effect of reducing acceptance and legitimacy (Fin 662).

Another dimension of diversity that may become reduced by standardized design concerns the variety of deliberative formats that currently exist. Introducing a common design for citizen panels implies gaining dominance within the community of providers. This imposes a competitive disadvantage for alternative procedures, which may, in turn, reduce the available creativity for future designs (OD 1108ff).

### ***Variations of standardization***

Taking the issue of standardization beyond a simple yes or no debate, some participants discussed potential variations and room for manoeuvre in relation to deliberative procedures and practices.

- ▶ One suggested alternative was to regard standards as general principles. Once agreed upon, they would serve as guidelines rather than stringent requirements. These standards would be comparable to quality criteria for representative democracy, like comparative assessments of the conditions of electoral systems or the ongoing discourse about their acceptance and legitimacy, for example (Saward 2003). Criteria such as accountability or transparency could be applied in the specific case of citizen panels.
- ▶ Another alternative standardization approach discussed by participants would be to acknowledge the diversity of contexts and philosophies and work on developing a more flexible “method matching approach”. This refers to using a repertoire of variable methods as tools that can be adapted

to different context conditions, philosophies, and purposes (Fin 448). This approach proposes a toolkit of participation methods (Fin 745) rather than a unified standard.

- ▶ Participatory designs hold potential to increase the context sensitivity of citizen panel formats, i.e. to transfer decisions on quality criteria completely to the implementation context, for example to local communities. Alternatively, local communities could also decide on specific quality criteria for participation (which a trademark would forbid) (Fin 477, 762).
- ▶ Another point in the discussion on alternatives was a demand for reflexive quality control (Fin 592). This represents a move away from constructing certainty in favor of reflecting about the uncertain. In this regard, it is highlighted that the construction of certainty, the reduction of contingency, and obscuring design decisions ex-ante, i.e. blackboxing the method and process of participation, will not be helpful for the application of citizen panels in practice. In contrast, they will most likely become a fragile and artificial order imposed on multi-faceted, fluid, and diverse situations of political contestation (Fin 786). This underscores the importance of process documentation.

Connected with the discussion on standardizing citizen panels design and practice, participants raised concerns about privileging one deliberative format over others and particularly privileging a single political philosophy that would impose certain (political) orders over a range of different implementation contexts. The issue of whether to standardize citizen panels is not solely a technical or functional question of how deliberation should be conducted in certain situations, but also a political question of constitution building and deciding to promote a certain vision or worldview. Defining standards thus becomes relevant for larger parts of society and it requires deliberation processes that go beyond expert agreement or trial and error. One resulting challenge for the future of citizen panels design will therefore be to explicitly define and openly discuss the political implications, repercussions, and desirability of specific standards at an early stage of the design process with a larger set of societal actors.

### 3.3 Quality: How to control the quality of citizen panels?

A further key issue raised by workshop participants concerns the reliability of citizen panels as a method of public participation. In order to be accepted and have an impact on decision-making, the public must trust in the quality of the participatory process by which citizen panels produce judgments.

Workshop participants generally maintained that it is necessary – and should be possible – to control the quality of citizen panels and to prevent their misuse for manipulating decisions. However, this requires a procedure for quality control. The discussion that emerged in the context of this issue included questions related to the problem of operationalizing the quality of citizen panels, particularly when considering the diverse situations of their application and divergent conceptions of their function (see the sections on “Context” and “Functions”). Because there are fundamental differences in viewing and conceptualizing the context and the functions of citizen panels, there are also different ideas about what constitutes good quality and how it can be assessed and controlled.

#### ***Different approaches to quality control and for dealing with diversity***

Some workshop participants initiated this discussion by contending that there are certain “hard facts” that indicate the quality of participatory processes. These facts derive from the basic conditions required for “correct” and “legitimate” deliberation. For example, the number of people who change their opinion during the deliberation process can be objectively measured. Thus, “change of opinion” would be an example of a general quality indicator. In this context, standardization was once again discussed as a progressive approach that would help ensure the quality of citizen panels. On the other hand, the very existence of “hard facts” for quality control, as well as the viability of the described example, was also contested. First, “change of opinion” is not generally perceived as a prerequisite for good participation (Fin 690). Second, most workshop participants did not view standardization as an appropriate way to address the issue of quality control.

Instead, most participants emphasized that quality criteria essentially needed to be defined by those who are involved in the deliberations and not (solely) by the experts in charge of managing the process (Fin 762).



How open citizen panels are to design inputs on the part of participants, including judgments of what constitutes a quality outcome, was seen as a central element and precondition for quality control. One “best practice” example that incorporates this openness and was mentioned several times during the discussion is the “Oregon Citizens’ Initiative Review”, institutionalized in 2011, which involves citizens in the design of the deliberative process (Yellow 534).

Workshop participants developed additional concrete ideas for the operationalization of quality control in the form of open, participatory approaches. These approaches were related to the design of the deliberative process itself as well as the quality of its results.

- ▶ One concrete idea was to establish multi-stakeholder oversight boards to prevent citizen panels from being “hijacked” by certain (powerful) groups or users (Red). Ideally these boards would include a balanced group of actors with different positions on the issue in question. However, critical activists might not be interested in the deliberation of consensus, but instead seek to open up the dominant public discourse by articulating alternative positions and contesting the mainstream before concerning themselves with deliberation and integration (Red).
  
- ▶ Another idea for quality control was to explicitly recognize design limitations and leave design questions open to the situational context. This suggestion is based on the fundamental assumption that citizen panels cannot fully and comprehensively represent the public, i.e. that it is impossible to include all relevant actors in citizen panels, in particular those who have not been included thus far. Instead, the workshop attendees acknowledged that all forms of participation and enactments of citizen panels are partially informed and framed in particular ways. The politics and contingencies of participation tend to be excluded as an unavoidable dilemma of participatory procedures. One way to deal with these limitations is to communicate contingencies, to become aware of limitations and uncertainties, and to explain design decisions to participants, for example how different actor groups are represented (Fin 592).

Instead of imposing pre-defined panel designs that suppose some degree of certainty about the quality of citizen panels, a more reflexive mode of quality control is required. This would expose given commitments and uncertainties (Fin 592). Hence, there is a need to look into process, the “throughput” of citizen panels, not only the output. This includes letting light into the black box (OD 1234) of deliberation and making decisions more transparent.

In summary, a key challenge for the future of citizen panels is how to ensure quality control. For some participants, standards held the potential to define basic principles of good deliberation and inscribe them into procedures. However, other participants viewed reflexivity and learning as the preferred methods to ensure quality control. This includes an open approach to designing and conducting citizen panels, i.e. not blackboxing design decisions, methods or the deliberation process after the fact, but instead communicating relevant limitations. Therefore, awareness should be created among citizen panel providers that imposing a predefined design means imposing a fixed order on highly complex, fluid, and diverse situations. Hence, design questions should stay open for debate and contestation in different contexts. One possible future approach is the complete transfer of design decisions, e.g. on quality criteria, to the implementation context. This would mean that local communities would be responsible for design-related decisions and/or the quality criteria for participation (Fin 477, 762).

### **3.4 Impact: Do citizen panels need closer links with political decision-making?**

Questions related to the impact of citizen panels formed a further key issue in terms of future challenges. Participants largely acknowledged that if citizen panels fail to have an impact, their future existence will be fundamentally endangered as there would be little interest in initiating or taking part in this deliberative format.

Impact usually refers to the uptake of citizen recommendations in authoritative decisions. A frequent take on citizen panels is that they should only be conducted if authorities can be obligated to respond to their results. Nonetheless, this type of link may result in increased attempts to manipulate panel processes. What about other potential impacts of citizen panels? These might include impact through reporting in the media or the decisions of large corporations. While debating the impact of citizen panels, participants were of the opinion that defining the intended outcome seemed to be paramount. This includes questions such as the types of decision-making processes that citizen panels address, how to link citizen panels with binding decision-making structures, and the kind of impact that is envisioned.

