

14.

PARTICIPATORY METHODS

By

Jerome C. Glenn

use of Millennium Project on Science and Technology, Middle East Peace Scenarios participatory processes and tele-nations

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I. HISTORY OF PARTICIPATORY METHODS

One might argue that explorations of the future through public participation began three million years ago in Africa as groups of humans clustered together gazing at the evening sky while contemplating their fate. These group meetings have evolved into the "palavers" common in much of Africa today. Other examples might include the citizen assembly for political discussions in Athens, except that the majority of people - women and slaves - were excluded from such "public" debate. Surely the vote was an early form of public participation in the political process. Cited also are modern techniques of public opinion polling and focus groups. In the 1960s and 70s, more modern participatory methods were developed like Charrettes, Syncons, and various forms of computer-mediated communications. These integrative techniques are designed for a cross-section of the public and/or professional communities to identify issues, future possibilities, and common aspirations. Such interactions can also generate consensus on general goals, strategies, and tactics. All the forms of Internet listserves, websites, chat rooms, e-government services, and other participatory systems have dramatically increased public participation in the policy process and broadened the interaction globally.

No one quite knows the first time someone thought to quantify or qualify people's opinions. In the United States, polling goes back to the 1880s; in July 1824, the *Harrisburg Pennsylvanian* reported a straw vote taken at Wilmington, Delaware, (USA) "without discrimination of parties." Use of original marketing research by an ad agency shows up in early 1879, with questionnaires mailed in 1895 by Harlow Gale of the University of Minnesota (USA) to obtain public opinions on advertising¹. Projections of probable opinions of the many from the few remained a mystery of this type of research and, at first, produced skepticism from newspaper editors and the public. The advent of the telephone and, later, the computer propelled public opinion research and market research to a respectable and high-profile multi-billion dollar business of today.

Group facilitation techniques are widely used in many participation methods, such as charrettes, Syncons, Future Search Conferences, and computer-mediated communications drawing on social psychology. Many of these techniques originated with the National Training Laboratories (NLT) in Bethel, Maine (USA).²

Charrette is a French word meaning "little cart." A little cart was originally used during the 19th century by art and architectural students to carry their work to the university in Paris. Like students today, they did not always make the deadline and would jump in the charrette to finish their design. As they moved along the country roads in route to the university, farmers, innkeepers, and everyone else they passed would suggest improvements - a little more red here, a little less green there. Hence, the final work would be a "charrette design" with input by the general public against a tight deadline.³ Architects used the principle to involve the client in the design. Later in the 1960s, city and educational planners in the United States who found themselves caught in contradictory situations between the mayor's office and the public would bring them together in charrettes to forge agreements about the future.

In December 1971, the first public participatory process specifically designed for long-range

futures work was invented by Barbara Hubbard and John Whiteside in the United States. Called SYNCON for Synergetic Convergence, most Syncons were conducted during the 1970s by The Committee for the Future on live television and addressed the general future of civilization with some focused issues, such as the future of the space program, technology and society, the future of energy, as well as more geographically focused and specific issues like youth ethnic conflict in Los Angeles and national planning in Jamaica.

The history of the Delphi process is explained in another booklet in this series specifically on the Delphi. Its earliest use was for participation of experts rather than a cross-section of the public; however, no reason exists why the public cannot be involved in a Delphi process through public media, as explained later in this chapter. Simulations and games are also useful for interaction in both small and large group settings and can be played by groups that are geographically dispersed. The history and use of simulation and gaming approach to participatory methods is the subject of a different paper by that name, in this series and, hence, will not be repeated here.

Computer software for group collaboration (or "Groupware") is intended for people who were geographically dispersed and might not otherwise work with each other. One approach was invented by Murray Turoff in the 1960s for the U.S. Department of Defense's ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network), which was the forerunner of Internet. This *computer conferencing* software was introduced in the early 1970s to the American public through the White House's Price and Wage Control Commission and several years later with support from the National Science Foundation through the New Jersey Institute of Technology and called EIES (Electronic Information Exchange System).⁴ EIES had messaging, conferencing, and shared data base capabilities for group editing and polling. From this software sprang many variations of computer conferencing, bulletin boards, and international computer network software widely used today (now growing at 200 percent per year).

A major contributor to the human-computer group participatory methods was Doug Engelbart at Stanford Research Institute (now SRI International), and currently at the Bootstrap Institute <<http://www.bootstrap.org>>. His invention of the computer mouse and combinations of collaborative software he and his team developed gave birth to many innovations in Silicon Valley we enjoy today such as: two-dimensional display editing; in-file object addressing, linking; hypermedia; outline processing; flexible view control; multiple windows; cross-file editing; integrated hypermedia email; hypermedia publishing; document version control; shared-screen teleconferencing; computer-aided meetings; formatting directives; context-sensitive help; distributed client-server architecture; uniform command syntax; universal "user interface" front-end module; multi-tool integration; grammar-driven command language interpreter; protocols for virtual terminals; remote procedure call protocols; and compileable "Command Meta Language."

Engelbart is currently guiding an enthusiastic team of volunteer professionals in the designing prototype open-hyperdocument systems (OHS), one of which is the State of the Future Index detailed in a separate chapter in this series.

The first national system for general public participation via computer was Minitel in France. To save the cost of printing and distribution of telephone books, simple computer communications

terminals were given at no cost. Soon, people began communicating via these new terminals and developed very personal messages called “hot chatting.” Another form of groupware called IBIS (Issue Based Information System) was first developed by Horst Rittel *et al* in the early 1970s. IBIS provides a simple, yet formalized structure to deal with complex issues that do not readily lend themselves to the traditional linear approach of collecting and analyzing data then defining and implementing a solution. Highly advanced software systems are able to display issues, related positions, and supporting or negating arguments, graphically, using hypertext links in a flexible and evolving network that supports fluid responses and decisionmaking.

II WHAT ARE PARTICIPATORY METHODS?

This chapter examines participatory processes to explore both possible and desirable futures. Participation can involve a group in one location, meeting face-to-face, or geographically and temporally dispersed but connected by telecommunications. This chapter gives more emphasis to larger group processes that can be used by a nation or region. The results of these processes tend to be more normative (what the future should be), than analytic (what the future might be, based on empirical conditions of past and present). Such processes can identify the aspirations of a people and general strategies to achieve them but are not as good for making specific plans. More analytic methods, discussed elsewhere in this series, should be input to these processes so that people are not dreaming in a vacuum. In the 1950s, it was widely believed that, once colonialism was defeated, Africa would prosper quickly. When this did not happen, pessimism grew to weaken idealistic efforts necessary for African prosperity. Similarly, in the 1980s, it was widely believed that, once communism was defeated, the Second World would attract vast financial investment from the First World. As this is not happening as fast as expected, pessimism grew in Central and Eastern Europe. The normative vision produced in participatory processes should be created in dialog with those who do the more analytic research to avoid unrealistic expectations and create more effective strategies.

Some argue that the degree to which the recipients of a decision are involved in making the decision is the degree to which the decision will be accepted by the public. Conversely, the degree to which the decisionmakers are involved in the citizen process is the degree to which the conclusions will be implemented with ease and speed. The greater the range of alternative futures considered in the process, the more likely the conclusions will have a positive and lasting impact. Hence, the purpose of participatory processes is to improve decisionmaking. Such processes can also educate participants and build consensus for action.

Once people genuinely and actively participate, the process is seldom neat and tidy, especially if important and controversial issues are raised. Anger will and should flow and unlikely ideas will be aired. Only if this kind of free-for-all occurs -- and is allowed to occur -- will participants recognize that they have neither the time nor the interest to make comments and decisions about everything. This leads to a new sense of focus, responsibility, and cooperation, but only if the previous phase is allowed to run its course. Good facilitation can reduce the time taken to reach

this awareness and can avoid unproductive disintegration of the argument.

Professional planners often feel threatened by the thought of greater public involvement in policymaking and planning. The detail in a plan from a planning department far exceeds the conclusions of a public process. But planners are often out of touch with the feelings of the people. If the public process sets the criteria for planning (i.e., the aspirations), then planners can use those guidelines without feeling that their territory is invaded. Plans can then be evaluated in the next round of public process, creating a partnership between the planners and those for whom the planning is done. This sequence is not only important for planners to improve their work as a result of feedback, but also for the public to accept the result as "their" plan.

