Teleparticipation

Engaging Millions

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Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to lay the foundations for building a high quality mass citizen participation process.

We know that we can engage thousands of people in meaningful processes on live policy issues. We also know how to engage millions of people through non deliberative asynchronous mechanisms such as e-petitions and mobile or online voting.

The Teleparticipation project explores how best to combine the reach of mass media and voting techniques with the deeper engagement experience of the deliberative event.

This Document

This document consists of two standalone but complementary elements. The first section, **The Proposals**, contains recommendations and comparative models showing how Teleparticipation might be taken forward in practice. The second section, **The Research**, outlines the desk research, case studies and mass engagement components that led to our development of **The Proposals** and discusses the benefits of and barriers to successful mass engagement.

This project, in light of the Innovation Fund focus on practice, has been conceived as a pragmatic response to the need to develop truly national deliberative fora. This project therefore does not seek to provide a definitive answer to the problems and questions surrounding this issue, but it does seek to provide a solid foundation on which further exploration and piloting can be built.

Throughout the research process we particularly sought to learn from the experience of online and media-driven mass engagement from outside the UK and have benefited greatly from the support of deliberative democracy pioneers America*Speaks* in producing this document.

Throughout the research process Involve researched and produced a number of case studies on different process approaches, undertook desk research and interviewed a number of key figures working on relevant areas as well as visiting America*Speaks* during the CaliforniaSpeaks health engagement process in 2007.

Acknowledgements

Contents

A. The Proposals

This report and the proposals in this section have been based upon four working assumptions as to the objectives of any mass engagement process. These assumptions are that we are trying to create a mass engagement process which supports:

- Millions of people to engage deeply with an issue. In practice this means reflect on the issue and be exposed to views very different from their own;
- The creation of solutions to specific policy challenges;
- Reach out to all social groups, with emphasis on those not engaged by traditional politics or consultation methods;
- Deliberation in preference to oppositional models of mobilisation.

A1 Recommendations

The following recommendations follow directly from the working assumptions above. We have broken the recommendations section below into mission critical recommendations (A1.1) and additional process recommendations (A1.2). We believe that if the mission critical recommendations are not followed as an absolute minimum standard then any deliberative process will be likely to fail.

A1.1 Mission Critical Recommendations

1. Multimedia & Many Opportunities

Provide multiple opportunities for engagement both in terms of the type of medium through which people are asked to engage and in terms of the depth and commitment required to participate.

Why critical? People want to participate on their own terms in a way that suits them, and are willing to give differing amounts of time to engage at differing levels. Providing a variety of formats and opportunities to participate in the process is therefore essential both in terms of reaching diverse audiences and in generating a useful range in terms of depth of information.

2. Irresistible Engagement

It is absolutely essential that the process is entirely designed to maximise audience participation - branding, publicity and all participative elements must be incredibly engaging.

Why critical? If the goal is to engage large numbers of people, the process used must extremely interesting or engaging if a critical mass of participants is to be achieved. Some large engagement processes to date have struggled to fill the seats available. Participant feedback showed that processes can feel too worthy or bureaucratic and therefore not necessarily an enjoyable way of spending their ever more limited free time. Those processes to date which have engaged millions have either been extremely easy or extremely appealing, but have tended to be oppositional and failed to support solutions. If we are to develop processes which are solution focussed they will be very hard to make as quick as an e-petition, for example. They must therefore be extremely engaging. If there are any barriers to entry the incentives to overcome these must be significant.

3.   Individual opinion expression

Every person who participates in the process should be given an opportunity to express their opinion on the final options as part of a mass action. For example, if we use deliberation kits or have online games as part of the process those who go through must, by right, be able to express a final opinion as part of the wider process. Voting, polling and petitioning must not be disconnected, isolated processes.

Why critical? We know from the soon to be published government ScienceWise and citizen summit evaluations that the opportunity for each individual to express an opinion through a vote or some other means is incredibly important for the following reasons:

- Active participation: it forces each person to become an active participant and think through how they wish to express their opinions;
- Data creation: it also ensures that we know what each person thinks and what the level of consensus or disagreement actually is;
- Participant satisfaction/ownership: participants also enjoy the process of voting and feel a subsequent sense of ownership and interest in the final results;
- Connection to wider process: we know that when this doesn't exist the programme elements without this level of connectivity are exactly as you would expect, are disconnected and have less appeal to participants and create less value for the overall process.

4.   Go with the Grain of Civic Energy

When attempting to engage large numbers of people it is necessary to look both at how and where they are spending their time interacting, and to find out what issues people are motivated to participate in. There is little point spending valuable time and resources fighting powerful social trends, but rather harness what is working already.

Why Critical? If we look at where millions of people are already engaging it is in activities which plug directly into people's key concerns or interests. Successful initiatives such as the 2007 e-petition on road pricing, Pop Idol or online communities like Netmums, independent consumer guides such as Which (or, indeed, eBay) and conventional broadcasting.

Such approaches are tuned into existing value systems and lifestyle requirements; they are usable and easy to engage with. Such participatory models are also successful because the participants trust and believe in the offer being made and the independence of that process from ulterior motives.

A1.2 Secondary Recommendations

5.   Transparency and integrity

Ensure transparency of the process from the very outset of the project in order to build trust. This could be achieved through involving a broad base of independent commentators or stakeholders in the process from the outset and who can document the process freely online and off. The process should be open to criticism, using it as an opportunity to learn and respond. Having the right kind of process leadership also helps. (See point 9 below.)

6.   Create an event

The overall process should feel like a specific event designed around a particular cause or impact. Ongoing processes tend not to create the necessary sense of urgency required when seeking to engage a critical mass of participants. Time limitation goes hand in hand with event-style processes and should help define the process and create an atmosphere of urgency around the need to participate. Also, if aiming to influence policy a timeframe which allows this must be established from the outset.

7.   Establish absolute clarity of purpose and boundaries

Ensuring that all involved in the process – those running and those participating- understand and are able to communicate the purpose of the process, what it can and can not achieve. This clarity will help focus on achievable results, galvanise participation and manage expectations of the process.

8.   Prioritise participant viewpoint

To engage millions the entire process must be designed to be something that there is a real demand and general public desire to be part of, such as the mass popularity of the Live8 campaign. The process must therefore be developed with users to ensure the process elements fit with the participants' lifestyles and that the subject appeals to their values. A steering group of representative participants should therefore be an integral part of the way the process is run.

9.   Follow up visibly

A successful engagement process will leave a legacy of civic energy. There should be some support for citizens to continue engaging with policy decision making after the initial time-limited process has taken place. This means not only following up with information as to the outcomes and changes that have taken place after the process ends, but also some form of resource or network which can take that energy forward. Planning and providing for this follow up should be considered with input from the participants themselves.

10.   Government give clear steer to Broadcasters on their 'Citizenship' role

It is essential that the government make it clear to broadcasters that they wish to see them supporting the types of national public participation outlined in this report. Through our research it has become clear that due to the sensitive nature of the relationship between the government and our broadcasters, many broadcasters are concerned about going beyond a traditional information giving or opinion reflecting role. For the models outlined in this report to achieve their potential, broadcasters need to feel the explicit support of government.

11.   Open leadership approach

It is important that any process benefits from a leadership approach which opens up debate and welcomes criticism. This approach can be at odds with classical political leadership which tends to based on advocating a specific position and being defensive in the face of criticism.