▶ One precondition for defining and measuring the impact of citizen panels is a clear and specific link between citizen panels and the other related institutions and organizations. These are, for example, public administration, political parties, or parliaments (Yellow 228, 284). Some participants mentioned that an exclusive focus on administration or government should not be the utmost objective; instead, other actors such as corporations and their commitment to respond to citizens' vote should be considered as well (Green). These participants referred to the fact that corporations have been a major consumer of CPs in Germany and therefore the issue of impact on decision-making processes is also relevant in this context (Green 384). In any case: When citizen panels are not linked to agenda-setting and/or decision-making processes, creating these ties is an important future design challenge to ensure that they do in fact matter (BL 20).

- ▶ Commitments on the part of policy makers and other authorities are a crucial precondition, i.e. political willingness to integrate citizen opinions into decision-making processes. If decision makers are not committed to deliberative results, both participants and the broader public may be left to wonder what the public goal of deliberation may be and how it can be viewed as credible.
- ▶ As a suggestion by participants for creating or promoting a closer link to decision-making processes to increase the impact of citizen panels, the conditions and the potential of citizen panels must be better assessed and evaluated. Far more comparative studies should be conducted to compare the impact of participation both with and without political commitment (BL 20).
- ▶ In addition, citizen panels need better advertising, e.g. greater promotion and recognition by the media, as some participants stated in this regard. Citizen panels must become more visible by investing in media attention, public relations and better communication (Fin 877, 988). “If you don’t get the media you don’t get anything” (Green 152) as one participant summed it up succinctly. However, in this regard it was mentioned that the media often takes a critical stance toward citizen panels and doubts their impact (Yellow 311). The media can also even play the role of “accomplices” in the instrumentalization of citizen panels, link in the UK (Green 152), as some participants critically mentioned. However, the risk of citizen panels becoming instrumentalized due to their proximity to decision-making processes does pose a dilemma.

### ***The dilemma of impact versus autonomy***

Discussing the need to create links between citizen panels and organizations and institutions to improve the uptake of results in decision-making processes prompted critical reflections on the downsides of a close proximity to politics. The issue of impact poses a dilemma between political ties and commitments on one side, and guaranteeing the processual autonomy on the other.

- ▶ On the one hand, participants saw a need for citizen panels to be directly linked to decision-making processes, including a predefined procedure for handling their outputs (Fin 832). This can take the form of an obligation for contractors to respond to the panel results within a certain period of time (Fin 97, Green 116). It could also be specified as a legal requirement (Green 283).
- ▶ On the other hand, participants feared that clear links could end up being “too close” to decision-making procedures. This might be abused for legitimation purposes. A close proximity and uptake obligations would raise the stakes in the selection of participants and attempts at controlling the process. Governmental actors, for example, are often pressured by the particular conditions under which they operate and seek to control publics rather than to learn with them (OD; Red). However, as one participant stated “institutionalized participation is a waste of time. There will be no commitment on the side of contractors without knowing the outcome. And you need the support of the contractor otherwise you are stuck with the process” (Green 283).

### ***What type of impact on what kind of politics?***

The dilemma of impact and autonomy then led to a discussion of how citizen panels can impact specific decision-making process. Like the issue of “functions”, different understandings of political decision-making processes and the role of citizen panels were discussed in relation to the issue of “impact”. Different views of how political decision-making takes place and what the role of citizen panels is in this regard could be observed among the workshop panel:

- ▶ If political decision-making is mainly seen as public problem-solving, the judgment generated by citizen panels will be taken up as a particular form of expert advice. Citizen panels therefore serve representative democratic institutions in a consultative capacity (Green 116). Citizen panels may also be valued for their contribution to clarifying options and stakes in the political process, and for not preempting decisions (Red). Their impact is thus to enlighten political problem-solving.

- ▶ If political decision-making is seen as a process of building coalitions and competing for public support, citizen panels articulate policy proposals that are undergirded by public support. They are not put up as a petition, but as an invitation to negotiate (Yellow 384).
- ▶ If politics is understood as a struggle for hegemony, citizen panels appear as a site of discursive politics. Their impact is then a question of irritating, shifting or solidifying the way in which issues are framed and debated – not only within institutionalized decision-making contexts. In terms of impact, links to formal decision-making procedures are less important than the initial choice and framing of issues (Green 259, 341; Yellow 584).

For the future of citizen panels, one challenge will be to link them to decision-making processes and demand commitments to their outcomes, on the one hand, but also to guarantee the openness of results and resist manipulation on the other. Conducting studies that assess and evaluate the impacts and the conditions of citizen panels in various decision-making processes could help gain further insights into the potential contributions of citizen panels for decision-making, as well as the related risks and opportunities.

### **3.5 Representation: Which is the public that citizen panels produce a view of?**

Closely related to the “impact” of citizen panels is the question of their legitimacy. How much weight can a judgment deliberated by a small group in a very specific setting carry for a larger public? Why should this judgment be considered a “public” judgment? And how can citizen panels be trusted to speak in the name of all citizens?

All these questions center on the question of the legitimacy of citizen panels as an important issue in the course of the workshop debate. Legitimacy is related to the idea, held by many providers, that citizen panels are representative of the public as a whole. But where and who is this relevant populace and how is it adequately represented? The issue of representation therefore presents a challenge for the design and future development of citizen panels.

#### ***Legitimacy in representative democracy as an opportunity and a pitfall***

The discussion on public representation in citizen panels and their legitimacy is based on the assumption that representative democracy is suffering from a legitimacy crisis (Fin 777; Red). At its core, this implies that democratic systems are not working properly because the citizenry does not feel adequately represented. As a result, this leads to a “decrease in trust” in the system and a crisis of democratic institutions (Fin 1069). There are many explanations of why this is the case, ranging from an increasingly heterogeneous citizenry to an increasingly distributed decision-making authority. The analysis of legitimacy problems in established democratic institutions has led to the identification of specific requirements and pledges to use alternative modes of political participation to counterbalance the erosion of trust. Legitimacy problems in representative democratic institutions thus shape the demand for citizen panels and there is a growing instrumental interest in citizen panels as an alternative means of legitimation. Citizen panels are often confronted with objections raised in the wider public and by the media that they are organized for legitimacy purposes to “whitewash” policy proposals (Yellow 311; Green 59).



### ***How to make 'the public' speak?***

The public is not a monolithic substance that is “out there” and which can be reproduced by taking bits of it into the laboratory for observation under the microscope. Publics emerge in interaction over issues of concern, and as a result of controversy (Dewey 1954; Marres 2005). They are constituted by difference. Any selection of participants and any set-up of a process will produce a particular public which is not identical with the public generated by any other procedure or with an imagined “natural” public as it would emerge “in the wild” without any organized process. Yet, there is a widespread belief that, in order to generate legitimacy, demand, and impact, citizen panels have to become accepted as a voice of the public (Green 69). How this can be achieved was a controversial topic at the workshop.

- ▶ Some participants referred to statistics and claimed that representativeness is mainly a technical task of finding the right quantity and quality of societal representatives. It is largely a “numbers game” (Green), assuming that representation is possible.
- ▶ Others avoided the assertion of representativeness, stating that any select group can only “resemble” the wider public. One may also consider doing away with the idea of representing a unified public and instead articulate options and stakes. However, this idea does not work when the function of citizen panels is to promote consensus and decision-making (Red).

### ***Different concepts of publics and legitimacy***

Threading through discussions of legitimacy and representation are different concepts of “the public” and related ideas about how to account for citizen perspectives. This is particularly relevant for the selection of panel participants (Fin 920, 948). Which public should be represented in citizen panels? Should citizen panels speak for an international public or a national or local public? Or should they to speak on behalf of muted, marginalized groups in order to add their voices to larger public controversies? These publics are different “reference groups” (Fin 948; BL 18; Green) which imply different decisions in terms of building citizen panels.