Public hearings are often used to collect selected feedback from the public and are a participatory method; however, since one person testifies at a time - even in a geographically dispersed and simultaneous process - the percent of those involved is small. Such hearings can indeed collect valuable input, but they give the impression that the public's voice was heard when, statistically, public option polling is more representative. An exception was the hearing process in Canada that was augmented by a team going to the Alaskan Aleuts to discuss the issues involved in the Alaska pipeline.⁵ The mix of hearings and small group processes is what made it more representative. Small group processes tend not to claim that they represent the aspirations and strategies of the general public. Such processes may be appropriate for small or large groups and/or for meetings in one location or in multi-locations. The following chart classifies some of the techniques discussed in this paper:

	SMALL GROUP (1-100)	LARGER GROUP (100+) (hundreds to thousands)
MEETING IN ONE LOCATION	Focus Groups, Future Search Conferences, Consensor, TeamFocus, VisionQuest, Simulation-Gaming	Charrette, Syncon, Simulation-Gaming, Voting
MEETING IN MULTI-LOCATIONS	Computer Groupware: Collaboratories, Integrated Multi-media, Simulation-Gaming	Option Polling, Syncon, Public Delphi, Simulation-Gaming, Voting

Figure 1. Classification system for participatory methods

With the advent of low-cost radio, copying machines, satellite television, fax, Internet, and cyber cafes, the much of general public anywhere in the world can easily inform itself on global affairs. As these technological capacities become more interactive and less costly, more people will become involved in the decisionmaking processes that shape their future. This growth creates demand for social technologies of freedom.⁶

Focus Groups and Opinion Polling

An opinion poll or survey asks specific questions to a random sample or a specific quota of the public. This process provides objective statistics of public opinion. With large enough samples of the public, differences in the hopes, fears, and priorities of different groups can be compared. Polls are useful for exploring attitudes and registering preferences and priorities about specific sets of choices.

Focus groups are usually conducted by a researcher or trained group leader who guides the conversation among a small group of respondents. A list of topics, which takes the place of a formal questionnaire, allows respondents to talk at length in their own words and at their own level of understanding. Discussion can range freely to include spontaneous topic changes or comments that were not foreseen as relevant by the researcher. Group leaders also have the opportunity to seek clarification or amplification where necessary.

Charrette

Charrette is an intensive face-to-face process carefully designed to bring people from various segments of society into consensus within a short period of time. The pre-charrette planning breaks the main issue into its component parts. These parts become groups that periodically report to the whole. Feedback from the whole on these group reports is then addressed in the next round of group discussions. This sequence is repeated until consensus is reached at the final deadline for a report of the whole to whomever-the news media, government officials, or the larger public drawn to the final event through media coverage of the process. Charrettes vary in size, from 50 to over 1,000 people, and in time, from one day to two weeks.

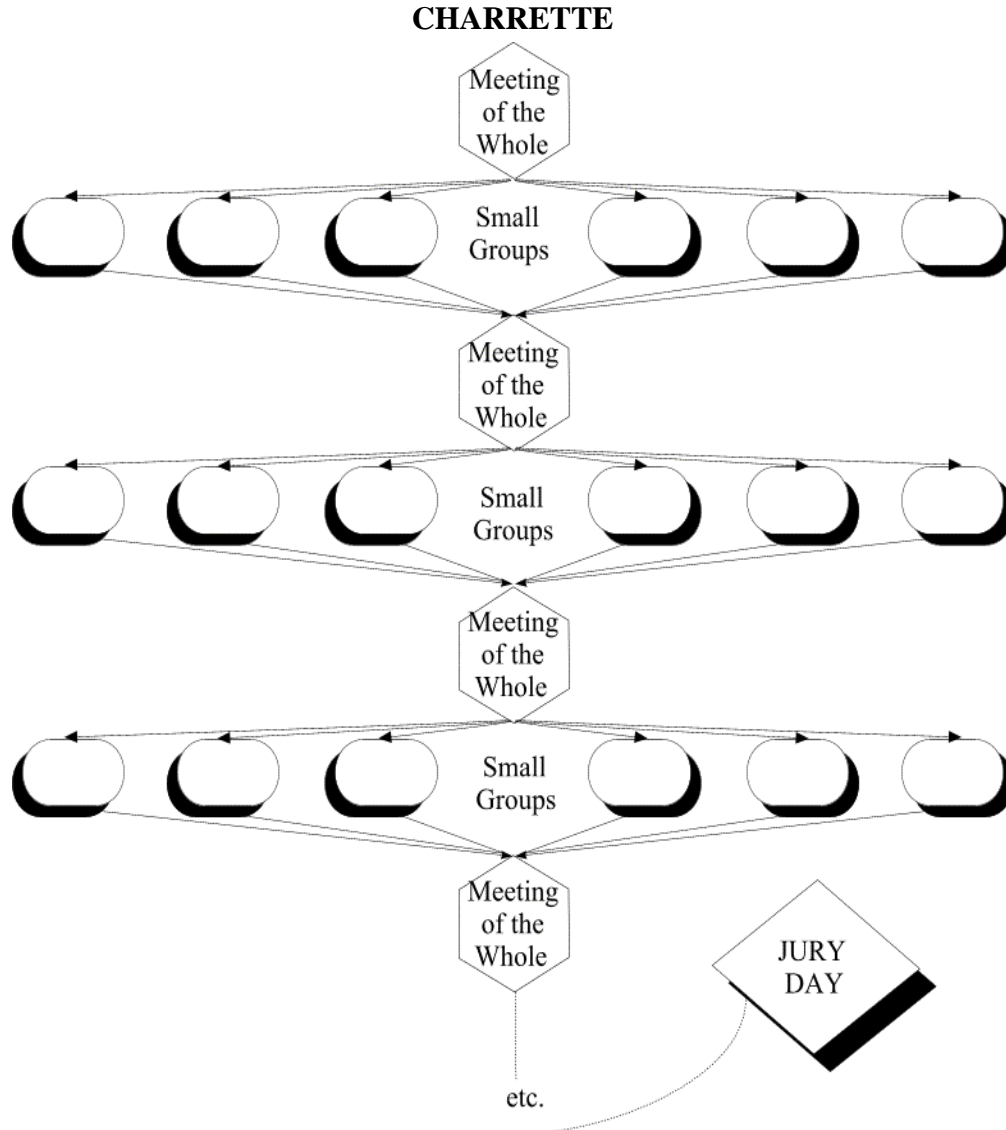


Figure 2. Charrette process pulses back and forth from small groups to the large or whole until general consensus is reached

SYNCON

Syncon is the most future-oriented and holistic of the participatory processes. It was originally designed to answer the questions: what future could all people work toward, and what misunderstandings need resolution prior to such collaboration? If a diverse group could come together, share their dreams, find common ground, then new awareness might be generated that could accelerate progress for all. The inner sections of the Syncon Wheel (see figure 3 below) represent the different orientations or major elements of our fragmented societies. The outer sections represent growing potentials of civilization. People meet in groups to explore the future and then merge with other groups to build a composite future that integrates these different orientations.

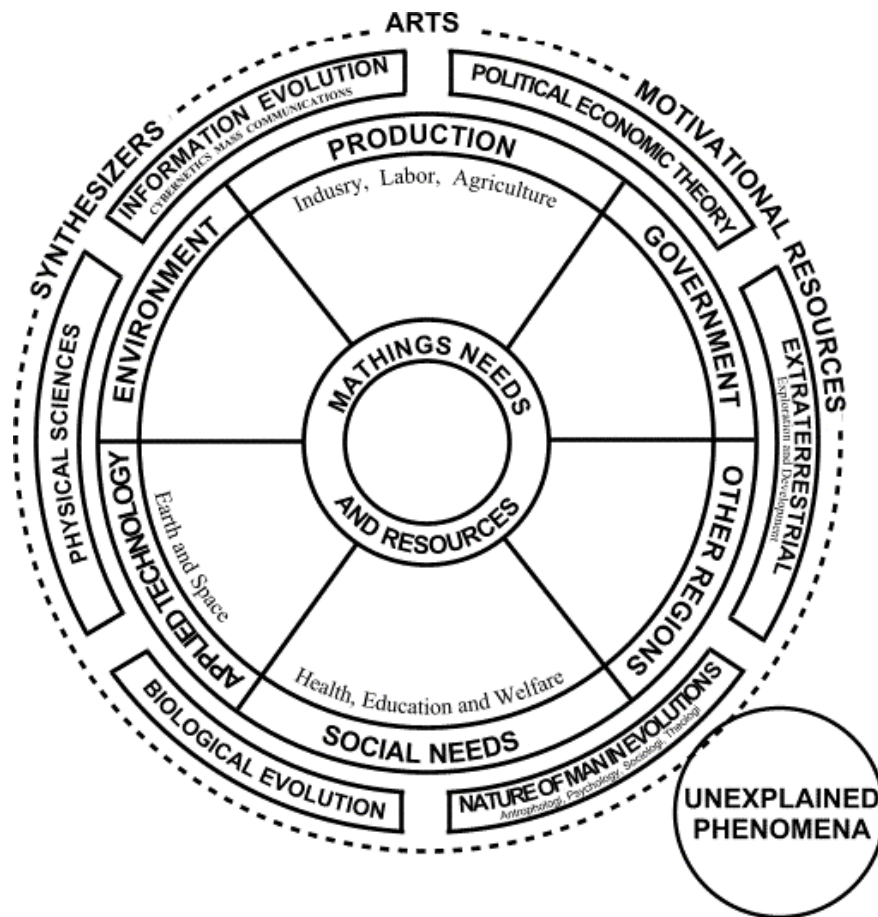


Figure 3. The SYNCON Wheel

The process begins with small groups, merges to larger composite groups, and finally becomes one total group. This sequence occurs inside a huge pre-designed wheel-like environment highlighting our present fragmented society. Removable walls between groups are spokes of the wheel. The inner sections of the wheel - social needs, technology, environment, government, production, and other regions - represent functional areas of any culture, nation, or community. The outer sections represent the "growing edge" of future potentials in biology, physics, information, extraterrestrial, political/economic theory, human nature, the arts, and unexplained phenomena. This three-and-one-half-day process is usually on live television with computer communications to link those unable to be present at the Syncon location.