12.   Incentivise participation

Designed to ensure you involve a more diverse representation of people in the process beyond altruistic self-selectors. Different types of incentives can be used, such as competitions, benefits offered, prestige, influence or peer approval.

13.   Further action research

To date, limited research on the effectiveness of various participative technologies to engage different sections of society has been undertaken in order to uncover how people engage with new technologies. Further, more detailed work could be commissioned around motivation and potential to instigate opinion shift.

14.   Establish satellite deliberation approach

Further exploration required around the logistical possibilities of linking community deliberation using self-facilitated kits and games with national events or processes through the internet and TV.

15.   Harness social networks both online and off

Informal social networks are a very valuable way of accessing particular groups of people who do not usually engage with formalised politics or governance. The process can be grown by tapping into and harnessing existing initiatives in these areas. It should not be assumed that people are waiting for the opportunity to come and engage with a central process; it is important to reach out into existing networks and invite participation.

A2 Policy context & motivations for mass engagement

21st Century Issues

We as a society face challenges the like of which we have never seen before. Complex societal issues such as public health provision, immigration, the aging society and climate change are currently challenging those formulating public policy to make tough decisions.

In the 20th century we built institutions to tackle the challenges we then faced; the NHS to raise life expectancy, the Highways Agency to move us around and the BBC to keep us well informed. Today's challenges are similar but increasingly complex. Yesterday's institution-focused policy solutions are no longer able to answer today's policy problems – our challenges are complex, interdependent and often require large groups of individuals to change their beliefs or actions. It is becoming clear that 20th century institutions alone cannot solve the problems of the modern era. We look to the government to act on our behalf, but which politician would dare suggest that we are living too long, should move around less or are too busy to be well informed, for fear of losing the dwindling number of votes available[1]?

Beyond Large Events

It is no coincidence that in the last two years the Government has commissioned four large Citizens' Jury[2] style events on Healthcare, Pensions Reform, Climate Change and Nuclear power. Four 'wicked issues'[3] if there ever were any. In some cases, policy was influenced by these events; the then Prime Minister committed to integrate public priorities from Your Health, Your Care, Your Say (2005) into the National Health Service. While the majority of these Citizens' Juries have benefited those who have participated, there have simply been too few people involved either to make an impact on society as a whole, or to constitute a critical mass which could provide the momentum for change[4].

Transformative Change

Mass deliberative style events can deliver positive outcomes, both for those who participate[5] and for the ability of government to tackle the wicked issues which mark out our era. This has been powerfully demonstrated through the public opposition to change[6] promoted in much of the press or gathered through traditional opinion polling, though is perhaps not an accurate reflection of considered public opinion[7]. It is considered public opinion not the uninformed public opinion gathered through polls that should drive policy. In the words of Professor James Fishkin "allowing traditional opinion polls to influence politics, is a bit like encouraging a man off the street to try his hand at brain surgery. It's a bad idea." In contrast Fishkin goes onto say that "deliberative polls ensures that opinion is well informed and grounded, sometimes even better informed than politicians are themselves. Now that is a good idea"[8].

1 Bartle, J; Atkinson, S and Mortimore, R (2001) 'Political Communications The General Election of 2001' Parliamentary Affairs, Volume 56, Number 2, 1 April 2003 , pp. 367-367(1)

2 Citizen Juries: The events that have become known as Brown's Citizens' Juries are officially referred to in the UK as Citizen Summits and based on the model of AmericaSpeaks' 21st Century Town Meetings®. They are not Citizens' Juries which are much smaller, similar to a judicial jury.

3 Wicked Issues are highly complex, circular, fluid and changeable social problems which society faces to which there is no simple solution. Rittell & Webber 1973

4 Participation Nation, Critical Mass, Involve, London (2007)

5 96% said they were satisfied with the process : Evaluation of Your Health Your Care Your Say, Shared Practice for DH (2006)

6 e.g. fuel taxation (climate change); stronger regulation of junk food advertising to children (obesity);

7 Imagine Jersey 2035, 19th January 2008

8 Discussion with James Fishkin Tampere, Finland, 27 September 2006

There is some evidence[9] that mass deliberation can support transformative change in those who participate, with people's opinions shifting radically and new and better relationships forged between institutions, experts and citizens.

Recent Experience

We have recently seen mass deliberation events run in the States of Jersey and Westminster. Each time they have given the government a powerful mandate for radical steps to address wicked issues the incumbent government faces. Only in Jersey however, have these events led to policy change. We believe one of the main reasons for this was that only in Jersey did they manage to involve a significant enough proportion of the population in the process to create the momentum for change.

In the UK we have involved too few people in a single process to make an impact on society as a whole and crucially, too few to constitute a critical mass which could provide the momentum for change[10].

Engaging Millions

To tackle the tough issues we face requires the genuine engagement of millions of people not thousands. That is what this project is about. This will only happen by going with grain of contemporary British Life - by going to where people are already participating. This project will explore how critical political issues can be made highly relevant to everyday life in order to reach out to a large and diverse demographic, many of whom do not participate in traditional or formal civic processes.

The most successful public participation projects in Britain today have created a phenomenon and touched everyone's life. Up to 10 million people give up several hours a week to be involved, many of whom do not participate in traditional politics and who often find it difficult to engage with or understand[11]. These 'projects' are, of course, the TV voting phenomena of Big Brother, X-Factor and Strictly Come Dancing. 200,000 people auditioned for X Factor in 2007[12]. Around nine million people tune into the X Factor each week[13].

This project will take initial steps to practically understand how we can harness established and new media to produce groundbreaking participative multimedia formats for political engagement based upon relevance to everyday life and contemporary entertainment culture.

Small can be beautiful

Currently "The public fail to associate the word 'politics' with issues that affect their everyday lives"[14]. Individuals are less engaged than ever in formal political activism such as voting and party membership[15], yet a quiet revolution is taking place on single issues. This can be seen in healthcare as Expert Patients take control of their own well being[16]; as community movements challenge the forces of globalisation with local

[9] Warburton, D. (2006) *1*, Department of Health: London
[10] Participation Nation, Critical Mass, Involve, London (2007)
11 89% of 'Political Junkies' find politics 'interesting', 'important' and 'relevant' compared to 51% of Big Brother viewers. But 25% of Big Brother viewers find politics 'hard to understand' compared to 4% of Political Junkies A Tale of Two Houses Prof. Stephen Coleman (2003)
12 http://www.xfactor.tv/news/article/?scid=24
13 BARB viewing figures http://www.barb.co.uk/viewingsummary/weekreports.cfm?Requesttimeout=500&report=weeklyterrestrial
14 Hansard Society, Electoral Commission Audit of Political Engagement (2006)
15 Hansard Society, Electoral Commission Audit of Political Engagement (2003-2007)
16 http://www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/40024857/

initiatives such as farmers markets[17] and slow food towns[18]; and in focused digital campaigns[19] as citizens capitalise on networks managed through social software, mobile devices and the internet[20].

Mass Engagement & Politicians

This detachment and discord between the policy making processes of national government and local citizen-led action on single issues has not been missed by our political leaders:

> *"For although ours is an era in which many of the traditional structures of society, association and voluntary engagement have declined, I have seen, all around the country, new and vibrant forms of civic life, social and community action, and multimedia technologies that have transformed the scope and nature of civic participation[21]"*

> Gordon Brown

However, we have seen tensions emerging between politicians and traditional political leadership and the need to open up political discourse that these processes demand. For example, during the nuclear mass deliberation process Gordon Brown told parliament at Prime Minister's question time that a decision to continue with nuclear power had been taken "and that is why the security of our energy supply is best safeguarded by building a new generation of nuclear power stations". A statement that was later used as a key reason for the NGOs involved withdrawing their support for the process[22].