The crisis of democratic institutions is likely to become more acute in the future due to increasing globalization and individualization. For the future development of citizen panels, the challenge will be to reflect and to be clear about their limitations to represent a larger public view or rationality. To conduct citizen panels, it will be necessary to explicate not only the objectives, functions, and underlying philosophies, but also the related reference frames and criteria for participant selection. Both conveners and participants must be aware of the limitations of every selection process in terms of representation and the legitimacy of citizen panels' outputs.

### **3.6 Neutrality: Can power asymmetries and biases be evaded?**

The “neutrality” of citizen panel design and conduct is an issue that closely relates with the issue of representation. If the legitimacy of citizen panels is thought to derive from being perceived as representative of an objective public view or rationality that is already “out there” in the world, independent of the particular participatory event, then a core challenge of designing citizen panels is to ensure a neutral representation of the public. The question is, however, if any procedural design and conduct can ever be neutral in the sense that it authentically “mirrors” and does not introduce selectivity or shape the articulation of public views in a specific way. If one is skeptical about the possibility of neutral mirroring, the challenge for the future development of citizen panels is to reveal the specific ‘bias’ involved in any kind of interactional setting.

#### ***Various sources of bias***

Various sources of bias were mentioned in relation to citizen panels. One topic was the selection and presentation of “information” on the topic of concern to citizen panelists. Collecting, preparing and distributing information implies some selection and filtering, as well as a presentation approach. In the context of citizen panels, further points include the selection of expert witnesses and the moderation of their “evidentiary” contributions to the panel (Fin 97). Moreover, the moderator structures and guides the discussion (and sometimes also drafts the concluding consensual report) and is a critical actor with respect to the issue of neutrality. The moderator is faced with the dilemma of standardizing and structuring the debate, while also leaving room for creative improvisation in order to follow the dynamics of interaction and learning within the group (BL 11).

As an additional source of potential bias, commissioners of citizen panels often have stakes in a particular outcome and may try to influence the process. These actors may attempt to “hijack” citizen panels and use them to show that a deliberating public supports their policy decisions (see section 3.4 “Impact”).

This presents a challenge in terms of neutrality for organizers, who therefore need to negotiate their contract in a way that guarantees processual autonomy.

However, “cheating” related to neutrality is not always calculated. Bias may be introduced simply because commissioners, organizers, and moderators take certain framings and aspects of the policy issue for granted and thus do not consider balancing different positions as a requirement or a possibility. The same holds for different setting-related or procedural aspects that may promote or impede the articulation of certain perspectives and arguments. Prominently discussed aspects include current practices of examining and selecting participants (Fin 962). These practices can imply certain preconceptions of relevant social differences that need to be portrayed in the panel and of personal qualities required for eligibility as a panelist (OD 446). Besides biases introduced by the organizers and conveners of citizen panels, bias can be introduced through varying degrees of power exerted by participants to shape discursive interactions and the resulting consensus, e.g. through forceful assertion, rhetorics or bonding, and enrolment strategies (Fin 271).

A key challenge for the future development of citizen panels thus appears to be whether striving for procedural neutrality and the elimination of bias is actually viable, or if it entails a false promise that involves hypocrisy, because it cannot be fulfilled – and thus the risk of denunciation and debasement. As an alternative approach, some see bias as inevitable (Gomart and Hajer 2003) and argue that its manifestations in the setting and the procedure should not be concealed but openly reflected and discussed as an integral part of substantial recommendations produced by the panel (Fin 786).

### **3.7 Context: Is the working of citizen panels depending on situational contexts?**

Workshop debates on citizen panel design touched upon the issue of their embeddedness in and influence of different situational contexts (Fin 97, 169). Not only issues of concern, but also established political cultures and institutions, patterns of social cleavage and conflict can result in highly specific requirements. In addition, organizers and commissioners negotiate specific purposes for citizen panels. All this boils down to the conclusion that citizen panels may require different designs to work effectively. Context appears to have a strong impact on what one can expect from citizen panels.

A core question that emerged in the workshop was whether contexts can be classified in order to match them with specific design variants or whether contextual diversity requires the situated conceptualization, design, and conduct of citizen panels. Several challenges were discussed in this regard.

#### ***The importance of context for citizen panels***

Beginning the discussion on this issue, the importance and relevance of contexts was highlighted by many participants. As illustrated above, the perceived legitimacy of citizen panels to produce a “public” judgment, for example, is largely a matter of the individual political culture and respective conditions for trust and persuasion (Fin 1049; Red). Similarly, different contexts may pose different requirements with respect to participant selection and process moderation, depending on the level of politicization or social mobilization in a given society, for example (Green). Moreover, different actors such as governments, companies, or various media in different contexts may require “different stories, means, techniques, and designs” for citizen panel recommendations to have an impact (Yellow 73, 605).

Context is thus an important aspect for citizen panel design. However, despite the possibility of classifying situational contexts according to design requirements and devising a specific repertoire of options, together with guidelines for matching participatory designs with specific contexts, the influence of context is currently often neglected and largely under-theorized (Yellow 117).

### ***“Institutional ecology” and “ecologies of participation”***

Some participants argued that citizen panels are part of a larger governance “architecture”, in which they are embedded in institutional settings, or, as some participants phrased it, in a particular “institutional ecology” (Red). This governance context within which citizen panels operate is constituted by specific institutions, as well as related organizations and actors. More specifically, citizen panels can also interact with other forms of participation and deliberation, such as parliamentary elections, petitions, public hearings, referenda, polls, and surveys, but also new social media (Fin 561, 1069; Yellow 101).

Alongside the formal institutions of a democratic system, informal structures are also relevant, e.g. forms of political activism and public protest that exist as particular cultural characteristics. Hence, citizen panels always operate within a particular “ecology of participation” (Fin 777, Yellow 384), a perspective that needs to be factored into their analysis.

As a particular form of public participation, citizen panels cannot be understood as something that is produced and delivered on demand as a stand-alone tool (OD 919). Instead, they must be seen in relation to other forms of participation. Democracy consists of various forms and constellations of citizen deliberation and participation (BL 4). The remaking of democracy is a learning process with no predetermined, clear-cut solution. Citizen panels may be part of the solution, but they will need to be developed in relation to a larger set of alternative approaches (Fin 1069).

An understanding of how citizen panels interact with other forms of political participation in particular contexts also depends on different broader perspectives on society and whether citizen panels are placed in an innovation narrative that emphasizes different forms of democratic integration or, alternatively, different forms of civil empowerment and resistance (Fin 1324, 1425).

### ***Broader changes in context required to make citizen panels work***

Besides the need to adapt citizen panel design to different institutional conditions, adopting a dynamic perspective also seems important for their future. The development of citizen panels should not be understood as a one-time undertaking which is complete once a format has been adapted to an individual context. Design work needs to be seen as a dynamic process in which specific forms of participation co-evolve in direct relation to context developments. So, too, are the dynamics of citizen panel development embedded within the dynamics of their broader socio-political context. This includes shifts in political culture and institutions, as for example with globalization and European integration, as well as shifting problem frames and issues on the public agenda (such as the increasing complexity connected to the discourse on sustainability) (OD 1031, 1165). Design work therefore must become a continuous process of integrating “constitutional change” and “organizational learning” into public participation (BL 25). This considerably broadens the task of designing citizen panels to include regular checks to determine if basic conditions have changed and if they are still being met.

Improved conceptualization, monitoring and evaluation of context conditions, as well as their changes over time and the respective influences on citizen panels will form a critical challenge for the development of citizen panels in the future. This not only helps to establish a co-evolutionary perspective on citizen panels design and context, but it might also support an intentional cultivation of context conditions to make citizen panels work.