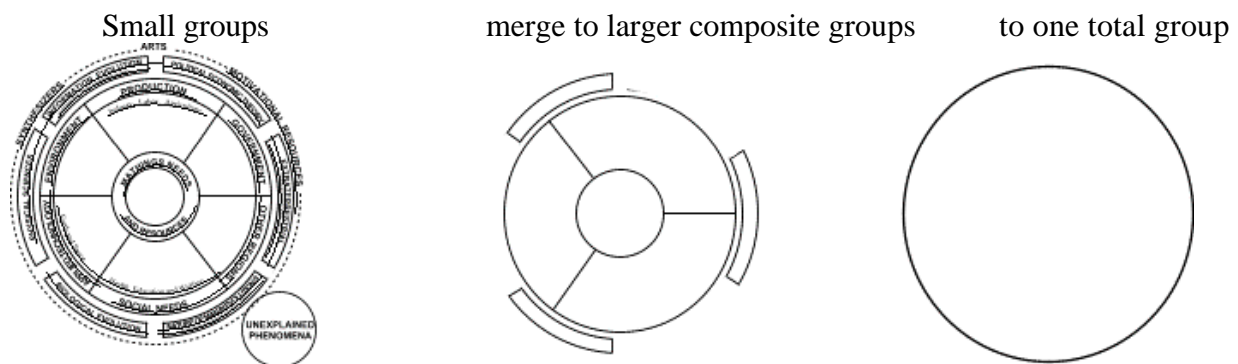


Figure 4. The Syncon process begins with small groups, merges to larger composite groups, then to one group of the whole.

Each SYNCON section has:

- a discussion guide to provide a rational framework for identifying goals, needs, and resources;
- a coordinator;
- several leading experts;
- interactive television to coordinate the hub with the other sections; the hub, in turn, communicates with the external community by live television.

Although 50 to 500 can participate inside the Syncon wheel, thousands can participate by telephone while watching television at home and calling in questions or comments. Evening sessions are artistic expressions of the future through theater, music, dance, humor, and light shows, giving participants time to reflect on the day.

Public Delphi

The Delphi is a repeating questionnaire that allows respondents to react to each other's judgments. This method is explained more fully in the Delphi paper in this series. Although the Delphi is usually conducted among a preselected and carefully screened panel of "experts," it could also be used with the general public through Internet, newspapers, or on the radio. Such "public" delphis could be used to identify national aspirations. Internet web sites, or newspapers could collect and publish the public's views through a series of repeating questionnaires. These questionnaires could also be discussed and shared on public radio and/or television. The public Delphi is an open meeting that lets ideas, rather than personalities, be persuasive.

Unlike a one-shot poll, the Delphi consists of several rounds of questionnaires. The first questionnaire could be announced on a public website, printed as a newspaper column, or read over the radio. It could ask the general public about their aspirations for the future of the country. E-Government websites would be one logical vehicle for this. The responses to the first round are condensed as the second round of the public Delphi. This second round is announced at the website, printed in the newspaper column and/or read over the radio and asks the public to rank these future goals or give more specifics. This process can continue as many rounds or as long as desired, identifying where national consensus exists, where the public is well or poorly informed, and helping planners identify national values and priorities.⁷

With the spread and merger of the Internet with mobile telephones, such public Delphis could become self-organizing and represent an emergent form of democratic processes.

Future Search Conferences

A variety of approaches - like strategic planning, visioning processes, consensus building, and futures issues management - are available for groups of 10 to 50 people.⁸ For the purpose of simplification, one approach - the Future Search Conference - will be discussed as an example because it integrates elements of others. Because of its pulsation between small and full group sessions to find agreement among a broad cross-section of people, the process is similar to a charrette but more structured. The search conference was developed by Fred Emery, a systems scientist from Australia in the 1960s,⁹ to find common ground among a group of 30 to 65 people. The more specialized Future Search Conference was developed by Marvin R. Weisbord in early 1980s to create future vision and strategy among a diverse group of people. The two-to-three-day future search conference is facilitated by two professionals and has five phases: 1) identification and discussion of global trends (desirable and probable); 2) analysis of relevant trends and how they will affect their organization; 3) projections of how the organization will evolve based on these trends; 4) future design of the organization; and 5) generation of strategies to achieve this new design.

Groupware

Computer software that connects groups of people to collaborate on the same project is commonly known as "groupware." This phenomena is called "Computer-Mediated Communication" by Murray Turoff, the inventor of computer conferencing in the 1960s who put the Delphi process on computer networks.

When groupware is used specifically as a participatory decision system, it is referred to as "group decision support systems" (GDSS). In scientific research settings, groupware that connects research workers in different locations to the same set of data bases for multi-media teleconferencing is increasingly referred to as a "collaboratory." Generally, these systems allow for electronic mail (from one-to-one and one-to-many), shared editing of documents, common data base access, and graphic systems to visualize the work in progress. For information on collaboratories see: <<http://www.scienceofcollaboratories.org>>.

More specific groupware functions include:

- Simultaneous collection and display of members responses to questions and issues, so that all responses are available to stimulate new ideas and improve thinking;
- Organization of electronic brainstorming sessions or other sources into defined categories for further analysis;
- Arrangement of group ideas into a graphical or spatial outline format on which members of the group can individually add to or comment on the developing outline;
- Evaluation of alternatives by ranking a list on a scale according to criteria generated by the group, which could be number of people affected, extent of impact, ability to effect policy, etc.);
- Communication by electronic mail as an aside to another member (or members) of the group;

Creation of a group dictionary to establish consensus on terminology, thus avoiding miscommunication due to incorrect assumptions by individuals employing differing connotations;

- Electronic links (hypertext database) between documents, issues, terms, and definitions from which group members are able to select a highlighted node in order to activate its link to cross-referenced definitions, concepts, or documents; and
- Simultaneous collaboration on the creation, editing, or annotation of the same document.

Local groups can now participate with individuals at great distances given the options made possible by the growth of Internet, which connects computer networks around the world and allows groupware to be downloaded, plus the falling prices for computer terminals, and the recent political support for the "international electronic highway."

III. HOW TO DO PARTICIPATORY METHODS

When selecting a specific method or designing a process, the following general questions and considerations should be kept in mind.

1. *Success.* What are the criteria for success from the process? Would success be an agreement or a single goal, decisions for direct implementation or the generation and acknowledgment of the plausibility of several scenarios? Is the expectation to give advice to decision makers or to educate the public about the issues as an impetus to create long-range plans? Is the intent of the process to produce a written document approved by the participants for submission to some authority or is the process a one-time activity, an initial step toward further processes, or even a periodic or continuing process? Many purposes can be served, such as: assisting an advanced technology research team to design their plans; collecting information from citizens on their aspirations; determining reactions to specific plans developed elsewhere; or sharing views to create a new direction for many purposes.
2. *Future Orientation.* How will the process ensure that long-term considerations do not get lost in arguments about who was right or wrong about the past? All too often people say, "before we talk about the future, we have to understand the past." Then the time runs out and nothing useful was discussed about the future to make better decisions today. Discussions of current decisions should be in the larger context of a range of alternative futures. Leaders of such processes should be chosen, in part, for their commitment to long-term thinking, willingness to involve futurists, and openness to genuinely new thought. When possible, a specific year in the future should provide a perceptual focus. For example, the UN General Assembly could use the year 2015 as the focus, since that the year for achieving the UN Millennium Goals, or the National Long-Term Perspective Studies in Africa could use the year 2025 as the focus, since that is the year for achieving African economic integration as specified in the *Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community*. The arts should also be involved (possibly through competitions) to produce music, paintings, T-shirt, and other media to involve participants in a playful focus on the future.
3. *Content.* Is the process intended to examine one issue, such as the future of education or health care, or is it intended to examine a whole range of issues involved in answering the general future aspirations of a people? Are the conclusions from the process to be a consensus or a range of options with cost/benefit judgments? Will the agenda be flexible or fixed?
4. *Participation.* How many people will participate? In what ways? For how long? What range of knowledge and interests should be represented by the participants? Some processes are open to whomever wants to participate, as with Public Delphis and can be with Charrettes and Syncons. Other processes are open only to people institutionally related and pre-selected, such as the board of directors of a corporation or all the permanent secretaries of government. Still other processes try to select a new group that might never have worked together before. Selection processes could include: literature searches; contests with a prize for the best thinking on some

topic; self-selection by those naturally attracted to the issue or process; or recommendations from persons appropriate or institutions relevant to the participatory process, asking those recommended the same question until a pattern of simultaneous recommendations and referrals occurs.