This kind of explicit leadership although clear and genuine can both close down the scope for debate and undermine the ability of these processes to function effectively.

Limits of Technology

It is clear that if we are to reach out and engage larger numbers of people we are going to have to harness new technology and the networks it supports to make this work. However, we do not yet know to what extent new technology can support the critical element of deliberation.

We do not know who will be excluded if a technology led process is adopted and whether the legitimacy of the participation will be undermined by using these new technologies.

However, in an era when formal politics often excludes the majority of society are such discussions peripheral to the fundamental motivation of building a critical mass facilitated by technology to push for societal change? It is these questions and others that this project explores.

17 http://www.lfm.org.uk/who.asp
18 http://www.slowfoodludlow.org.uk/
19 http://education.guardian.co.uk/students/finance/story/0,,2155763,00.html
20 1.7m people signed road pricing epetition. Student Facebook campaign changed HSBC policy http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6970570.stm
21 London, 3 September 2007 to National Council for Voluntary Organisations
22 Vidal J (2007), 'New Nuclear Row As Green Groups Pull Out', The Guardian, 7 September 2007

A3 Models for Mass Engagement

In this section we outline three process models. The first is a generic model and the remaining two are variations of this; the second being a top-down institution led approach to mass engagement, and the third a more bottom-up or user generated approach. The three models have been developed with the working assumptions that any mass engagement process would be seeking to:

- Engage millions
- Create solutions
- Reach out to all
- Avoid oppositional approaches

In practice the three distinct models we outline in this section would in practice be combined and tailored in order to form a satisfactory hybrid which fits the requirements of a specific real life process. Through our research we have identified two dominant schools of thinking in terms of how mass engagement can push for change: working closely and constructively with institutional decision makers in large managed processes or by having processes that are separate from any formal policy processes but have influence by virtue of their scale creating a critical mass to push for change. In this section we bluntly distinguish these approaches as institution and citizen-led.

The models have been developed according to interviewees' contributions, through looking at case studies and from both Involve and America*Speaks*' own experience in the field. We would not advocate direct transfer of these models as they are presented here; adaptation to the specific context would always be required. Here, however, we seek to demonstrate a working hypothesis on how a mass engagement process taking place in the UK in the next few years might best be successful. This is not a definitive and closed proposal - rather a starting point to be built upon.

We believe that it is useful to make a distinction between approaches and break down processes into components in this way as it helps to compare and contrast the practical application of any given mass engagement process and to envision how a integrated whole approach might best fit together.

A3.1 A Generic Model : Four core components

In this section we briefly describe the four key components that we believe should broadly surmise any mass engagement process. The components are shown as being sequential but in fact the relationship between the different elements will vary depending upon the approach taken. These shifts in dynamic are demonstrated in the later 'institutional' and 'citizen-led' models for mass engagement. Below we describe why we consider these components are essential elements and highlight some key tensions. Box 1 on the following page outlines the stages.

A3.1.1   Issue Selection and setup

Achieving relevance of topic, impartiality of project organisers and balance of any partisan advisers is essential from the outset of any mass engagement process.

The subject matter up for discussion in a mass engagement process is absolutely crucial to the success of the project. This is not only true in terms of the general issue addressed but also in the way in which the specifics are presented and communicated to the public. If the issue is either peripheral to the public's core concerns or is not presented in a highly relevant and understandable way the process will see poor take up across the board from the outset. This is likely then to incur negative press coverage and dampen the chance of process success from the very outset.

The matter of issue selection and setup is also crucial when considering public trust in any process being undertaken. The impartiality of the decisions taken around firstly, what issue to address, and secondly how to present information relating to that topic, must be shown to be beyond all doubt to avoid undermining the process.[23]

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│  Issue selection and    │
│        setup            │
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│     Creating a buzz     │
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│      Focal point        │
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│  Change and follow up   │
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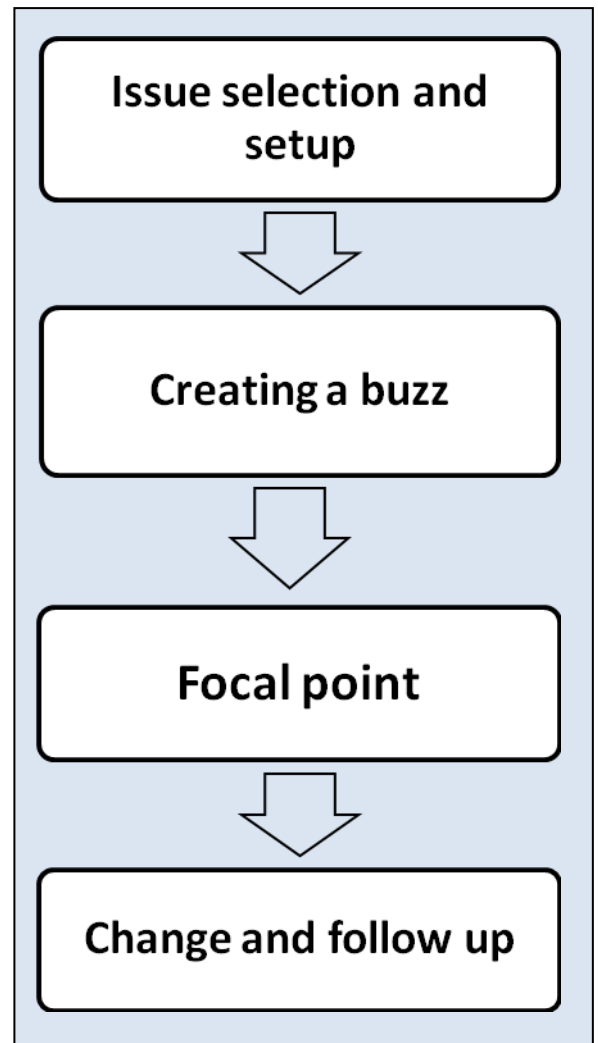
Box 1: The Four Core Components

A3.1.2   Creating a buzz

If an engagement process is to be attempted on a truly massive scale then it is essential to ensure that as many and as diverse a group of people as possible know about it. What is more, as many as possible see the process as being relevant to them and so want to become involved and informed. This kind of reach must be established in order to give any eventual process outcomes legitimacy.

Previous deliberative activities have involved thousands of people at times, but outreach into mainstream consciousness has been consistently poor. If we are to reach anything approaching millions of people then of course, a central communications campaign would be an effective approach – but we would argue that this kind of one-way informational campaign, though important, is not enough to succeed when trying to engage with and involve large numbers of participants.

One of the key ways in which people become involved in or aware of activities is through already active citizens and word of mouth rather than any central communications campaign[24]. Successfully reaching active individuals who are able to converse with and influence others to participate is important to the success of the project, particularly to outreach into underrepresented groups.