### **3.8 Social life: What drives and shapes the innovation of citizen panels in practices?**

In addition to questions of how context conditions and changing societal developments can be taken up in citizen panels and shape future design developments, the innovation process itself creates momentum and introduces the social dynamics involved in the design process. These dynamics of innovation emerge from the distributed activities and interactions of actors who engage with citizen panels. These dynamics arise spontaneously, i.e. without prior design or planning. As part of a reflexive approach to the innovation of new forms of public participation, these types of dynamics can be monitored, anticipated, and perhaps modulated (Rip 2006), if not planned and steered. In this sense, it is another critical issue for the future of citizen panels, to reflect the own dynamics and the various influences and strategies by which actors engage, or are likely to engage, with their development.

#### ***Heterogeneous interaction for citizen panels design***

As an initial key aspect of their innovation dynamics, citizen panels are not shaped by single actors or groups of actors (as suggested by the scenarios in the appendix), but through the interaction of many different actors and actor groups. These interactions involve different perspectives on citizen panels as their common object of engagement, different expectations about their future development, and different values to assess the success of their application. The future of citizen panels is thus the result of distributed and heterogeneous agency among, inter alia, social scientists and philosophers, political activists, administrative officials, professional politicians, business entrepreneurs, journalists and, last but not least, citizens (Fin 1394). This diversity of actors, interests, ideas and underpinnings should be reflected, along with the various direct and indirect linkages and influences they bring, particularly with regard to the ability of single actors to intentionally steer the design process.

#### ***Supply push and marketing by participation experts and professionals***

Because citizen panels continue to attract a growing constituency of dedicated experts and professionals who seek to develop and market an innovation that is both dear to them and vital to their livelihood, there is an element of supply



push that shapes the process of citizen panel development (Chilvers 2008; Hendriks and Carson 2008). The demand for citizen panels is not naturally given, but socially created and sustained.

Workshop participants engaged in the development of citizens agreed that shaping the perception of citizen panels in the media and among potential commissioners is hard work. Successful cases of the establishment of citizen participation procedures were viewed by most as the result of a long-term “strategy for building public demand”, which included the search for “backdoors” and “niches” (Yellow 639). While participation professionals and an emerging “deliberative industry” (Saretzki 2008) play a crucial role for the innovation of citizen panels, ensuring that their design and the implementation is not dominated by commercial constraints and interests will be an important future challenge (Green 171, 192; Yellow 339).

### ***Learning from success and failures***

Individuals have played an important role as innovators and champions of citizen panel development in the past. They spurred the development of certain panel formats by articulating methods, building networks, and strategically working for the spread and institutionalization of their designs. What appears as a success story in hindsight is in reality a small sliver extracted from a vast amount of failed attempts at enrolling actors and actor constellations in further development stages (Yellow 703). The institutionalization of citizen panels is still very limited (Yellow 515). Much of what is known today about citizen panels is based on the analysis of a few success cases. These are embedded in exceptional circumstances, however, which are ignored because they are difficult to export. Instead, a future challenge in this regard is also to learn from cases which are less successful because they build on common circumstances (e.g. in terms of political support, or resource endowments) (BL 25). This involves better monitoring and analysis of experiences, including both success stories and failure cases.

In summary, a key challenge for future developments of citizen panels in relation to more encompassing social dynamics will be to promote a better understanding of the innovation processes, dynamics, and mechanisms involved in designing and shaping citizen panels.

We must bear in mind that citizen panel designs result from the distributed agency of heterogeneous actors following different interests and logics. Moreover, we also need to understand the interdependencies, linkages, and influences of these actors. These conceptual aspects form a necessary precondition for intentionally optimizing social conditions for the further development of citizen panels. The future of citizen panels can actively be shaped through dedicated reflection and learning strategies about these mechanisms and dynamics.

## 4. Towards responsible innovation processes in designing citizen panels

The objective of the “Challenging Futures” workshop was to identify challenges for the future of citizen panels and to initiate an anticipatory discussion of their wider implications and possible repercussions. All issues reported on in this document originated from the workshop and were later subject to our interpretation. As we show in the previous chapter, many issues are interlinked and closely related to broader questions of philosophical underpinnings and worldviews.

Differences in worldviews and philosophical orientations closely influence actors’ visions of what citizen panels can accomplish and how they should function and conducted. Are they brought into being to promote consensus or to reveal plural perspectives and power differences? Can they represent and formulate a legitimate “public opinion”, or are they mainly good for articulating options and stakes? These questions are rooted in fundamental concepts of what society is and how it is constituted. This includes struggles between those who expose the existence of a common rationality and those who would argue that society is, at its very core, a heterogeneous complex.

Acknowledging diversity and contextual differences influences perceptions about the usefulness of design standards and about questions of the quality of citizen panels. Setting standards for quality assurance conflicts with the belief that design needs to remain open to situational contexts, as heterogeneity and socio-cultural and political differences would otherwise be neglected. Moreover, any standardized and uniform approach to guiding behavior incorporates particular models and ideas about how society should function. Hence, citizen panels are political and not neutral instruments. It is important to bear in mind that citizen panel design is a decision of political process. These decisions need to be handled in a comprehensible and democratic way.

As a main challenge for the future of citizen panels, we believe that relevant actors should pledge to make design decisions and underlying orientations transparent in the future. They need to ask questions such as: What is the objective and for setting up citizen panels and what is the corresponding reference framework? What is the logic of deliberation, what are the limits of

representation and legitimacy? And, finally, where are the chances to impact actual decision-making processes? Critical reflections about the chances, risks, and limits of citizen panels and an open discussion of the preconditions and ambiguities related to design questions will help improve citizen panel design.

These types of questions will help clarify the expected impacts in decision-making processes, increase context sensitivity, improve the quality of outcomes and enhance awareness of the dynamics involved in citizen panel design. By reflecting about the needs and visions of involved actors, designs can be continuously reviewed and adapted to changing conditions and requirements. Singular interests and power structures, whether intrinsic or extrinsic to the design and implementation process, can be faced head on and openly debated.

Because the design discourse on citizen panels is still open, such debates and reflections may help increase their societal embeddedness. With this report, it is our objective to share the results of our workshop along with our interpretations in order to continue the societal debate about the future of citizen panel design and conduct.

## References

- Abels, G. & Mölders, M. 2007. Meeting of Minds. Kritische Beobachtungen zu Form und Funktion der ersten europäischen Bürgerkonferenz. In: A. Bora, S. Bröchler & M. Decker (Eds.), *Technology Assessment in der Weltgesellschaft*. Berlin: Sigma, pp. 381–391.
- Chilvers, J. 2008. Environmental risk, uncertainty, and participation: mapping an emergent epistemic community". *Environment and Planning A*, 40(12), 2990–3008.
- Chilvers, J. 2012. Expertise, technologies and ecologies of participation. *3S Working Paper*. Norwich: Science, Society and Sustainability Research Group.
- Chilvers, J, & Evans, J. 2009. Understanding networks at the science–policy interface. *Geoforum*, 40 (3), 355-362.
- Della Porta, D. 2013. *Can democracy be saved? Participation, deliberation and social movements*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Dewey, J. 1954. *The Public & Its Problems*. Athens: Swallow Press.
- Felt, U. & Fochler, M. 2010. Machineries for Making Publics: Inscribing and Describing Publics in Public Engagement. *Minerva*, 48(3), 319-338.
- Felt, U, Wynne, B., Callon, M., Goncalves, M. E., Jasanoff, S., Jepsen, M., Joly, P.-M., Konopasek, Z., May, S., Neubauer, C., Rip, A., Siune, K., Stirling, A. and Tallachini, M. 2007. Taking European Knowledge Society Seriously. Report of the Expert Group on Science and Governance to the Science, Economy and Society Directorate, Directorate-General for Research, European Commission. Brussels: Publications Office of the European Commission. [WWW document]. URL [http://www.bmbf.de/pub/EuropeanKnowledge\(6\).pdf](http://www.bmbf.de/pub/EuropeanKnowledge(6).pdf)
- Freire, P. 1998. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Goldschmidt, R. & Renn, O. 2007. *Meeting of Minds-European Citizens' Deliberation on Brain Sciences*. Final Report of the External Evaluation. Stuttgart: Stuttgarter Beiträge zur Risiko- und Nachhaltigkeitsforschung. [WWW document]. URL [http://elib.uni-stuttgart.de/opus/volltexte/2007/3031/pdf/AB05\\_GoldschmidtRenn\\_Evaluation\\_Report.pdf](http://elib.uni-stuttgart.de/opus/volltexte/2007/3031/pdf/AB05_GoldschmidtRenn_Evaluation_Report.pdf)

Gomart, E. & Hajer, M. 2003. Is That Politics? For an Inquiry into Forms in Contemporary Politics. In: B. Joerges & H. Nowotny (Eds.), *Looking Back, Ahead: The 2002 Yearbook for the Sociology of Sciences*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 33-61.