5. *Integrity.* This ingredient is the most important. How to ensure the integrity of the process is the most difficult and sensitive question to answer. If the process is manipulated to force a previously decided conclusion, then participants will feel used and betrayed and conflict could follow. The initiators of the process must be interested in the whole picture not just a part. For example, if a participatory process were designed to create an agreement on what energy system or systems should be developed over the next 25 years to reduce the "greenhouse effect," then the initiators should not come from only the solar power lobby or the nuclear industry. The initiators should earn a reputation of being "even handed." The integrity of the coordinator of the process is even more important than the initiator's. The coordinator's integrity is defined as the willingness to involve the full range of views and to allow the process to determine its own direction toward the purpose. The best techniques will produce fraudulent results if hidden agenda are allowed to circumvent genuine discussion. Warren Avis¹⁰ (of rent-a-car fame) defined consensus as occurring when "sufficient information makes the answer obvious to everyone." Integrity is a necessary condition for consensus.

6. *Who should decide* how these questions are answered and how the answers are integrated into the participatory process? A steering committee is best, whose members represent a range of views and expertise relevant to the purpose of the process. The steering committee's function will be detailed further as individual methods and techniques are explained below.

After these general questions are addressed, the designers of the process should ask more specific questions. Will the process:

1. involve the shy nontalker;
2. allow for innovation during the process;
3. create one-way/two-way or group communication;
4. allow time to reflect and save face if an individual's mind is changed;
5. mix participants to break-up cliques;
6. make people feel comfortable enough to express private thoughts in public;
7. develop a sense of interdependency or community by sharing common ground;
8. make necessary information available;
9. ensure that people are encouraged to think long-range (25 years or more);
10. encourage assessment of secondary and tertiary consequences of actions from alternative futures;
11. include all perspectives on an issue through people representing those perspectives;
12. have decisionmakers from government, business, and other authorities interact with the

- people affected by their decisions;
13. connect the implementation system to the issue, such as the legislature or city council;
 14. avoid threatening individuals and groups;
 15. insist on clearly stated conclusions to prevent later misinterpretation;
 16. guarantee full-news media coverage;
 17. Empower all participants equally in the process; and
 18. create an environment for institutional decisionmakers to see the process as a positive opportunity?

Opinion Polling and Focus Groups

Opinion polling is structured for questioning large numbers of people, usually representative of a larger population. This technique is based on questionnaires administered by interviews. The questions are precise and lend themselves to statistical analysis. For example, a question might look like this: "On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the strongest agreement, 5 mixed or no opinion, and 0 the strongest disagreement: Do you want your government to work for African economic integration?" Or the question could be a simple yes or no: "Are you in favor of African economic integration by the year 2025?" These polls are usually conducted by telephone to produce statistical data from a wide cross-section of the public. Alternatively, they can be conducted by interviewing people in busy locations. The opinion poll is definitive and gathered under controlled circumstances. Each interview must be conducted in the same way, with the same questions, asked in the same order so that the researcher may compare the accumulated data.

Conducted now in both industrialized and developing countries, opinion polling has taken on global proportions. Louis Harris and Associates conducted an opinion survey in 16 countries for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).¹¹ These countries include Argentina, Brazil, China, Germany, Hungary, India, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, United States, and Zimbabwe. Exactly 8,325 interviews were conducted using the same questionnaire to measure environmental attitudes of both the general public and leaders. Between 300 and 1,250 interviews were conducted per country among the general public. Approximately 50 interviews per country were conducted among the leadership. In developing countries, the samples were limited to urban areas. In Saudi Arabia, the sample was limited to men. Methods to identify interviewees among the general public included samples from electoral registers and area probability. Leaders were selected from lists of elected and appointed government officials, civil servants, and leaders in the news media, business, religion, trade unions, and the medical field. Interviews among the public were conducted by telephone (census-based random-digit dialing) and random-walk techniques in areas designated from quota samples.

The focus group technique uses a small group to explore issues in depth. The focus groups are usually composed of eight to twelve people and conducted by an interviewer who uses a broad topic guide with as few direct questions as possible. Individuals in the group are encouraged to speak as personally and subjectively as possible. The interviewer should encourage free

expression of attitudes throughout the approximately hour-and-a-half discussion. The interviewer can use questioning techniques to encourage individuals to reveal attitudes in depth and with emotion. The interviewer should also try to establish the range of reactions by prompting respondents to look at different sides of an issue. An interviewer can use techniques to encourage respondents to express their views indirectly as well. In a focus group, the sample should cover a wide spectrum of people. Generally about eight is desirable, too many make the group unmanageable. The discussions should be held in an environment that is relaxed and informal at a time that is reasonable for the invited respondents. Group discussions are usually led by the researcher who is going to interpret the information and write the report. Reports on qualitative research have to be largely impressionistic, since they are based on small samples and unstructured data. The group leader, however, does not need any advanced skills. Leading group discussions are easily learned with the chief aim to keep the discussion on track and to air different topics that arise within the overall discussion.

The focus group is impressionistic and flexible in order to explore fully and diagnose the participants' views and feelings. The aim of interviewing in qualitative work is to ensure that respondents feel able to talk freely and at length about themselves and their lives with enough personal intensity or intimacy. For this reason, hypotheses can only be tentative. The depth in coverage of individual views provides a useful complement to the quantitative polls.

Focus groups are not just for industrialized countries. Sensitive subjects on political transition in Mozambique were addressed during the second half of June 1993. Louis Harris and Associates conducted 12 focus groups totaling 173 people in 11 different locations in 4 provinces in the northern, central, and southern Mozambique among 10 language groups. The results were made available to both the leadership and the general public. Such grassroots in-depth analysis of opinion is a new form of public participation in Africa.¹²

The focus group requires more interpretive skill at the source, where the opinion poll produces statistical data, which can then be interpreted within a larger context. In both cases, measurements are made of people's opinions with the focus group representing a narrow segment and the opinion poll representing a broader population.

Charrette

The first step in a charrette is to identify the need for a new direction. Any person or group, whether government or concerned citizens, can identify a need. They must, however, accept the responsibility for coming forward to work toward that new direction. These initiators who identify a direction evolve into the steering committee, after raising all the necessary funds for the charrette. This committee should have representatives of all areas involved in implementing the new direction as well as those affected by it, yet stay small enough to be a working group (about eight to twelve, not including group facilitator who will join later in the pre-charrette planning). If additional leaders are needed but are not likely to work on the steering committee, then a special advisory committee can be formed.

Barry Schuttler has been involved in 50 Charrettes and lists the following critical factors of success:¹³

1. Include all decisionmakers relevant to the planning effort;
2. Select an area for planning that has a constituency, a political base of residents;
3. Include the community residents in the decisionmaking;
4. Conduct the charrette planning within the community and be aware of the political realities when you begin; and
5. Use an experienced charrette manager who has directed the process in other communities.

Pre-charrette planning can vary from one month to a year depending on how many days the charrette will last, how complex the issue is, and how many participants are expected. A three-day charrette of 300 would take approximately three months of pre-planning; five-day charrette of 1,000 would take approximately six to eight months of pre-planning.

During the pre-charrette planning, the steering committee should meet weekly to: (1) identify the four to ten sub-elements of the issue that become the four to ten discussion groups during the charrette; (2) list the key questions for each group; (3) agree on what is a proper range of views on these questions; (4) find people to participate in the charrette who will represent this range; (5) gather all available and relevant information to answer these questions; (6) select a group facilitator, outside futurists, consultants, and other necessary resource people (such as for financial management, public relations, media coverage, publicity, music, etc.); and (7) create an initial design of the process, a budget, and hire a charrette director and administrative staff.

The charrette director is responsible for the final design and management of the process and the administrative staff. The integrity and reputation of the director is critical to the success of the process. S/he must have sufficient knowledge of group dynamics to maintain that integrity throughout the charrette. Additional characteristics for a director include ability to work in a nonauthoritarian manner, deal with ambiguity, quickly analyze and intervene in the process when necessary, and be flexible.

Committee facilitators should have the same characteristics as the director and be familiar with the sub-issues of their committees. Once selected, they should become members of the steering committee. Each facilitator should have one to three consultants who are leading experts in the sub-issue and can answer any questions or find pertinent information for the committee during the charrette.

The rest of the participants in the charrette either focus on one committee throughout the process or rotate among committees. The focus participants are a core of people in each committee who stay with that committee throughout the charrette. They can take on specific duties to support the committee. Some could be original initiators of the process or members of the steering committee. Approximately one-third of each committee should be focus participants. The other two-thirds are general participants who have no formal role in the charrette. A schedule is recommended for participants to rotate from committee to committee throughout the process. It

is also to be expected that the rotation schedule will breakdown as these participants find their interest areas. Nevertheless, the schedule provides a process and a structure by which participants become involved in the charrette and can help distribute participation more evenly.