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[23]Government Energy Review (2006) High Court Judgement ruled the consultation was 'misleading' and 'seriously flawed'.
[24] Ipsos MORI Socio-Political Influencers (2007)

Creating a buzz' around the process refers to interest and conversation generated around the project on a largely informal level. Online and text based viral style techniques should be combined with local and national press coverage, face-to-face outreach and word-of-mouth. This would take the form of a number of satellite activities that run alongside or feed into the main process, ranging across user generated elements such as Facebook groups, online pledges and petitions to professionally facilitated face to face meetings[25] and innovative community events[26].

The main purpose of element would be to generate interest and excitement and to create a public demand to participate in the process. For this reason, centrally developed satellite activities must be developed with an emphasis on entertainment, relevance and engaging content, and user-generated activity should be welcomed and supported – for example through online blogging networks and offline community groups. Activities of all forms should be encouraged to direct individuals back to a central point to engage.

A3.1.3   Focal Point

Any large national or international process will require a focal point and brand, around which other activities can take place and feed into working towards a shared outcome.

This focal point for mass engagement could take a number of differing and complementary forms which we discuss in greater detail in the following two models, and would also act as a centrepiece towards which public energy and enthusiasm can be directed to and engaged with.

A website will be important to act as an information portal which directs individuals to relevant information, partner sites, polls and deliberative engagement activities. However, a web-hub alone is not enough to engage a wide demographic audience.

Our research has shown that to promote inclusivity, the public should be provided with as many ways into a process as possible in order to capture diverse input. In practice this would mean combining a web-hub (which itself has many channels of entry pointing people towards it from different media and satellite web activities such as social networking sites, texting, printed community publicity materials, mass media coverage, etc.) with some kind of high profile offline event like a national TV programme.

A national television event would have tremendous reach, especially when combined with telephone and text voting activities, self-facilitated meeting packs and a central web-hub. The combination should create excellent outreach both in terms of diversity and numbers.

Any approach is very likely to feature a focal point which includes a central website hub as a minimum and possibly some supportive broadcast television content.

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[25] Such as the type run by America Speaks in the US. See the case studies in the research section of this document.
[26] Such as those highlighted in the Involve Say and Play community consultation pilot (Forthcoming '08)

A3.1.4   Change and follow up

Three key questions must be addressed towards the end of any deliberative process if it is to be considered a success:

- What changed?
- What next?
- How can we improve?

Change can take many forms such as policy change, creation of new information or mobilisation of people and will of course be influenced by the process delivered. Although inherent with such a process, the precise details of the change can not be predicted. It is important that the resultant change is made explicit to the participants.

Follow up activities are important to ensure that the process' impact is maximised, and in particular that any civic energy generated is channelled productively. Follow-up activities can take the form of communications to participants and other key audiences through media work or information provision of what has changed on the issue in question. It can also include participant support, such as direction to other resources to take their views forward to elected members or through NGOs.

Evaluation of any such large process will be important both to learn from it but also to inform the management of the project on an ongoing basis. Members of the public should be involved in this evaluation process.

A3.1.5   360 Degree Engagement

Any effective mass engagement will have to support a number of different forms of public participation to involve this broad audience. This is termed as "360 degree engagement". Whereas components in the section above represent elements of a process, in this section we outline a 360 degree engagement approach.

Before we proceed into the components it is worth highlighting that perhaps the key concern when developing a 360 degree approach is ensuring that it generates supported solutions. Millions of people have been mobilised on many occasions but always as one way oppositional movements, be it political marches or the No. 10 Anti Road Pricing e-petition.

Support for solutions can be generated in a number of ways. A number of solution-options can be pre-determined as part of the process, using groups of advisers (e.g. NGOs or experts), or they can be co-created with citizens as part of the process, this could happen through ratings systems such as those employed by YouTube and Technorati where different citizen generated solutions are proposed and participants vote and comment on the one they support; or created through deliberative large-scale face to face discussions.

Information Dissemination

Information on the key issues must be provided as part of the process. This should be done in a way that is simple easy and engaging, and which caters towards the diverse needs of various sections of society. A number of techniques are listed below that can be used to provide information which offer a more

engaging or personally tailored experience than merely providing textual formats via a central website or promotional literature (although the clarity and dissemination of such material is an important factor too). We have grouped them under three heading: 1-Way, 2-Way and Co-production.

1-Way

- Video, both online and in national and local media including viral marketing styles can be tailored to appeal to specific groups who choose to watch in particular ways or prefer specific formats.
- Radio, national, local, student, community and web-based should be used to disseminate information in a conversational way to individuals as part of their existing listening habits.
- Text message subscriptions can be provided to those who want to receive brief information bulletins, updates and reminders about other participative opportunities but who do not have ready access to a computer.
- Digital TV information screens can enable people to access information in a living-room environment – particularly aimed at those groups who are less likely to own a home computer.
- Email newsletters including multimedia content are a simple way of sending out information bulletins and participative links and polls to subscribers.
- Tailoring the central information hub to individual preferences using multi-channel format is a useful way of appealing to different segments of the participant group whilst maintaining one central portal, for example, having a separate children's area.
- RSS feeds should be enabled on all process websites so that web-savvy individuals are able to subscribe and keep up to date with the latest information which they can then pass on by other methods to their own networks.
- Online role playing games – can take individuals through the various trade-offs and compromises required by playing through a scenario from various individual's perspectives.

2-Way

- Home facilitation packs (using discussion formats and DVDs) can enable community groups to hold deliberative events in their own environments in a way which best suits their needs.
- Social networking groups are able to reach into existing media-literate and active, generally younger more dispersed and time-poor communities.
- Individual blogs and blogging networks – information can be provided in a wide variety of personal styles and from various perspectives which will appeal to a spectrum of views. Centralised process-owned blogs can be charged with providing the balanced and impartial stance – then bloggers with different opinions can be linked to from that central source.
- Deliberative online and offline surveys – leads a participant through information step by step and enables them to interact by stating opinions and inputting information as they progress.

Co-production

- Wikis – collaborative editing and composition of relevant information could make up part of a citizen-led process.

Deliberation

Mounting research[27] advocates that in terms of creating solutions and informed participation, a deliberative element is key. There are a number of routes towards enabling large numbers of people to deliberate. These can take place in less depth on a larger scale using online methods such as the deliberative survey or role playing games mentioned above, or can be run as satellite face-to-face events which are run in conjunction with the central mass information gathering process. Some examples of this more in depth deliberation are included here below:

Downloadable deliberation kits (e.g. democs). Deliberation kits which can be undertaken in any space from a dinner table to a pub or school can be a valuable low cost aid to deliberation. Critical to the success of such an approach however will be creating explicit connectivity to a wider process. Deliberation games and kits have been run as part of other national initiatives (e.g. BBC's Action Network and DIUS's ScienceHorizons) with limited effect. The key to making them work, as they did in CaliforniaSpeaks is the explicit connection (in this case via online broadcast and voting) to the main process. These events may well have to be structured to take place at a specific time to coincide with TV broadcasts, or just be run in conjunction with a computer from which you can download video, questions voting opportunities, etc. Such kits and games can be a low tech alternative to expensive professional facilitation.

Citizen Summit Meetings (e.g. Pensions and Nuclear Debates). Using professional convening organisations is an option to run large events which people are invited to attend. The advantages to this is there is greater control of the quality of the process; the downside is that these are expensive and require extensive planning and organisation in order to ensure success.

Community led discussion forum (e.g. deliberation day). Local organisations (e.g. local authorities or schools) could be skilled up to deliver community deliberative processes which are connected through the centrepiece to the wider process.