Habermas, J. 1995. *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Hendriks, C. M. & Carson, L. 2008. Can the market help the forum? Negotiating the commercialization of deliberative democracy. *Policy Sciences*, 41(4), 293-313.

Karlsson, M. 2010. A panacea for Pan-European political participation? Analysis of the 2009 European Citizen Consultations. *New forms of participation: Normative implications*, Baden-Baden: Nomos , pp. 97-112.

Laurent, B. 2011a. *Democracies on trial. Assembling nanotechnology and its problems*. Paris: Mines Paris Tech.

———. 2011b. Technologies of democracy: Experiments and demonstrations. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 17(4), 649-666.

Lezaun, J. & Soneryd, L. 2005. *Government by elicitation: Engaging stakeholders or listening to the idiots*. London: The Centre for Analysis of Risk and Regulation.

Marres, N. 2005. *No Issue, No Public: Democratic Deficits after the Displacement of Politics*. Doctoral dissertation: University of Amsterdam.

Mouffe, C. 1999. Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism? *Social Research*, 66(3), 745-758.

Owen, R., Bessant, J. & Heintz, M. 2013. *Responsible Innovation. Managing the Responsible Emergence of Science and Innovation in Society*. Chichester: Wiley.

Owen, R., Macnaghten, P. & Stilgoe, J. 2012. Responsible research and innovation: From science in society to science for society, with society. *Science and public policy*, 39(6), 751-60.

Rask, M., Worthington, R. & Lammi, M. 2010. *Citizen participation in global environmental governance*. London; Washington D.C.: Earthscan.

Rip, A. 2006. A Co-Evolutionary Approach to Reflexive Governance - And Its Ironies. In: J.-P. Voß, D. Bauknecht & R. Kemp (Eds.), *Reflexive Governance for Sustainable Development*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, pp. 82-100.

Rip, A, Misa, T. J. and Schot, J. P.. 1995. *Managing Technology in Society. The Approach of Constructive Technology Assessment*. London, New York: Pinter Publishers.

Saretzki, T. 2008. Policy-Analyse, Demokratie und Deliberation. Theorieentwicklung und Forschungsperspektiven der ‚Policy Sciences of Democracy‘. IN: F. Jänning & K. Toens (Eds.), *Die Zukunft der Policy-Forschung. Theorien, Methoden, Anwendungen*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 34–54.

Saward, M. 2000. *Democratic innovation: deliberation, representation and association*. London: Routledge.

———. 2003. Enacting democracy. *Political Studies*, 51(1), 161-79.

Wynne, B. 2007. Public participation in science and technology: Performing and obscuring a political–conceptual category mistake. *East Asian Science, Technology and Society*, 1(1), 99-110.

## Appendix A: Scenarios for citizen panels

Against the conceptual backdrop of social innovation dynamics in governance and for stimulating an anticipatory debate on future innovation processes, we have identified a series of diverging future developments pathways that may emerge in citizen panels from now until around 2030. We describe these paths in three scenarios to invite actors to explore the issues that are at stake for the future design and use of citizen panels.

In these scenarios, we integrate patterns and storylines that have been developing in citizen panels over the past forty-odd years. We especially pick up on basic tensions that shape the dynamics of innovation and singled out three broad drivers that play a role for the making of citizen panels. The first involves a *business driver* in which the development of citizen panels offers opportunities to market special products and services. The second is a *political driver* in which the development of citizen panels is a quest to implement certain forms of social order involving specific local power struggles related with it. The third driver is a *scientific* one: citizen panels provide a field for developing and asserting theoretical knowledge of the world. The chosen emphases were each isolate to create scenarios in which one of the three driving forces was dominant, i.e. how would the innovation journey of citizen panels unfold over the next twenty years, if business interests, politics or the sciences come to dominate its development?

The results can be found in three scenarios which are not meant to represent the most plausible, nor most likely, let alone desirable futures of citizen panels. But the scenarios provide a provocative point of departure, stimulating questions, thoughts, embellishment, amendments, objections, rectification, and debate about what are the challenges and issues when thinking about the future design and use of citizen panels.



## Scenario 1: A booming market for deliberation services

### Abstract

*This scenario is about business interests and how these interests drive the development of citizen panels. Designing and offering deliberative formats becomes a business like anything else; a potentially lucrative service influenced by the logic of supply and demand. Stimulating this demand and creating a market for deliberation goods and services is a primary objective in the portfolios of many specialized consultancies and service providers. These actors attempt to mobilize a scientifically confirmed and widely endorsed need for participatory decision-making processes. This demand largely exists in the world of governments and corporations, interested in instrumentalizing citizen panels as a new tool for propaganda.*

### **The immediate future**

By the end of 2013, after nearly two decades characterized by fragmented design schools of, and separated discourses on, citizen deliberation, the attempts to connect professional actors from various national and transnational contexts finally meet with success. Not only are scientists engaging in an ongoing interdisciplinary dialog on the principles and merits of deliberative formats, but also a growing number of practitioners are committed to developing a set of common design standards. Global networks such as the *Participedia.net* community or the *International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)* are steadily growing; joint conference series and international research projects are a frequent occurrence. All these activities gradually bundle scattered expertise and help to elaborate participatory deliberation designs and standards.

Over the next few months, the instrument constituency experiences rapid growth. In particular, the specialized deliberative service industry expands to provide the necessary infrastructure and formats to carry out citizen panels. For many service providers, among them consultancies, think tanks and various freelancers, citizen panels exist to satisfy the customer, and ultimately as a profitable service. Who are the customers? Basically, all organizations that wish to legitimate their policies and actions by claiming they are in the public

interest; most notably, politicians and governments, but also corporations and foundations that are active in a wide variety of contexts and subject areas.

### ***Rising demand for deliberation***

In 2014, governments around the world require new forms of legitimation to prop up eroding frameworks of representative democracy. Civil society expresses its discontent on a large scale: students, NGOs and civil right groups argue that their concerns are not integrated in political decision-making processes, nor reflected in the outcomes. Organized interests make governing difficult.

Many people are not just concerned about the products of decision-making, i.e. “bad choices”; instead, more and more citizens believe that the way decisions have been made in the past– i.e. top-down and relying heavily on expert opinion, is undemocratic and often inadequate to deal with contemporary social and political problems. Desperate efforts to fix and repair the perceived democratic deficit are fed by several factors. These include societal differentiation and a growing ‘expertocracy’, as well as an ever-increasing aggregation of political power in the context of the EU and the UN with long chains of representation, and the inroads that these factors offer for the informal lobbying power of powerful corporations.