Participants should not break for lunch but eat in working groups. Breaks should be according to need, not schedule, so that loss of momentum can be kept to a minimum.

Jury Day is the climax of the charrette, when the final presentations by all committees are given. Media coverage of this is highly recommended. News coverage should also be encouraged during the charrette but should be concentrated, like a press conference, on Jury Day. The charrette director should allow no ambiguity in the final presentation and no overlap of committee reports. The final presentation should be a holistic, integrated, and internally consistent normative vision with strategy and general implementations schedule.

The trick of a charrette is to eliminate the distinction between "them" and "us." No restrictions on participation exists, only a strict deadline. If people argue too long without reaching a consensus, then no report is made. But when the decisionmakers, private individuals, and "experts" are able to reach consensus, it comes as no surprise that the recommendations are received favorably.

SYNCON

Similar to pre-charrette planning, pre-Syncon planning begins with a steering committee that is a microcosm of the participation desired for the Syncon. This committee conducts a similar set of tasks as outlined in the section on Charrettes. Syncon has some major additions of responsibility, such as producing internal and external interactive television, constructing a specially built environment, and creating art exhibits, evening music, and theater productions, in the Syncon environment.¹⁴

A Syncon is only as good as its participants. The steering committee should create a list of the knowledge, institution, and views that each section of the Syncon wheel needs to address the area properly and nominate people who can fulfill those needs. A steering committee member is assigned to recruit participation based on this profile for each section of the Syncon, recommend section coordinators, and help write a discussion guide for the group. Discussion guides for each section should be one page, giving an overview of the future and the general situation of that section as well as specific tasks and procedures for the section to follow.

The steering committee has to select a location with enough space for the Syncon wheel and television lighting and with doors wide enough for moving equipment. Adjacent rooms will be used for a studio and anchor desk and another for the video sphere. Access to cable or broadcast connections are also needed. Internal or closed-television requirements for a full Syncon are quite substantial: closed circuit cameras to connect wheel sections visually; color monitors; microphones; speakers; a Synconsole that integrates these elements for the Syncon coordinator and staff to watch, hear, and speak with each group; and sufficient lighting equipment. External television requires a camera production unit, anchor position, video recorders, shotgun microphones, video library of futuristic images and concepts, and an experienced television crew.



Figure 6. Synconsole being used by Alvin Toffler, author of the *Future Shock* and *Third Wave*, and more recently *Creating a New Civilization*.

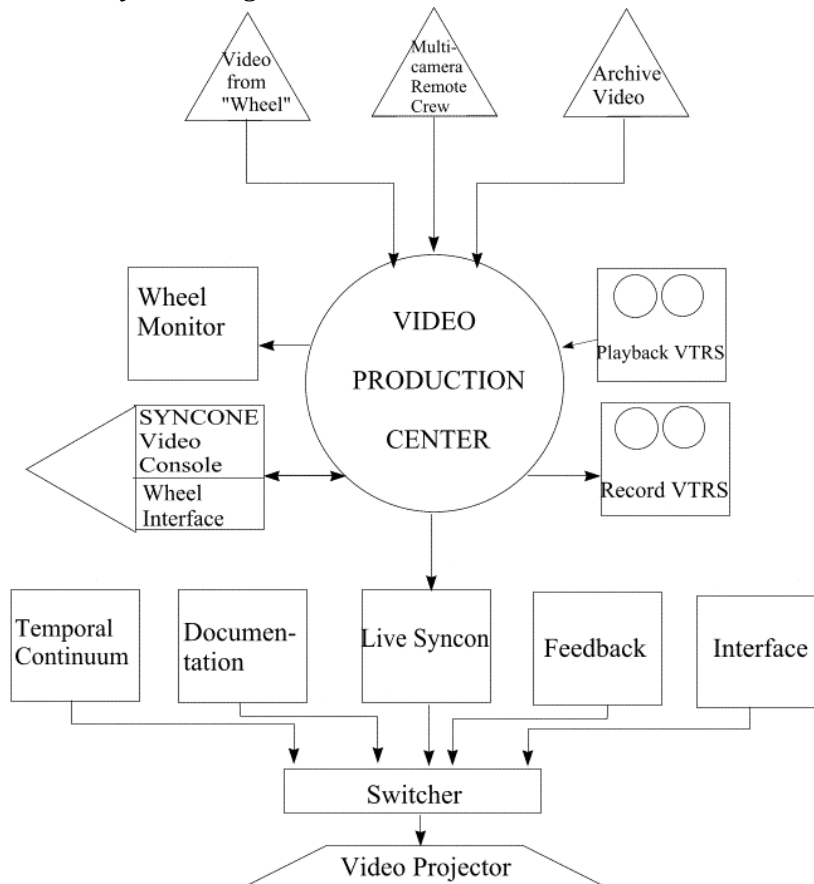


Figure 7. Flow Diagram of author of *Future Shock* and *Third Wave* Television system of

SYNCON

Just prior to the beginning of the Syncon, while the wheel is being built and the television system is being installed, a meeting of the section coordinators is held to set the proper tone for the process.¹⁵ They are to think of themselves as orchestra conductors bringing forth the very best from the participants in a constructive direction and toward an initial report within one-and-a-half days. At that point, half the walls are taken down and groups merge: technology with environment; production with government; etc., to form joint committees. These coordinators become joint coordinators and have one day to deliver joint reports. These joint reports are given just before all the walls are taken down in the middle of the fourth day. The last activity is an open discussion of the total group on the impacts of the joint reports on each other and of the group's general vision of the future.

The Syncon coordinator keeps track of the whole process from the Synconsole as well as walking around the wheel, constant communication with the television producer and director, and holding daily meetings with the coordinators. Critical needs often create painful and prolonged confrontations. Should this occur, the participants involved will be invited to develop special presentations to the "whole" when all the walls come down on the last day. Alternatively, deadlocks are handled by ad hoc panels created by the Syncon coordinator. Two sections can see and hear each other via the Synconsole if mutual issues need discussion or opportunities confirmed. Coordinators are encouraged to use any group facilitation techniques they wish and to move their authority and leadership into the group. For example, if someone in a section is concerned about how they will merge with the neighbor section after the first walls come down, the coordinator could ask that person to act as liaison with that committee prior to merger. Syncon can be a very flexible process and coordinators can divide their committee (or joint committees) into temporary subgroups as necessary, then gather the groups back together to check progress.

Throughout the process, short (15 minute) presentations are given within specific committees to share significant ideas from leaders in their fields as factors to consider. By telephone, TV viewers can direct a question or comment to a discussion they are watching in a certain section of the wheel. Or they can ask questions of experts at Syncon, which may be answered immediately, live, on the air. To balance the intense intellectual work during the day, evening events provide entertainment, reflection, and relaxation.

Public Delphi

A detailed description of how to do a Delphi is the subject of another paper by that name in this series on futures methodology. Hence, a detailed description will not be repeated here. The essential difference between a regular Delphi and a public Delphi is that participants select themselves by responding to the public Delphi, and the general public can know what ideas and judgments are being considered WHILE the Delphi is occurring. Anonymity can still be guaranteed in the public Delphi by not requiring respondents to identify themselves.

To begin through an e-Government Internet website, the leader of the country might hold a press conference in person, which could be simultaneously broadcasted in streaming video from the e-Government website, and would give a welcoming message and define the challenge to the public. Non-governmental initiatives on Internet would have to be announced through some publically acknowledged institution or combination of institutions to get serious attention. To begin through the newspaper, then a leading columnist or journalist known for being even handed and interested in the public welfare publishes might initiate the activity through a general invitation in a special column in the newspaper. This initial invitation to the public identifies the general topic, how long and in what form the newspaper would like to receive responses, how these responses will be fed back into a second round and subsequent rounds to be published in the newspaper column, when the deadlines are for each round, how often the results of each round will be published, and how the conclusions will be part of other public policy processes.

A public Delphi through radio would be introduced by a talk show host with a similar reputation of integrity as counterpart. This introduction could be a regular announcement at the beginning of each talk show, including all items mentioned above for the newspaper introduction but relevant to the radio format. The talk show host would follow this standard announcement by giving a summary of the previous shows and then invite listeners to call in their comments. Unlike the newspaper version, the talk show host can discuss the ideas expressed and receive immediate feedback from other callers.

Future Search Conferences

Once an institution, nation, or corporation identifies its need for future direction, a future search conference can decide the details of the new direction and strategy to make the necessary changes.¹⁶ As with other participatory processes, the participants in a future search conference should represent a cross-section of those most critical to the implementation and impact of the new direction. These conferences tend to have 30 to 65 participants. The conference is usually two or three days and managed by two facilitators. The two facilitators should be experienced in group process techniques and sensitive to both the intellectual content of the conference and the emotional status of the participants. The first responsibility of the participants is to define the problem to be addressed or the purpose of the search.