Mass Polling/Voting

Any mass process requires a way of measuring the number of people who support one option or another. This would take the form of mass voting or polling of some description. The main risk here is fraudulent voting or hijacking of the process by single-issue campaign groups. Safeguards would therefore have to be put in place to avoid fraudulent or mass votes. There are a number of routes to achieving this kind of data-gathering:

- Online Polling or voting and e-petitions would reach those with access and ability to use computers;
- Mobile and telephone voting would enable those who watch the television programmes to engage;
- Postcard voting would support those who are less likely to use telephone or online methods.

The critical issues to consider here when aiming to achieve meaningful outcomes will be timing, incentivising and channelling.

Timing: In order to impact upon any issue, the voting element of the process should be timed to enable decisions to be affected by the results.

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[27] Fishkin, J. S. (1995). The voice of the people. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press., Gastil,(2000). By popular demand: Revitalizing representative democracy through deliberative elections. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Incentivising: To capture large numbers of diverse opinions it would be advisable to incentivise or introduce competitive elements of some sort, otherwise self-selection could skew results so far they become meaningless.

Networks

Online social networking has become an important part of how many people in the UK live. Indeed Britons are purported to be the heaviest users of social networking within Europe[28]. Social networking is an important element of any mass deliberative process that uses new technology whether it be institution or citizen-led as it is through these activities online individuals that information (and misinformation) about the engagement process will rapidly spread both online and off.

Social networkers are able to disseminate information very quickly and to gather support, interest, conversation and offline action at a similarly quick rate. Whether or not social networking groups are actually used to directly gather some qualitative data as part of a mass engagement process or not, it is important to utilise their popularity and presence on the web to raise awareness and channel people into the process itself.

Face to face community networks should not be neglected when planning a deliberative process. These react less quickly than online groups but have good, deep-rooted reach into communities, and can act as important hubs for the localised satellite deliberation events. For example, parent teacher associations, church groups, youth groups, conservation volunteers and campaign groups may all be targeted in order to mobilise participants.

Unification

Although all of the approaches described above necessarily imply a diversity of styles and methods to engage citizens in the process, it is essential that there is an overall sense of unity and a clear centre-point and purpose to all of the activity. This applies whether or not an Institution-led or Citizen-led model is used. Unity of purpose and a strong focal point which all activities overtly point back to and channel participants towards is essential to ensuring that any process does not become weakened through dispersal and misinformation.

In the remainder of this section we will go on to describe two models for mass engagement based on these guiding principles.

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[28] http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=1801

A3.2 Institution Led Model : The top-down approach

An institution-led model of mass engagement (or a top-down approach), is one whereby the initiative is sponsored by, or has an institution as a key partner. This is the approach adopted by America*Speaks*, Opinion Leader Research (OLR) and the Centre for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford among others. This approach requires a clear route into the policy making process, and depends to a large extent for its success on whether it influences that policy making process or not. Box 2 outlines the four key components for an institution-led model and suggests some possible constituent parts of those stages.
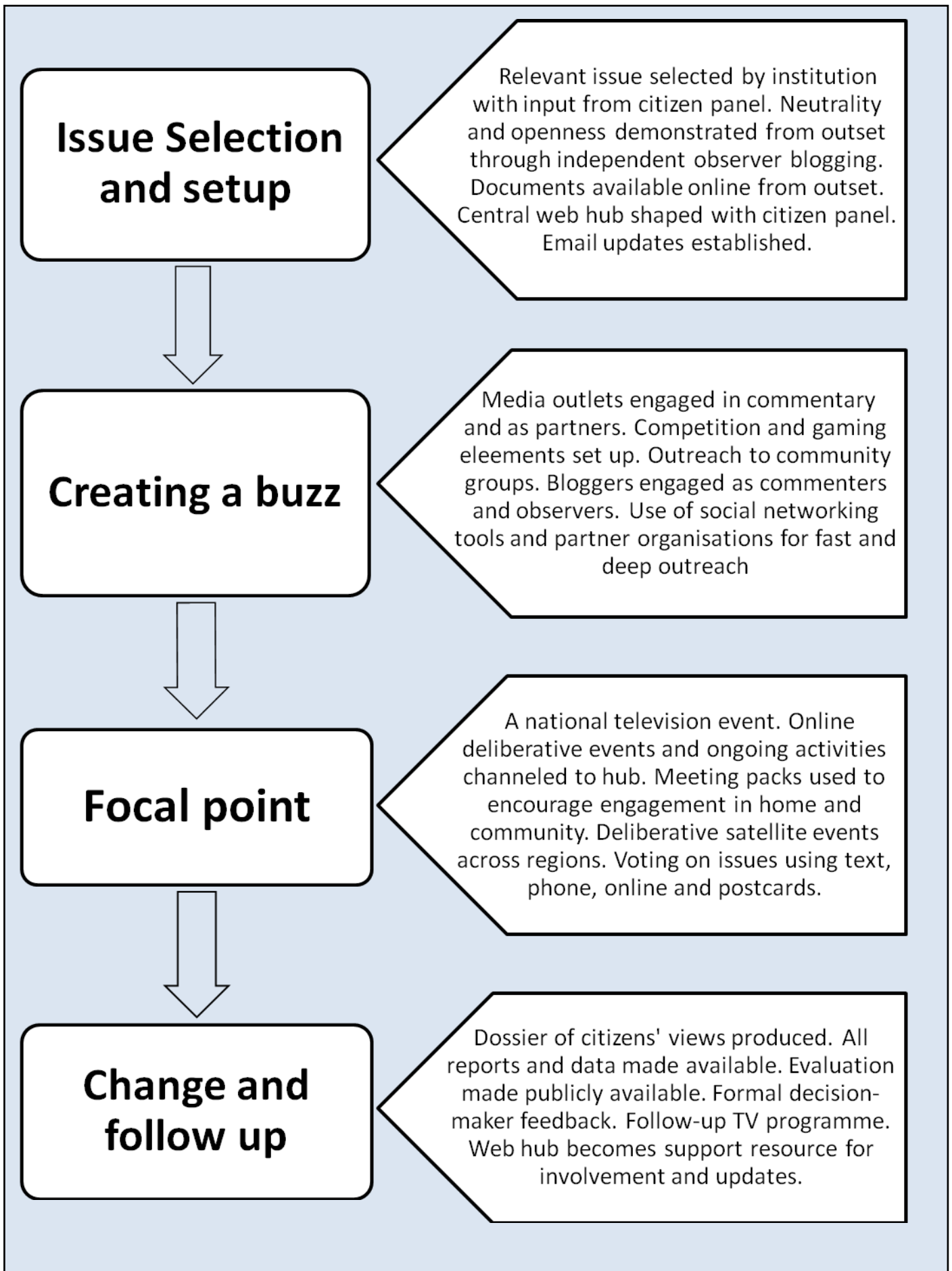
Its characteristics include:

- Issue/subject matter chosen by the institution
- Information gathering designed to feed back fluidly into institutional mechanisms both in terms of boundaries and timing to influence official policy processes
- Participant representativeness and inclusion given highest priority
- Centralised approach with emphasis on a central focal point
- Involves decision makers throughout the process
- Decision makers committed to making changes as an outcome of the process
- Success measured by institution's policy change

Examples of possible objectives are:

- Create a mandate for change on tough policy issues
- Inform the government's policy on a particular issue
- Create a new policy solution to address a specific policy challenge
- Build relationships between a government department and its key audiences and stakeholders
- Provide a platform for traditionally excluded citizen voices
- Gather information to improve the government's decision-making
- Learn from the public to instigate institutional changes
- Awareness raising and presentation of balanced information

In the remainder of this section we describe the Institution-led process with reference to the diagram in Box 2 on the next page.