The tense political climate pushes many authorities to provide better options and formats for public participation in political processes. Motivated by a desire to improve democracy, as well as fears of losing political power, many influential political decision-makers regard participation as a means to enhance their political legitimacy. Citizen panels are increasingly set up as alternative, widely accepted source of legitimation.

The UK is the first European government to make citizen deliberation mandatory for the enactment of all new laws starting in 2014. This decision builds on positive experiences after 2001, when the influential *Third Report on Science and Public for the House of Lords* was implemented, which called for greater public involvement in science and politics. Political analysts later argued that this new policy focus ultimately secured an additional legislative period for the ruling party.

Similar initiatives are tested in the course of election campaigns in other European countries, where diverging political perspectives on pressing problems such as terrorism, social inequality, and climate change create divisive social rifts. Citizen deliberation gains appeal as an approach to enhance the legitimacy of governments in democratic societies.

### ***Meeting the demand***

The diversity in demand is mirrored by a highly variegated supply. Numerous types of citizen panels range from reputable deliberative instruments for democratic governments to easy-to-install solutions for business and the propaganda machines of authoritarian regimes. The booming service industry has long waited for such a receptive market. Products are offered “at a fraction of the cost of illegitimate policies”, as goes the basic argument of several marketing campaigns. Large consultancies like the *Danish Board of Technology*, *McKinsey*, and the *Boston Consulting Group Inc.* perceive the growing demand for participation as a new field of activity with a huge market potential.

As the top manager of one major firm explained behind closed doors: “Politicians need flexible formats for public participation. They need to be able to construct public interest around their policies, and not the other way around. And the process needs to appear open-ended. If it’s not, it won’t work. It just ends up being obvious, old-school propaganda that will be quickly outed in this digital day and age. Citizens have to come to the conclusion that a government’s policy is in their interest all by themselves, by turning the issue inside out and then forming an educated opinion. When they are able to do this and believe they have made a real contribution to the deliberation process, then you’ve developed the perfect tool.” While some critics within the deliberative service industry refer to this understanding of citizen panels as ‘Propaganda 2.0’, many consultancies and especially the newly established service providers work to develop such technologies in line with their diverse customers’ wishes.

Many politicians recognize the new demand-oriented and flexible deliberation formats as a pragmatic approach to improve the societal embeddedness and acceptance of their political decisions.

Demand for these formats is high among public agencies and administration. How to efficiently integrate public opinion without fundamentally challenging existing structures becomes the guiding research question for many actors at the science-policy interface.

In 2015, a widely noted scientific paper claims that the capacity of deliberative designs to address certain problems is merely a functional question of finding the right set of participants and the right process. The result is efficient public reasoning. This is the cornerstone of a research program focusing on applied public discourse management. The program centers on best practices in discourse management and leaves issues of democratic representation largely unaddressed.

### ***Public-private partnerships in the development of legitimation technologies***

Governments begin to provide funding for discourse management research to science and business. Funds are dispensed at both the national level and supranational levels. The *European Commission*, for instance, backs the establishment of a new policy initiative that targets cooperation between sciences and the private sector, called “*Democracy +*”. The purpose of this initiative is to bring EU policy closer to its constituents and to further develop appropriate legitimation technologies.

Close cooperation and mutual learning between actors in the deliberative industry and in political entities occurs in various situations and is initiated at all administrative levels. It seems that supply (service industry) and demand (politics) have teamed up to form a perfect match, with conceptual help from the scientific community.

### ***The rise of the deliberation industry***

Like all market products based on supply and demand, the costs for developing and producing deliberative services must also be driven down as far as possible, below the price at which they can be sold. Standardization helps to keep prices up – and costs down –, given the sizeable purchasing power of governments and other customers.

Strategies of monopolization first become visible in the United States. "*We the People Inc.*", a new company established by *McKinsey* with experts from the *National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation* and *America Speaks*, is launched in 2016. Its portfolio mainly contains customer-oriented deliberation solutions that can be applied in a number of situations. It becomes a great success in the U.S. and Canada.

Spurred on by its economic success and urged by shareholders to increase profit margins, "*We the People Inc.*" decides to spread its business beyond American borders and opts start this expansion in Europe. For strategic reasons, the company's research division develops a deliberative standard, the "*Democracy Panel*", which advertises a unique suitability for the particular needs of the 'European customers'. Marketed as a best-practice solution for policy development, the company pushes its standard onto the European policy agenda through its international networks and partners which include *European Citizen Action Service*, *King Baudouin Foundation*, and *Involve*. Prior to this move, the company registered its instrument design as a trademark in anticipation of its global debut.

Yet not only governments, but also companies, take an interest in deliberative procedures. As most formats had been originally developed for public policies and long-term decisions, the growing service sector identifies the need for ready-made solutions for short and medium-term planning and interests. Detecting additional business opportunities, various new economic actors enter the field, enlarging the instrument constituency and further strengthening its business orientation.

*Google* includes a participation tool in its 2017 software release and *Apple* comes up with "*iVote*", a client-oriented program that is first applied on large scale for voting in the Eurovision Song Contest that same year. The development of deliberative procedures is predominantly in the hands of an active deliberative industry and characterized by a few global players that push for the broad-scale, i.e. global, application of their deliberative standards, and thus gain dominance over other designs.

In the early 2020s, standardized deliberation technologies make it into the political mainstream in many countries. They become a standard product, regulated by general design specifications and certification schemes for the quality of suppliers. Governments in the EU, but also in the U.S., Australia, South Africa and others, anchor the use of deliberation technologies in their legislation. These technologies are predominantly implemented by professionally trained and certified staff furnished by a transnational deliberative industry.

### ***Growing resistance to public deliberation***

However, as soon as deliberation becomes 'big business', civil rights groups report on systematic abuses where 'public interest' had been obviously manipulated by biased information and moderation. The growing reluctance of citizens to participate is a development that can be found in many countries where powerful economic actors have pushed their agendas, leading to the institutionalization of deliberation technologies by a number of governments. A survey conducted by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 2028 states that 84% of survey participants in America are not interested in being involved in policy matters at all. Similar trends occur in other countries in the following years.

## Scenario 2: A toolkit for democracy

### Abstract

*This scenario is about political ambitions and competing (social) visions as key drivers in the development and use of citizen panels. Participants reclaim the negotiation of procedures for public participation and adapt various approaches to local situations. Citizen panels develop as a repertoire of participatory principles, methods, and practices. Actors pick and combine these elements for specific local projects – well aware of the political implications of their methodological choices. Policy design takes place in an open process of debate and negotiation as stakeholders attempt to reach a consensus on appropriate forms of participation.*

### **The immediate future**

By 2014, the instrument constituency surrounding citizen panels still consists of a loosely connected network of actors, subdivided into thematic and national segments. A transnational association with members committed to common design principles and procedures seems far out of reach. Even though supporters of networks such as the U.S. initiative *7 Public Engagement Principles (7PEP)* and the *International Association for Public Participation (IAP2 US)* try to push the global application of their quality standards, their attempts are largely ineffective. The demand and circumstances that frame deliberative procedures and participation methods are simply too diverse.

Standardized deliberative designs face critique from a variety of sources. Activist groups increasingly call for bottom-up initiatives for participatory processes and deliberative procedures. Scientists, as well as consultants and other service providers such as *Involve* and *Dialogik*, are also skeptical. Their common judgment is that any kind of formalized citizen participation that claims to be universally applicable is undemocratic. Instead, suitable deliberative formats need to be selected on a case-by-case basis by the actors involved.

In this climate, it becomes clear for many actors in the field of public participation and deliberation that design and consultation on procedures and schemes needs to become more political, with the impetus coming from the

citizens themselves. The market also reflects these views: the demand for standardized, universally applicable deliberative models is non-existent – leading to a fragile service sector for deliberative procedures.