The conference process has five phases: 1) trend identification; 2) impact of trends on the conference task; 3) evolution of the task; 4) future designs; and 5) strategies. Each phase takes about three hours. Hence, the whole process is approximately 15 hours over two or three days.

Phase 1: Trend identification. The conference as-a-whole identifies the major global trends through a brainstorming exercise on population, urbanization, miniaturization, internationalization, etc. These trends are written on flip charts and hung on the wall. Participants divide into four or so groups of about eight people to analyze the trends in terms of desirability and plausibility. They then create both normative and most likely scenarios. The groups reconvene and share their scenarios. With the help of the facilitators, common themes are used to build the total group's normative and most probable scenarios.

Phase 2: Impact of trends on the conference task. The conference as-a-whole identifies just those trends that are most relevant to the conference task. The same brainstorming exercise is used and the trends are written on flip charts and hung on the wall, as before. Participants divide again into groups to analyze these more specific trends in terms of desirability and plausibility and create both normative and most likely scenarios. The groups reconvene to identify the common themes and build the total group's normative and most probable scenarios of the conference task.

Phase 3: Evolution of the task. The participants engage in open discussion of the task. How did it begin, what are its elements and their internal relations, what are the strengths and weaknesses involved, how have the constraints changed over time. The product of this phase is a time line showing the evolution of the task, complete with the events that shaped the current situation.

Phase 4: Future Designs. Participants divide into small groups and identify the most desirable elements of the task. New systems, policies, characteristics, or whatever participants think is desirable. As new ideas are developed in each group, they are passed on to the other groups for selection. The groups that create the ideas do not decide on their acceptability. In this way, ideas selected are more likely to be implemented. All participants reconvene and put the selected ideas into an overall scenario and future design.

Phase 5: Strategies. Participants divide into small groups. Each group is given the same overall scenario and future design document generated by the previous phase. The groups generate a list of strategies to achieve the new desirable design. These lists are circulated among the other groups who make the selections, similar to the previous phase. During this selection process, the small groups can further refine their strategies. Next, the groups are reformed around the strategies. The strategies are grouped, and people join these groups to give further detail to the strategies. In this self-selection process, what will receive support becomes clear, and unpopular strategies drop out. These new action groups prepare their report to the total group. The total group reassembles, receives the reports of each action group, then engages in a discussion of the whole to analysis the effectiveness of the strategies proposed. If necessary, remaining disagreement over strategies can be referred back to the original trend analysis groups for resolution. In either case, the total group concludes with each participate explaining what s/he will do the next day in the workplace to begin the implementation of the new strategies. This last task forms the basis for a strategic monitoring or auditing process.

Future search conferences, like any participatory process for strategic planning, should not allow participants to be interrupted by telephone calls, visitors, or other meetings. They should be required to participate in all sessions or to be an observer. The focus throughout the conference should be on common agreement and common vision, rather than on deciding who is right or wrong.

Groupware

The easiest way to begin using participatory processes via computer communication is through the use of e-mail, listserves, feedback discussions on web sites, and other systems connected by the Internet.¹⁷ In this way, many people can work together at very low cost, even though participants might be located around the world.

A simple variation of computer-mediated communication is the Consensor or PC Voter of The Futures Group.¹⁸ This method is used to collect group votes for immediate display to all. Simple terminals are given to all participants in a meeting. These terminals have two dials: one is graduated from 0 to 10; and the other is graduated in 25 percent increments from 0 through 100. Each participant can vote on an item from 0 to 10 and indicate how strongly s/he feels about his or her vote or how confident s/he is about the item in percentage votes by the second dial. The votes of the group are immediately displayed, leaving no doubt about the group's thinking on the issue. Previous group votes can be re-displayed. Up to 60 terminals can be supported. This system allows planners to discover easily how much they know and how strongly they feel about alternatives facing them. It offers a way to make meetings and public discussions shorter, more productive, and, at the same time, more democratic and representative of the participants' true beliefs.

One of the early experimental versions of combining software and environmental design for participatory planning was TeamFocus by IBM in collaboration with the University of Arizona (USA). It combines a unique physical environment of computer terminals built into semi-circular panels or tables allowing 20 to 30 participants to see each other while typing in their views and randomly and secretly getting others' views. It is a very fast form of computer conferencing without knowing with whom you are conferencing. In this way, ideas are more persuasive than personalities. The decision to use such a special room and software tends to focus the work team even before using this groupware. A more advanced variation is now being marketed with some further refinement under the name Group Systems V by Ventana Corporation in the United States.

Jerry Wagner, a pioneer with computer-supported systems in the 1970s, created VisionQuest in the 1980s, which does not require a special room. Instead, participants can access VisionQuest through a local area network at different times to shape the agenda, comment on topics, rate ideas, and communicate anonymously. VisionQuest is completing a multi-media version that will allow participants to communicate by voice, print, video, and graphics. It is marketed by Intellect Corporation in Dallas, Texas.

More specialized computer-mediated communications for decisionmaking or Group Decision Support Systems (GDSS) have their own "look and feel," but the tools they offer participants have three similar features:¹⁹

1. Brainstorming allows individuals to type comments about a particular issue simultaneously and have them merged into the same file by the computer. The benefits of electronic brainstorming are perhaps the greatest advantage to GDSS systems. While only one

person can speak at once in a standard meeting, everyone types simultaneously in an electronic brainstorming session. While most people cannot type as fast as they talk, the parallel inputs still generate an enormous amount of material. This method also has the advantage of getting the input accurately recorded without the addition of editing from the group facilitator. A second advantage is the anonymity that the system offers. Comments are entered without attribution, so people are more inclined to enter unpleasant or critical comments than they would in a face-to-face meeting. Thus, results are not only voluminous but more honest.

2. Organizing tools allow individuals to make sense of the many comments entered during brainstorming by placing them into larger categories. Unfortunately, the current software tools for this are not yet satisfactorily matching human requirements. Identifying appropriate categories is difficult and often inappropriate. This difficulty makes selecting which comment should go into which category nearly arbitrary by computer and very time-consuming by human judgment.

3. Decision software tools allow individuals to record their attitude or judgment about a number of items in some structured format. These tools include voting, ranking, and other structured methods of polling people's opinion. The tools do **NOT** make the decision for the group, but they do reflect the group's opinion about a set of issues in an anonymous fashion. The data collected by these tools are usually persuasive in communicating the *group mind* about a particular topic.

One such pioneering groupware was CM/1. This groupware allows a group to create a map or network of information through fundamental building blocks referred to as *issues, positions, and arguments*. An *issue* is put in the form of a question that the group is to answer: What should the international development community do to assist African economic integration by the year 2025? A *position* is a possible solution to the issue: Support the creation of national long-term prospective studies in African countries. An *argument* is a statement for or against a position: Connecting the goal of African integration by 2025 to short and mid-term planning cannot be done successfully without national long-term prospective studies. The building blocks of issues, positions, and arguments are connected by the computer software so each participant can see the big picture and the information elements that compose it.

Futures research and policy conversations tend to be much more complex than the simple issue network just illustrated. To support more real and hence complex conversations, issue-based information systems (IBIS) allow additional relationships to exist between the three basic elements (issues, positions, and arguments): issues can be created within positions and arguments that challenge or support, and an issues network can connect to another issues network. In addition, the software also allows for the use of additional elements: *notes, references, decisions, and views*.

- *Notes* allow you to attach commentary to any other elements in the basic issue net.
- *References* allow you to attach pertinent information from external documents.
- *Decisions* allow you to attach consensus statements on the issue.

- Views allow you to attach spatial organization and connect two issue nets.

These elements offer a concrete and straightforward communication structure within which to hold complex conversations among groups of people. These elements are represented by an object or icon with a label in a hypertext database that contains the information. When you "open" such an icon, the information it contains is displayed. In this way, you only get the complexity you need when you need it. CM/1 uses eight different icons. They are used in combination with one another to organize policy dialog.