Issue Selection and setup

Relevant issue selected by institution with input from citizen panel. Neutrality and openness demonstrated from outset through independent observer blogging. Documents available online from outset. Central web hub shaped with citizen panel. Email updates established.

Creating a buzz

Media outlets engaged in commentary and as partners. Competition and gaming eleements set up. Outreach to community groups. Bloggers engaged as commenters and observers. Use of social networking tools and partner organisations for fast and deep outreach

Focal point

A national television event. Online deliberative events and ongoing activities channeled to hub. Meeting packs used to encourage engagement in home and community. Deliberative satellite events across regions. Voting on issues using text, phone, online and postcards.

Change and follow up

Dossier of citizens' views produced. All reports and data made available. Evaluation made publicly available. Formal decision-maker feedback. Follow-up TV programme. Web hub becomes support resource for involvement and updates.

Box 2: Institution-led model

A3.2.1   Issue selection and setup

When undertaking institution-led mass engagement it is key that two points are addressed from the outset:

- Relevance
- Neutrality

These points are particularly important when looking at institution-led approaches to mass engagement, as it is important that relevance to potential participants is prioritised alongside the powerful forces focusing on utility to policy formulation and decision-making.

Prioritise Relevance

The creation of such resonation is strongly influenced by the framing and presentation as well as the issue itself. Critical to the success of the issue framing process will be to ensure that the issue is presented in a way which speaks to the central concerns of the public rather than reflecting the terminology or framework used by policy makers.

We recommend that the relevance of a policy issue to both participants and its usefulness to policy makers should be tested with user groups before embarking upon a full scale engagement process.

Ensure Neutrality

A danger with all institution led processes is that they are seen as extensions of the policy-making machine, either promoting pre-determined policies or simply extracting information from citizens. Both of these criticisms have been raised in terms of recent UK experience with large scale public engagement processes[29].

An important goal of the initial communication process must be to ensure that engagement activity both is, and *is perceived as* neutral on the issues involved.

If the issue in question is highly contentious we recommend that a highly visible and representative cross-spectrum citizen/third sector steering group is set up to help to achieve this. The creation of a non-partisan policy advisory board to oversee the development of neutral educational materials that represent the range of policy options available is another way both of demonstrating and working in conditions of openness and transparency.

A3.2.2   Creating a buzz

The creation of a 'buzz'- an atmosphere of interest around the process - is particularly important to the institution-led model in terms of aiding outreach to a diverse and more representative range of participants than may take part in traditional formal engagement processes. Individuals less likely to get involved in a formalised, institutional process can be reached through satellite activities which orbit the central process and feed into the focal point.

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[29] CPPIH – extractive model; Nuclear Debate as PR

We recommend that any centralised institution-led process looks to where people are already engaging on issues similar to the ones it seeks to address, and bases opportunities to engage and become involved within the context of those existing networks and pathways. For example, looking to social networking, community activists, topical online forums, YouTube, local media and other appropriate pathways where there is already relevant participative or deliberative activity taking place.

A3.2.3   Focal point

The actual form of the focal point takes will undoubtedly vary. However, when looking at this, the institutional model we propose that a central web hub with a strong brand holding the process together and identifying its component parts will help create a focal point. Additionally, a television programme which brings the process to a far wider audience would also be an important factor. Some of the key aspects to consider when looking at creating a focal point for this institution-led approach are outlined below.

Timing

If seeking to influence formal decision-making processes the process will need to be designed to be able to do this. For example that it forms part of a consultation process, or is timed in advance of a parliamentary debate. In reality any initiative that involved millions of people will, simply through its scale create change, and the pressure for change. If the process is being led by an institution, it will be important for a clear route for the outputs to exist. We recommend that the focal point is publicised to co-ordinate with the decision making process.

Representation of participants

It is important to acknowledge from the start the limits of representation in many elements of politics, from the large number of people who do not vote to the small memberships of our political parties. Nevertheless for many institutions the representational quality of the participants is a critical issue. This could be difficult to monitor and control when dealing with mass engagement.

To measure the degree of representation of the process as a whole it is possible to create a parallel control group. A group of demographically representative citizens, as you would have for a deliberative poll. You can then enable this group go through the process and then compare their decisions/opinion with those of the mass engagement process.

Event Programming

For any institution led process which seeks solutions it will be necessary to create some kind of national deliberative focus. The most straightforward of which would be a televised, 'Question Time' style event, which supports deliberation and debate amongst celebrity participants. This could be produced and broadcast on mainstream TV and/or be broadcast online.

Our research suggests, however, that traditional current affairs programming has limited reach into currently disengaged groups. It may well be wise therefore to create a more engaging format which exposes people to the issues at hand through human stories. We recommend that a TV show or series be commissioned with broad appeal that seeks to break out of the 'current affairs' format. This would reach a broader audience, channelling them towards participation in the process.

National Media Support

To reach out to a large proportion of society it will be necessary to establish partnerships with some national media agencies (newspapers, websites or broadcasters). In doing so, as mentioned above, the institutional partners must not seek to control the media partners, but support them to do what they are good at: creating stories and engaging the public. The research in this report has indicated clearly that at present many of the media partners that the government, or any other institution may need, fear working with the government in so far as their expertise and skills would be hamstrung by over zealous government control and fears of communicating with the public. Additionally, media organisations themselves need to preserve independent status and not be seen as an arm of government.

Politician/Civil Servant Participation

Key policy-makers must be engaged in the process to secure their agreement to both participate and respond to the outcomes. The ultimate goal of any mass engagement process is to link citizens' priorities more closely to actual policymaking. The active participation of policy-makers in the process increases the likelihood that the public will be heard.

Recent research[30] for Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) found that a key threat to institution-led public engagement working effectively is civil servants not prioritising direct involvement. This is because many of the outputs often fail to communicate the wider cultural changes, opinion shifts etc. that have taken place. Therefore, just reading the reports gives a highly inaccurate impression of the process. The research recommended that if civil servants cannot give up the time to be involved they should probably not commission the process to start with.

It has also become clear that any politicians that have direct authority over the policy domain in question must give speeches, etc. which support a climate of debate and deliberation; not ones which close down discussion.

A3.2.4   Change and follow up

It is important to ensure that the process impact is demonstrated to participants, to demonstrate that their participation has produced a tangible outcome or effect on decision makers. In order to influence institutional decision-making, the process must also generate information and specific recommendations that have credibility with policy-makers.

The public's priorities should be compiled through an online database and reported to policy-makers who, in this institutional model, would also be involved in the process. This information communicates the direction of citizen concerns: what they value, how they would handle tradeoffs, and what specific policies they prefer.

The reporting also conveys the magnitude of concern by demonstrating the diversity of people that have taken time out of their daily lives to participate in deliberations. In the end, the reporting must carry the persuasiveness, emotional weight, and specificity of detail that characterize citizen deliberation. Such qualities will be as important as statistics in conveying the urgency of an issue, and in driving action.

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[30] Democratic Technologies (2006) Involve

Reports must also demonstrate the legitimacy of the process by which they were produced. Policy makers must be able to satisfy themselves that the process was neutral, fair and soundly executed. Process reports must transparently show whose voices are represented by the report and make available the raw data for analysis by public officials and outside parties.