### ***Citizen panels become politicized***

In 2015, local sites of political conflict, as well as particular proposals, programs, and issues brought up by citizens and activist groups make up the central breeding grounds for new deliberative and participatory procedures. Many procedures emerge out of situational negotiations with citizens, authorities, and stakeholders as part of local political processes. Hybrid deliberative formats that integrate citizen opinions start to take off as a popular new approach to decision-making on various political goals and objectives.

The importance of context is widely recognized: the necessity of local designs, sensitive to the wide array of interests, struggles, conflicts, and particular context conditions, seems to be just plain common sense.

### ***Flexible instrument designs and a flexible constituency***

By 2016, the bulk of citizen panel designs is negotiated in contexts where local actors and stakeholders initiate and organize locally accepted and embedded solutions. In response to this trend, several established advocates of citizen panels' offer individualized participatory processes for local initiatives, both as a strategy to stay in business and to maintain their reputation.

These deliberative service providers include small, recently established consultancies operating at the local level, as well as larger, well-established organizations such as the *King Baudouin Foundation* or *IFOK*, and several technology assessment institutes such as the *Austrian Institute for Technology Assessment (ITA)*, *Rathenau Institute* and *TA Swiss*. They all learn to adapt to the range of local political situations that provide the framework for citizen panels. Offering flexible, rather than standardized, deliberative designs that account for multiple values and realities help these consultancies strengthen their position. In promoting their work, they emphasize that their services for deliberative procedures are flexible, yet reliable and effective in terms of their outcomes and costs.



In the course of these developments, the constituency of instrument supporters becomes increasingly fragmented. A variety of design schools emerges, consisting of consulting companies, think tanks and academics specialized in working on customized solutions on specific tasks, conflicts and issues. Thus, design takes place in an open process of local negotiations with procedural support often coming from service providers. Participation is handled as an activity of interactive bricolage. Active understandings of participation, i.e. the principles that it seeks to support, how it works or which procedural elements can be combined in which way and to what effect, are negotiated on site by the actors who are either directly affected or otherwise identify as stakeholders in the negotiation process.

An understanding of citizen panels as a neutrally functioning method to help bring 'rational consensus to life' seems to have come to an end. Most actors active in the design of deliberative procedures – citizens, stakeholders, politicians, service providers – are aware of the fact that designing a participatory process is not just a matter of ingenuous tinkering or the 'discovery' of predetermined functional optimality. As social scientists argue: "The 'method' creates its object." 'Design is politics!' emerges as a slogan.

What participation is expected to accomplish, how it is organized, what roles it ascribes to participants, how it categorizes, values, and regulates information and communication streams, etc., all of these factors coningle to create an artificial body politics in the form of specific deliberative instruments. These instruments, it is argued, have an inherent bias, a predisposition to come to certain conclusions.

Depending on the local actors and conditions, participatory designs differ from site to site, and from case to case. There are debates about the right method to use, as well as when and where it should be applied. In some areas, the design debates are resolved consensually among relevant stakeholders; in others, powerful actors have the most sway in the decisions on instrument design. The design process is as diverse as the local realities in which it emerges.

### ***Waiting for critical reflections***

Scientific communities watch the recent developments in deliberative practice with mixed feelings. On the one hand, they see the bundle of varied initiatives as experiments that illustrate diversity and reflect on the dynamics of particular deliberative designs. On the other hand, the lack of universal best-practice principles for 'good deliberation' in public decision-making is glaringly visible in many cases – a real dilemma for many scientists working on that field.

In 2020, much like the principles of 'good governance', scholars from the U.S., Canada, Sweden, and the UK publish a widely distributed guideline for 'good participation practice', in which they highlight the role of the locality. The guideline appears with numerous comparative case studies on creating deliberative designs and participation procedures that emerged in the past years. Nevertheless, this research is openly debated with respect to its underlying perspectives and their effect on how the reality of participation is represented. However, these scientists primarily view their role as observers and are reluctant to act in an advising capacity.

Most stakeholders have no problems with the lack of scholarly recommendations in this regard, as they are more interested in on-the-ground deliberation than struggling with the theoretical idealization of deliberation.

### ***A toolkit for democracy***

By the end of the 2020s, citizen panels predominantly exist as custom-made processes. Instead of global standards and principles, a deliberative toolkit has developed, i.e. a floating repertoire of principles, methods, and practices which stakeholders select and combine for specific local projects.

On the whole, it seems that all relevant parties have become well aware of the political implications of certain 'methodical' or 'technical' details and hence the political power of instrument designs.

## Scenario 3: The “reason machine”

### Abstract

*This scenario is about the emergence of a decidedly scientific approach to citizen panels. Their design is backed by controlled deliberation experiments, neuro-cognitive laboratory studies, and information technology. Promoted as a scientifically developed and tested instrument for eliciting collective rationality, citizen panels are progressively applied in decision-making processes and are diffused on a global scale as “reason machines”. The high-tech deliberative industry enters a golden age. Protests from radical democracy advocates and scholars, who criticize these designs for manufacturing a very specific type of consensual rationality rather than providing opportunities for public controversy, lead to further reflections on, and technical refinements of, citizen deliberation, smoothing the path for further applications. Soon, deliberation technologies replace elections and voting as the core principles of democratic legitimation.*

### **The immediate future**

In 2014, the European Union and United Nations establish normative principles of ‘good governance’ and intensify their work on standards as ideal prescriptions for the use of participatory methods in policy making. However, the development of principles for deliberation and standardized procedures still proves to be difficult, at both the international and national levels.

The status of citizen panel design and its underlying constituency is still characterized by highly fragmented design schools and discourses. No individual design gains dominance in a particular policy field; commitment to a common design standard has not been reached. The scientific community is slow to offer an overarching discourse on general design principles; moreover, connections to practice are often absent. As an effect, most deliberative procedures fall short of providing universal modes of collaborative governance. Despite these setbacks, science remains eager to play a more active role. European scientists in particular actively pursue research that highlights methodological-functional approaches to achieving effective and legitimate outcomes through citizen panels.

Most of these scholars are affiliated with well-established scientific and technological research platforms like *PATH* or *CIPAST*, whose research activities receive a boost when the European Research Area dedicates two billion euros to the *Horizon 2020* program for detailed studies on how to produce 'good participation' in public decision-making. Research projects that go beyond theoretical reflections to analyze the principles, formats and outcomes of distinctively designed communication settings are preferred candidates for funding.

Sociologists, psychologists, political theorists, linguists and computer scientists assemble into new consortia to initiate various randomized and controlled experiments, forming a new field of experimental deliberation research, "*Science and Technology of Public Reason*". New conference series, workshops, and journals such as "*Deliberation Science*" structure this young and growing scientific field.

### ***Scientific breakthrough***

The ultimate scientific breakthrough comes in 2020, surprisingly not in Europe but in the United States. What happened? More by coincidence, while experimenting with truth-generating interrogation techniques, scientists from the *Neuroscience Research Center of the University of Texas* discover that medical treatments for regulating neuro-transmitter levels can significantly contribute to certain 'ideal speech situations'. This technology is thought to be applicable for a range of communication situations.

Only one year later, "*deliberative enhancement*", as the new technology is called, also shapes the transnational scientific discourse on deliberation techniques. Sophisticated informatics are used to calculate optimal 'treatment' levels. There is even the possibility to regulate the participants' propensity for agreement according to the flows of debate – a cybernetic system of deliberation has even substituted human moderators. The common good becomes an indisputable fact!

Measuring the quality of deliberation or the 'power of the best argument' only requires a few brainwave sensors and the right software tools. The perfect deliberation conditions can thus be discovered in experimental labs tests with

variable participants, some neuro-chemical enhancers, and normative, as well as informational, programming. Now, scientists are promising that it will soon be possible to reach a rational consensus for every dispute, at least in theory. Former opponents on nearly every public issue are able to put their differences aside based on the pure power of superior reasoning.