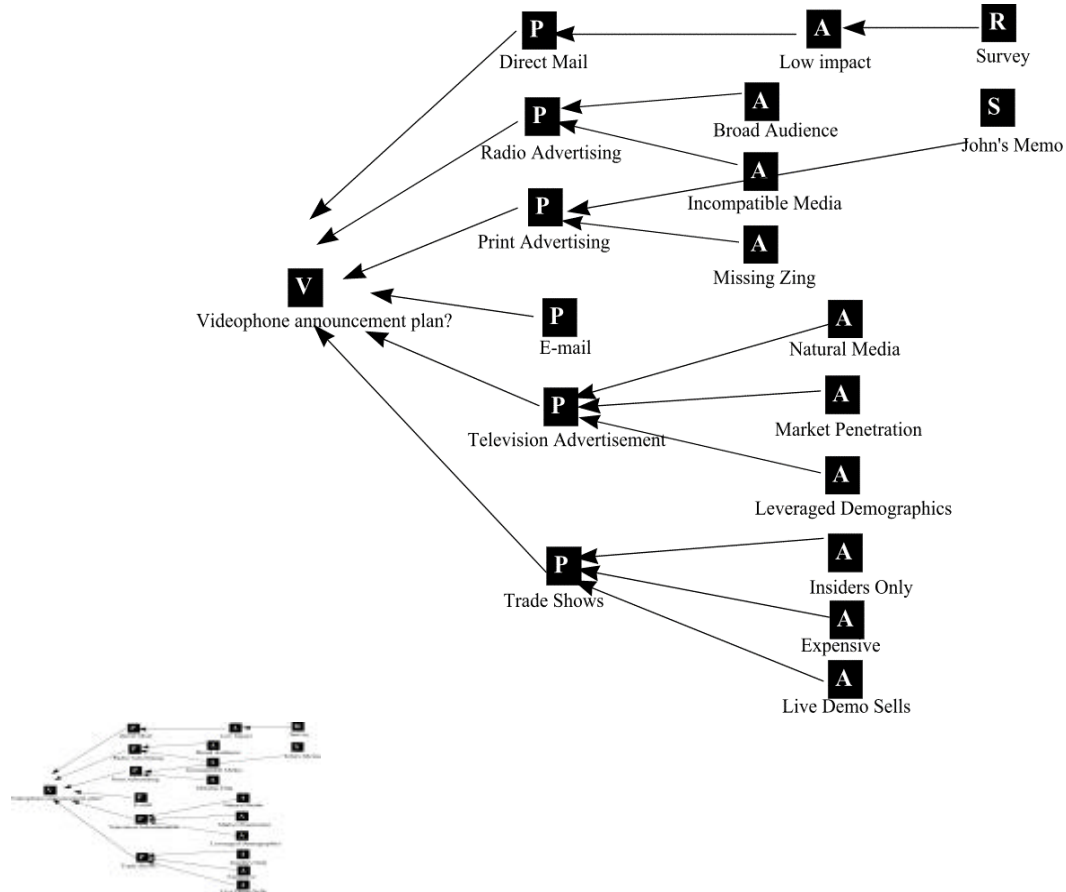


Figure 8. Example of a CM/1 flowchart graphic

Issues-based information systems, such as CM/1, begin with an issue. Throughout the conversation, other issues may be created as needed. Positions are taken that participants believe can answer the question at issue. Anyone can enter an argument in response to a position. Decisions are entered when agreement is reached, attaching the positions and arguments that lead to that decision. References, notes, and views can be attached that were part of a line of reasoning that lead to the decision. This information can be saved on a diskette, allowing others to review the policy dialog and understand how a decision was reached.

Although these techniques are still new to the majority of meeting planners today, some argue that groupware will be as common in the foreseeable future as word processing and spreadsheet software are today.²⁰ As the prices for computers and software continue to fall, schools, post

offices, and shops in the most remote areas in the world may soon allow any citizen to participate in local and national policy discussions mediated by state-of-the-art groupware. Just as telephones were often first available to the public in the general stores, so too advanced groupware could also be introduced in similar fashion to the general public.²¹

IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF PARTICIPATORY METHODS

The general strengths of any participatory process include: speed of implementation because a cross-section of decision makers and recipients of the decisions worked out the goals, strategies, objectives, and tactics together; reduced time to make a long-range plan by reducing the interval between feedback loops of those involved in the planning process; enhanced democratic processes that result in a more equitable product; and increased probability of success by sharing commitments and values of the participants and addressing potential conflicts during the process.

The general weaknesses of participatory processes include: superficial analysis; unfair influence by those more aware of how to manipulate the process; threatening to established power; and potential to create a new we/they polarity of those who participated and those who did not.

Good facilitation of a participatory process requires that the facilitator keeps a clear distinction between the issues of the process and the issues of the content. These issues must also be kept distinct in planning such a process. Confusing these makes the process less efficient, and the content less profound. And most important it can polarize the process making it a tool of one or more interests; and hence, lose the public's trust in the integrity of the process.

The strengths and weaknesses of participatory methods should be understood in context, including the purposes for which they would be used. Will it be a small group or a large gathering? Will they meet face-to-face in one location or can the general public share their views through other means?

Polling is relatively easy to do, people understand the output, and decisionmakers find polls immediately useful. The advantage of polling is being able to reach a large number of people quickly: one can manage ten supervisors of ten pollsters who can easily interview ten people giving feedback of 1,000 interviews in one day. The weakness is that wording of the questions can pre-determine the results and in-depth feeling and analysis is missing. However, cross-referencing polls can reduce these problems.

Focus groups have the advantage of getting in-depth views from a specific sample of people. This method is useful for finding out not only what people want but also how and why they want it. This is an excellent technique to explore what futures are more desirable and why, what are the key impediments to achieving that future and how. Focus groups do not build consensus. Their purpose is to collect understanding not generate action or commitment. They are time-consuming; facilitators are trained and highly skilled; hence, focus groups are expensive per person involved.

A charrette is a good process for hundreds of people to examine a broad range of issues with decisionmakers and recipients for an extended period of time. A charrette has the advantage of getting people of diverse interests together in one location. This crucible effect has been successful in generating consensus that is likely to be accepted by the general public and able to be implemented. After ten years of evaluating rural, suburban, and urban charrettes in the United States, Barry Schuttler identified the benefits that can be expected from a well-managed charrette. It should:²²

1. generate five dollars of contributed professional services for every dollar spent on planning;
2. make recommendations such that 90 percent or more are approved and funded by authorities;
3. reduce the time for completing a project (time saved should range from two years for individual projects, such as the building of a school, to ten years for large projects, such as the redevelopment of a central business district);
4. terminate construction moratoriums and obtain public approval for previously defeated bond issues;
5. develop new programs and services that result in funded proposals for new institutions and that encourage private investment and make tax savings possible; and
6. organize previously apathetic neighborhoods, equipping them with leaders, plans, and a working agreement, with government officials approving and funding every recommendation.

Unfortunately, large-scale processes like charrettes can have problems of translation in a multi-cultural and/or multi-lingual community. People also might not be able to travel to one location or stay for three days to a week or two. Charrettes, indeed any large group process, can take precise and advanced proposals and make them less precise and less advanced so as to be acceptable to all.

The primary strengths of a Syncon is its ability to help a large number of people share advanced thinking, rapidly educate them about the general possibilities of the future, create a shared vision of a desirable future, and come to general agreements about how that future could be created. Syncons also generate emotional commitments to work toward that future. Syncons give participants the feeling that the process is "more real," because it is on television. It integrates intellectual conversation, the arts, and telecommunications into a holistic process. Its telecommunications allows farther outreach and interaction than just for those inside the Syncon wheel. Hence, the number of participants is limited only by budget and imagination. Its primary weakness is that it requires more money and skill than other process and, hence, is more difficult to accomplish and replicate. The use of communications technology can intimidate some

participants, especially if those running the equipment are insensitive to this concern.

The primary strength of groupware is its ability to systematically organize and feed back the group's thinking in useful ways. Groupware currently requires typing, which slows down the brainstorming process. Some might argue that writing ideas may be more cogent, more articulate, and more focused on solving the problem under discussion. Yet, if new thinking is the objective, the quick brainstorming made possible by computers could be enhanced by the use of voice recognition software, which puts oral conversation into word processing software. As with any brainstorming session, a process is needed to clarify the intelligence within the flood of thought.

Peter Bishop of the Program for the Study of the Future at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, Texas (USA), has developed a one-workstation version of GDSS, simulating many of the advantages of the multi-workstation systems. Brainstorming is done verbally for nonsensitive topics and written comments for sensitive topics. Giving anonymity to participants for sensitive comments helps get the truth faster; the disadvantage is that ownership and responsibility is stripped from the thought. Since comments are entered into a portable computer connected to a printer and a projector, participants receive printed-paper and visual feedback on their comments. The facilitator helps the group organize their comments through on-line editing and display with periodic printouts. Finally, decisions are aided by voting, ranking, and rating through verbal report or paper questionnaires, which are then analyzed with spreadsheets and displayed with graphic packages. This process does take longer, however, since participants are not entering their comments themselves. Dr. Bishop notes that this can be overcome with a judicious selection of extended breaks to allow time for the data input.

Globally dispersed collaboratory systems via the Internet allow flexibility and lower cost per user than fixed groupware systems, like TeamFocus that force everyone to be in one location and carry a high cost. Yet, if the requirement is for quick decision with all participants in one location for face-to-face agreement, then groupware is valuable.

V. ALTERNATIVE USES, COMBINATIONS, AND FRONTIERS OF PARTICIPATORY METHODS

As mobile telephones merge with the Internet, countless self-organizing participatory processes could well become a vehicle for shaping and expressing public opinion and influence decisionmaking. Swarms of people using this technology could become a factor in both short-term policy decisionmaking in legislatures, as well as changing national leadership.