Soon after the process closes, we recommend that a publicly available report is produced in accessible formats and that any policy report and analysis compiled is also made publicly available. The next stage of follow up would be to produce updates for those participants who have signed up to receive further information about the progress of decision making around an issue. This could be supported by turning the original web hub into a resource to support citizen follow up on the issue and to enable further contact with those involved in running the process and with relevant decision makers.

It is not enough to simply bring the results of these deliberations to decision-makers. If a national engagement process is to effectively produce policy change, it must demonstrate to policy-makers the presence of continuing support and interest in the priorities that have been articulated. Supporting the public to remain involved in an issue through an online platform, supported by a range of relevant organisations is therefore key to the process.

We recommend that the following activity takes place after the process closes:

- Participants receive updates on the progress of the discussion and policy-making in Parliament through email, text message and post where appropriate
- Support website be set up as the front page of the former consultation hub containing:
  - Information regarding how to contact an MP, start a petition, or engage with advocacy groups from across the political spectrum working on the issue
  - Opportunities to participate in further online and face to face discussions aimed at deeper deliberation and engagement with policy makers if appropriate
- Downloadable materials made available for individuals to organize their own activities
- A cross section of decision makers, participants and non-participants invited to evaluate the process and to suggest improvements
- All reports and data generated made publicly available
- A formal response from decision makers be made publicly available
- Process evaluation documents made publicly available
- A follow-up TV programme be commissioned

A3.3 Citizen-Led Model: The bottom-up approach

A citizen-led model of mass participation is a bottom-up approach, one whereby the initiative is generated by bodies outside of the institution affected by the issue being deliberated upon. This approach is inspired by the recent rise in take-up across a variety of user-generated media and spontaneous participant or celebrity-led campaigning movement. The approach requires organisers to connect with receptive decision makers but not to enable those power-brokers to control the agenda. The success of the process depends to a large extent for its success on whether it disrupts and impacts upon that policy making process rather than feeding into it in a formalised manner.
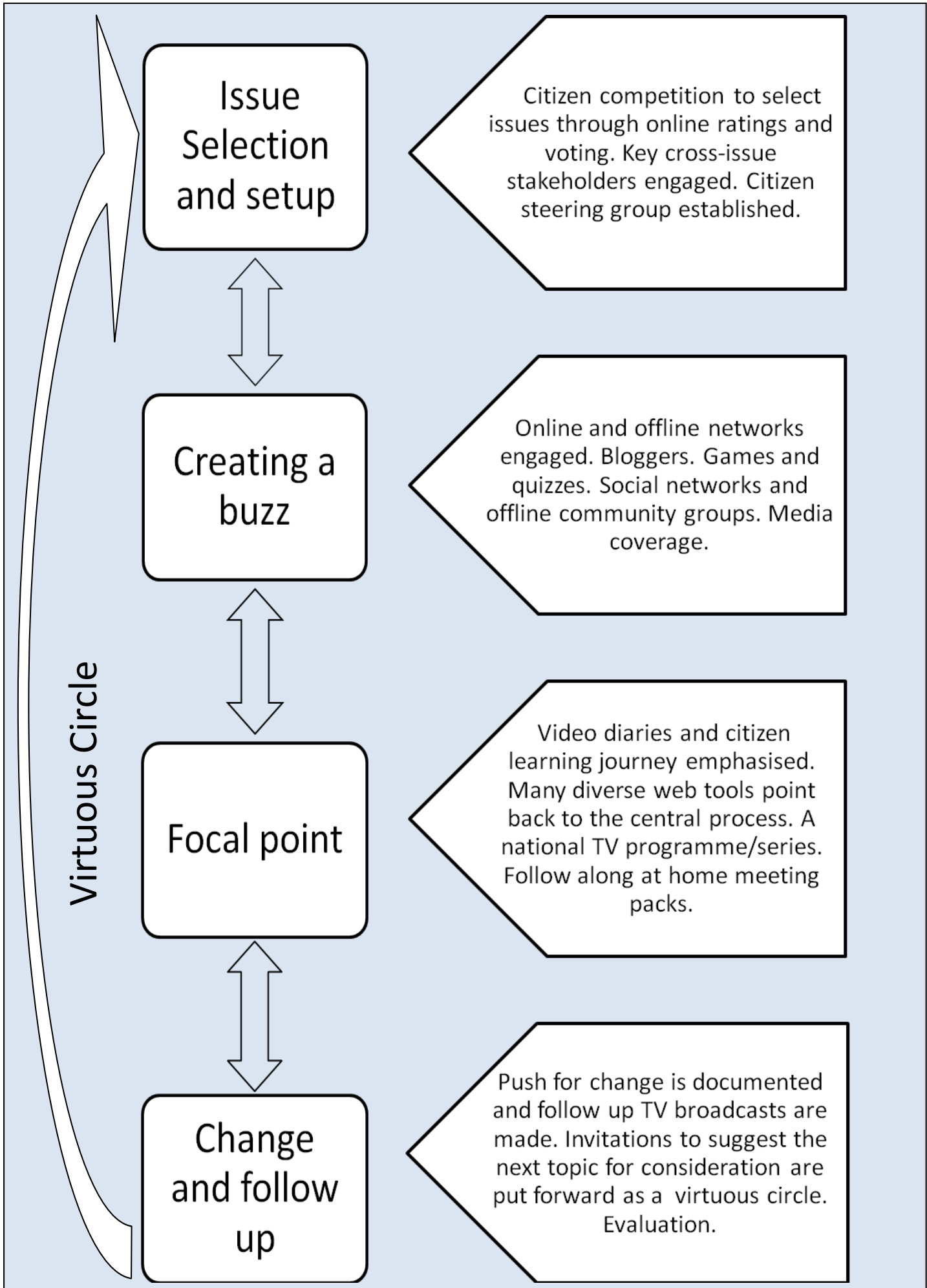
Its characteristics include:

- Issue for deliberation chosen by participants
- Aims to impact upon decisions and official policy processes
- Participant representativeness still important but not so exacting as Institution model
- Networked approach with many externally run satellite processes feeding back to central hub
- Does not necessarily involve decision makers in the process
- Decision makers are pushed to make changes – they do not necessarily buy into the process
- Success is measured by impact on public consciousness and policy change

Examples of possible objectives are:

- Creating a critical mass of people to push for change on tough policy issues
- Influence key opinion formers and social groups
- Starting a public debate on an issue which will lead to policy change
- Making change happen through funds raised by citizens themselves
- Generate popular solutions to policy challenges that are most important to citizens
- Establishment of a new intermediary presence to bridge the gap between citizen and state
- Awareness raising and presentation of balanced information
- Demonstrating the results of *informed* public deliberation

In the remainder of this section we describe the Citizen-led process with reference to the diagram in Box 3 on the following page.

Issue Selection and setup

Citizen competition to select issues through online ratings and voting. Key cross-issue stakeholders engaged. Citizen steering group established.

Creating a buzz

Online and offline networks engaged. Bloggers. Games and quizzes. Social networks and offline community groups. Media coverage.

Focal point

Video diaries and citizen learning journey emphasised. Many diverse web tools point back to the central process. A national TV programme/series. Follow along at home meeting packs.