Although this neuro-cognitive approach is still in its early stages, with practical applications are still looming on the very distant horizon, many actors in both politics and business start to become aware of this new technology. Achieving an absolutely certain, incontestable link between the government and public – what could be better?

### ***The gold rush***

New start-up firms and consultancies are flourishing around these new neuro-technological tools and even conducting their own simulations. Although – until this point – they mainly build on speculations about the potential uses of this technology, these actors, including many academics, start to launch their own businesses and divisions for deliberative procedures, e.g. the “*Human Reason*” project, with private funding from Peck Seuler.

Many deliberation experts see their chance to get onboard the ‘new democracy’ trend. They double up their efforts to establish a technical infrastructure for offering, improving and using deliberative technologies. The first applications are soon viewed as market-ready to be sold even many are still little more than prototypes.

A good deal of funding and effort is still required for high-tech deliberation. Only wealthy customers can afford to purchase their own private ‘reason machines’ to handle their pressing concerns. As the proof of principle improves, many politicians get swept away by the idea of new deliberation technologies as a means to secure an unequivocal basis for decisions. In the media, discussions about the pros and cons (mostly the pros) of technologies to achieve rational consensus are gaining ground.

In 2022, the gold rush reaches its first peak. This development is pushed by scientists that mobilize political power and operational capacities to strengthen their deliberative designs in real-world simulations.

As time goes by, developers fail to make good on their promises and the early versions fall short of customers' expectations. The technology is not tamper-proof; technical problems occur. Logicians demonstrate errors in the supposedly fail-safe conclusions. Some dialectic arguments are not processed in their full complexity and oversimplified conclusions are drawn. With the rapid introduction of these new technologies, the complex nature of deliberation and human reasoning itself seems to have been grossly underestimated. Ignoring the 'overly critical' claims of certain 'enemies of innovation' (as they are often referred to in the media), these 'bugs' are mainly worked out through additional technological improvements.

### ***A tool called "MicroDeliberation"***

During the gold rush, some startup pioneers merge for a larger firm that is later bought out by a consortium of global pharmaceutical and software companies. The company's researchers present convincing evidence that possible manipulation and problematic deductions can be solved, in theory and practice, through better programming and hence better technology. Building on the latest insights from public reason science and technology studies, a tool called "MicroDeliberation" is launched in 2023. The foundation has been laid for a revamped version of the 'reason machine'. The new '2.0' product is quickly adopted, thanks to the company's well-established global distribution channels. Soon afterwards, public administrations in several countries all over the world use "MicroDeliberation" to solve all kinds of debates. "MicroDeliberation" has smoothed out nearly every imaginable bug, yet NGOs like *Transparency International* remain skeptical: Such a powerful instrument controlled by a single company?

Scientists and a growing number of democratic politicians also share fears that computers are increasingly the only 'actors' with a comprehensive understanding of many public discussions. There are increased demands for stricter regulation and security for the tool's use. Protests against manufacturing a very specific type of consensual rationality, rather than providing opportunities for the emergence of public controversy, lead to further reflections on, and technical refinements of, citizen deliberation.

In 2026, the use of 'reason machines' for public issues becomes regulated by special oversight agencies operating at national level and supervised by the newly established *Global Council for Scientific Democracy*.

### ***Deliberation Friday***

In the following years, innovations and improvements of deliberative technologies become more sophisticated thanks to better oversight, continuous feedback loops and critical reflections that support scientific and technological progress. More and more, public issues are deliberated with the help of reason machines and the outcomes are often better than expected, especially in terms of the rationality of solutions as well as time saved. Politicians have become keen on citizen deliberation for just about every public decision, because without this procedure there is no legitimate basis for their decisions. Therefore, a growing number of citizens are asked to participate.

In 2030, the discussion about an obligatory 'Deliberation Friday' for every citizen emerges. While some of citizens view this Friday as their democratic responsibility, others are not enthused. One day a week for politics? Some are already longing for the 'good old days', when politicians and citizens only met at certain intervals for elections. However, within less than two decades, deliberation replaces elections and voting as the core principle of democratic legitimation.

## Appendix B: Workshop agenda

<b>Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Content</b>
April 26, 2013	Venue: Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW)	
<b>Introduction</b>		
9:00-9:10	<b>Welcome and overview</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Introduction to workshop objectives &amp; expected outcomes</li> <li>➤ Overview of the agenda</li> </ul>
9:10-9:30	<b>Why this workshop?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ "Challenging futures" in relation to dynamics of innovation in governance</li> </ul>
<b>Session 1: Challenging futures of citizen panels</b>		
9:30-11:00	<b>Opening plenary discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Table round: What characterizes the present situation of citizen panels development?</li> <li>➤ Open group discussion</li> </ul>
11:00-11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>	
<b>Session 2: Identifying and articulating future issues for citizen panels</b>		
11:30-13:00	<b>Group work: discussion of future developments and identification of issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Identifying specific issues that require further attention and/or debate in the future development of citizen panels</li> </ul>
13:00-14:00	<i>In-house lunch break</i>	
<b>Session 3: Compiling issues, discussing challenges</b>		
14:00-14:30	<b>Strolling the "wall of issues"</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Participants read and discuss issue briefs produced by working groups</li> </ul>
14:30-16:15	<b>Discussion of selected issues and challenges in plenary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Presentation of two issue clusters</li> <li>➤ Two discussion rounds, one for each cluster</li> </ul>
16:15- 17:00	<b>Concluding discussion in plenary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Wrap-up of discussion of issues in plenary</li> <li>➤ Identify open questions and missed points</li> <li>➤ Outlook on further procedure</li> </ul>
17:00	<b>End of workshop</b>	



## Appendix C: List of participants

NO.	Name	Organization
1	Abels, Gabriele	Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Department of Political Science
2	Banthien, Hennig	IFOK, Institut für Organisationskommunikation, Berlin
3	Brown, Mark	California State University, Department of Government
4	Chilvers, Jason	University of East Anglia, School of Environmental Sciences
5	Crosby, Ned	Jefferson Center for New Democratic Processes, St. Paul, MN
6	Dienel, Liudger	Nexus, Institute for cooperation management and interdisciplinary research, Berlin
7	Font, Joan	Spanish National Research Council, Institute for Advanced Social Studies, Córdoba
8	Galiay, Philippe	European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
9	Gastil, John	Pennsylvania State University, Department of Communication
10	Hennen, Leonhard	Office for Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag
11	Huitema, Dave	VU University Amsterdam, Department of Environmental Policy Analysis
12	Joss, Simon	University of Westminster, Department of Politics and International Relations
13	Lietzmann, Hans J.	University Wuppertal, Research Center in Public Participation
14	Lopata, Rachel	Community Research and Consultancy Ltd., Leicester
15	Masser, Kai	Germany's Centre of Competence for Administrative Sciences, Speyer
16	Prikken, Ingrid	INVOLVE, London
17	Rauws, Gerrit	King Baudouin Foundation, Brussels

18	Schweizer, Pia-Johanna	University Stuttgart, Department of Social Science
19	Shinoto, Akinori	Beppu University, Local Society Research Center
20	Soneryd, Linda	University of Gothenborg, Department of Sociology
21	Sturm, Hilmar	Society for Citizens' Reports, Munich
22	Wakeford, Tom	University of Edinburgh, School of Health in Social Science
23	Walker, Ian	New Democracy Foundation, Sydney
24	Worthington, Richard	The Loka Institute, Claremont, CA

### **The moderation team**

25	Rip, Arie (workshop chair)	University of Twente, Department of Science, Technology and Policy Studies
26	Amelung, Nina (group green)	Technische Universität (TU) Berlin, Department of Sociology
27	Mann, Carsten (group yellow)	Technische Universität (TU) Berlin, Department of Sociology
28	Voß, Jan-Peter (group red)	Technische Universität (TU) Berlin, Department of Sociology