Meanwhile, Public Delphis, which elicit general aspirations of the public through newspapers and on the radio, could be supplemented by polling more specific public opinion. The output from these combined methods could be feed to focus groups for more in-depth analysis. Public aspirations and specific issues could also be identified through focus groups, which in turn could be augmented by using groupware and other computer-mediated communications. The results of combined participatory methods - public Delphis, polling, and focus groups - can form the initial set of long-range policy issues that a steering committee of a Charrette or Syncon could use to

prepare a larger participatory process. The steering committee's work could be made more efficient through computer-mediated communications, because groupware allows meetings when members are not available at the same time and place, keep records on the development of the planning process, and identifies when agreements are reached and what issues are still pending and why. Results of the Charrettes or other larger-scale face-to-face public participatory systems could be fed back to policy planners for more detailed analysis linked by computer-mediated communication.

Groupware like CM/1 could be used to track responses from a public Delphi. As people call in responses to a radio or television station or mail them to a newspaper, the ideas could be entered with appropriate software and made publically available on websites. All the positions could be listed relevant to an issue, and pro and con arguments for each position could be entered. Comments could be sent via e-mail or chat rooms per issue. In this way, public comment could be graphically shown on the Internet and used by television, described on radio, or printed in the newspaper.

A number of national long-range planning efforts have taken place, but few of these have been processed through the essential decision making system of the country. UNDP's African Futures program did foster national long-range planning activities for many African countries that were connected to nations' Ministries of Planning. However, Canada was perhaps the first country to examine this possibility of creating its own on-going system during Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's administration in 1975-76. The Future Options Room, a U.S. futurist consulting firm, under contract to the Canadian Ministry of State for Urban Affairs, designed one such approach. It called for a combination of government analysis and a national public Delphi conducted by the news media on citizens' attitudes about present problems and future possibilities and priorities.

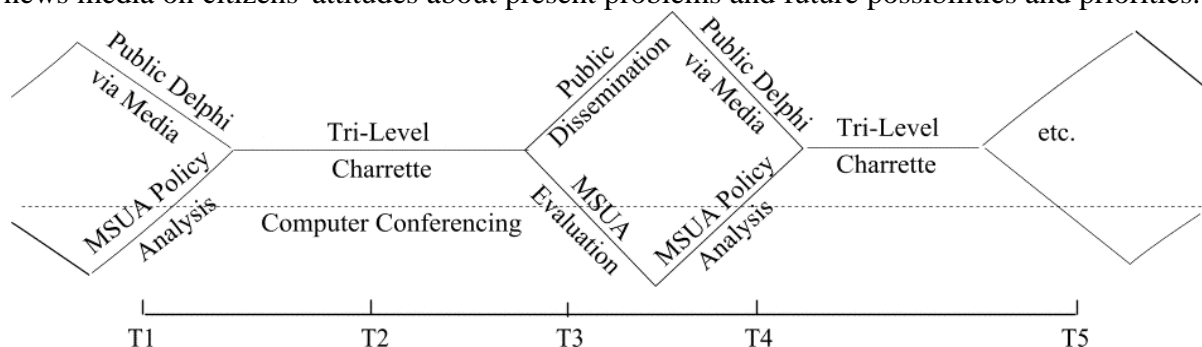


Figure 9. Example of a national process that includes state policy analysis and public participation.

- T1 During the first phase, the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs (MSUA) prepares policy briefing and option sheets for a tri-level charrette (TLC) involving metropolitan, provincial, and federal participants, while newspapers, radio, and television conduct a public Delphi to generate community feeling for the TLC.
- T2 In the second phase, a three-to-six-day TLC evaluates and synthesizes policy options and public Delphi conclusions for policy recommendations.

- T3 During the third phase, newspapers, radio, and television disseminate and evaluate the results of the TLC, while the MSUA does its own evaluation.
- T4 Next, the media prepare and conduct another series of public Delphis in response to public reaction to T3. Likewise, MSUA prepares its issues, briefing, and options sheets from its evaluation of T3 in preparation for the next TLC charrette.
- T5 Next TLC charrette.

This explanation is rather simplistic for a complex process. Such a process is intended to be part of MSUA's normal routine rather than a one-shot effort. Internet websites and chat room should run throughout the process to gather input from individuals whose advice is highly valued but who are unable or unwilling to participate in any other fashion, e.g., scientists or busy executives. Collaborate software on the Internet allows the MSUA or the media access to printouts of sections or entire texts and adds expert opinion that otherwise might not be incorporated into the process. According the Future Options Room plan, when recommendations received a predetermined minimum acceptance, they would automatically become policy. The administration in Canada changed before this could be implemented, but the process serves as a model for other national long-range planning efforts to create their own.

A new process called the "Citizens Jury" is a unique synthesis of focus groups, hearings, and trial by jury. Created by the Jefferson Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, (USA), citizens jury is still in the development stage. Its first use was in the United States during October 1993 to evaluate President Clinton's health care proposal. Ordinary citizens (24) were randomly-selected to become the citizens jury. The jury was chosen from "a random pool of 2,000 American adults to be a microcosm of the nation in age, gender, race, education (as an income indicator), geographic locale, 1992 presidential preference, and source of health care financing. Jurors were paid their expenses and a stipend for a week of meetings in Washington, D.C."²³

The jury held five days of hearings. They asked over 500 questions to 24 expert witnesses and three U.S. Senators. Instead of hearings conducted by government officials, these are conducted by a random sample of citizens. Like a focus group, the citizens could explore their feelings in great detail, producing a range of reactions -- in this case, as expert testimony on a matter of public policy. Like a trial by jury, each side of the debate had an advocate. Moderators and resource persons helped the jury function more smoothly.

The citizen jury, like the other participatory methods profiled in this paper, offer great promise in their potential to connect people. In addition, new support for finishing the international electronic highway, the advent of interactive multi-media systems, and super portable computers will allow increasingly more individuals and groups to communicate over great distances. Participating in such processes, people will have data immediately available in print, sound, graphics, and visual formats. Who was it that said, "information is the currency of democracy."

In the future participatory systems could include global cyber games with millions of participants to create policy.

ENDNOTES

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- ⁸ . Joseph F. Coates et al. Discuss a variety of small group approaches to exploring the future in *Issues Management: How You Can Plan, Organize, and Manage For the Future*, Lomond, 1986. See especially small group approaches discussed on pages 85-86.
- ⁹ . Baburoglu, Oguz N. and Garr, Andy M., III. *Chapter 6: Search Conference Methodology for Practitioners, Discovering Common Ground*, Berrett-Keohler Publishers, San Francisco, 1993.
- ¹⁰ . From conversations of Warren Avis (the noted Rent-a-Car entrepreneur) with the author.
- ¹¹ . Harris, Louis and Taylor, Humphrey. *Our Planet - Our Health: Attitudes to Environment*, World Health Forum, Vol. 11, 1990, pp. 32-37. This article details how the poll was done and gives an analysis of the results.
- ¹² . Louis Harris & Associates. *Imaging Democracy: A Report on a Series of Focus Groups in Mozambique on Democracy and Voter Education*. National Democratic Institute, Washington, D.C., 1993.
- ¹³ . Schuttler, Barry. Citizen Participation Ratification for Community Development, National

Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (1977).

¹⁴ Local Coordinator's Guide for SYNCON, The Committee for the Future, Washington, D.C., 1975.

¹⁵ "Pre-SYNCON Information to Section Coordinators," SYNCON: Washington, DC., The Committee for the Future, Washington, D.C., 1973 (page 6).

¹⁶ Most of the following description of the Future Search Conference has been drawn from Oguz N. Gaburoglu and M. Andy Garr, III, Chapter 6: Search Conference Methodology for Practitioners: An Introduction in Discovering Common Ground, Marvin R. Weisbord (ed), Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, 1993.

¹⁷ Krol, Ed. The Whole Internet: User's Guide & Catalog, O'Reilly & Associates, Inc., Sebastopol, California, USA, 1992. This excellent overview of how the world is being connected for computer- mediated communication.

¹⁸ The Consensor or PC Voter is available through The Futures Group, Glastonbery, CT, USA.

¹⁹ The following list was prepared by Peter Bishop, Chairman of the Program for the Study of the Future at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, Texas, as a contribution to this booklet.

²⁰ Bishop, Peter. *An Introduction to Group Decision Support Systems*, The Environmental Professional Vol. 15, pp 156-158, 1993.

²¹ Additional sources on Groupware:

Johansen, R.F. *Groupware: Computer Support for Business Teams*. The Free Press. New York, 1988.

For a example of a simulated groupware session, see "The Future of Meeting Support Environments," by Peter Bishop in The Environmental Professional, Vol. 15, pp 219-230, 1993.

University of Minnesota's Unix-based conferencing system SAMM (Software-Aided Meeting Management).

²² Schuttler, Barry.

²³ American's Tough Choices: Citizen's Jury on Health Care Reform, October 10-14, 1993 Final Report, Jefferson Center, Minneapolis, MN USA, December 1993.