Change and follow up

Push for change is documented and follow up TV broadcasts are made. Invitations to suggest the next topic for consideration are put forward as a virtuous circle. Evaluation.

Virtuous Circle

Box 3: Citizen-led model

Issue selection and setup

When embarking on a citizen-led engagement process, it is necessary to enable participants to actually set the agenda for discussion themselves. There are a number of ways citizens could be involved in selecting the issue to be discussed. We would recommend using an open ratings approach where individuals can suggest issues by posting on a website using text, pictures and video clips to submit their priorities and concerns, and then other participants can comment on and rate the ideas. There could be a competitive element included in the process to encourage diverse participation. This would also serve to begin creating a participant advocate base which would help drive the interest referred to in the next component 'creating a buzz'[31].

When outlining the institutional process above we emphasised the need for relevance and impartiality. It is through using a citizen-led approach to issue selection and process setup that relevance and impartiality can be addressed from the outset. If participants are involved in selecting the issues addressed, it will be more likely that subjects up for discussion resonate strongly with the public consciousness and are framed in a way which appeals to other potential participants, thereby encouraging higher participation rates.

The active involvement of citizens in making decisions on the process from the very outset also establishes openness and transparency of working practices, helping to protect the process from accusations of bias. The involvement of citizens in active decision making also has the added advantage of establishing a core community of users from the outset; people who may well go on to champion the process in their own circles.

We recommend the establishment of a prominent citizen-steering group to oversee and direct the process. Their activities and opinions could be catalogued openly through a blog network as well as offline media work and community meetings.

Creating a buzz

The creation of a 'buzz'- an atmosphere of interest around the process in the form of citizen-generated or media-generated activities is an integral part of the citizen-led model. This will aid outreach to a diverse and more representative range of participants than may take part in traditional formal engagement processes. This will also enable central organisers to embed the participation activity within existing preferred networks rather than requiring participants to access a central point to participate.

Harnessing Networks

Although a central web hub and strong communications campaign is a necessary part of all of the models we outline in this document, when implementing the citizen-led model it is through the wider network of online and offline communities that the central process primarily will be spread into existing areas of action.

To put it simply, a citizen-led process looks to where people are already engaging on issues similar to the ones being addressed, encourages and invites those existing networks and organisations to point back to the central process. For example, process organisers can look to social networking sites, community

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[31] See the Case Foundation Make it Your Own Awards for a working model. http://casefoundation.org/make-it-your-own as well as the Sinceslicedbread case study included in the latter half of this document.

activists, topical online forums, NGOs and campaigning groups, YouTube and other appropriate online and offline pathways where there is already relevant participative or deliberative activity taking place. It must be ensured that a balanced range of organisations and groups are involved if this activity is to avoid accusations of bias.

Focal point

A citizen-led model will showcase citizens' views and focus heavily on making the policy issues being discussed absolutely relevant to a diverse audience. The type of focal point for mass engagement will therefore necessarily draw upon citizen voices, user generated content and contribution and enable citizen control over the process through built in voting and rating mechanisms.

The actual form of the focal point takes will undoubtedly vary. However, when looking at this, the citizen-led model we propose that a central web hub with a number of different segments or personalisation options would work well to enable individuals to tailor the site to their own preference. A logo is an important part of tying the various activities together as a whole brand approach would not allow true diversity in the representation of information. The logo could be used as a way of badging the various discussions and activities which may be very diverse in appearance in this citizen-led, user-generated model. All activities will point back to the central web hub as in the institutional model.

A citizen-led television programme or mini-series which brings the process to a far wider audience would also be an important factor. This would feature some of the citizens engaged in the early stages of the process and follow their own explorations of the relevant issues on a learning journey. The programmes would also be available online as video-diary style reportage and made available on YouTube.

Some of the key aspects to consider when looking at creating a focal point for this institution-led approach are outlined below.

Timing

Although the citizen-led model will likely not have a formal feedback route into the policy-making process, it is advisable that those running the process make information on which decisions are coming up in Parliament clearly available to the public who will be deciding on which issue to focus deliberation.

Representation of participants

It is important that diverse views and diverse sections of society are included in the citizen-led process, as in the institutional process. This diversity would be encouraged by taking a network-harnessing approach and going to where civic action is already taking place across diverse communities both online and off as outlined in the previous stage 'creating a buzz'.

Event Programming

For any process which seeks solutions it will be necessary to create some kind of national deliberative forum. For the citizen-led model, a 'Question Time' style event involving celebrities would be less appropriate as the model's emphasis and integrity is borne from the citizen involvement and voice at the heart of the model. Instead, the Television centrepiece could comprise the stories of particular participants who would be followed throughout a deliberative journey of fact-finding and personal learning on the issues being discussed.

The actual focal event itself could take place as a nationally broadcast mini-series as well as an on demand online series of video-diaries. The activities and discussions featured on screen could then be supported by follow-along activities after each episode, signposting to web-based or regional deliberative events and other community events of various kinds led by participants themselves.

Change and follow up

This model describes a citizen-led process, but this approach does not imply a disregard for decision-makers' needs and ways of working. The process must generate recommendations that both have credibility with policy-makers and the public. All change and impact resulting from the process must be made highly visible to participants in order to demonstrate the value of their input and encourage faith in the process' efficacy. Decision-makers must be also made confident in the process in order to encourage their response and action and to satisfy themselves that the process was neutral, fair and soundly executed.

The public's priorities are compiled through an online database and reported to policy-makers who are invited to respond publicly. This information communicates the direction of citizen concerns: what they value, how they would handle tradeoffs, and what specific policies they prefer. Citizen reporters and bloggers are featured as commentators on the changes taking place as a result, and will interview decision-makers before during and after the process and during the follow-up period.

As in the Institution-led model, all reports produced must demonstrate the magnitude of public support and concern by demonstrating the diversity of people that have taken time out of their daily lives to participate in the process. Citizen-produced contributions will add further weight to the persuasiveness, and specificity of detail that characterize citizen deliberation.

Reports produced should consistently demonstrate the legitimacy of the process by which they were produced. The involvement of citizens and emphasis on user-generated input will add greatly to the transparency and integrity of the process. The reports produced must transparently show whose voices are represented by the report and make available the raw data for analysis by public officials and outside parties.

The citizen-led model would seek to establish a virtuous circle of citizen-led activity which would in practice mean that the issue-selection process begins once again after the first report is published.

We recommend that the following activity takes place after the initial process closes:

- Participants receive updates on the progress of the discussion and policy-making in Parliament through email, text message and post where appropriate.
- Support website be set up as the front page of the former consultation hub containing:
  - Information regarding how to contact an MP, start a petition, or engage with advocacy groups from across the political spectrum working on the issue
  - Opportunities to participate in further online and face to face discussions aimed at deeper deliberation and engagement with policy makers if appropriate
  - Downloadable materials made available for individuals to organize their own activities
- A cross section of decision makers, participants and non-participants invited to evaluate the process and to suggest improvements
- All reports and data generated made publicly available under creative commons license

- A formal response from decision makers be made publicly available
- Process evaluation documents made publicly available, wiki-versions included for open editing
- Follow-up TV programme be commissioned looking at individual characters progress and reflections and how they have changed since the first programme and the process report
- Virtuous circle - A new round of issue selection activities takes place and the process begins again on a new issue if there is enough popular support to continue this method of engagement

B The Research

The purpose of this section is to outline the underpinning research for the Teleparticipation project. Throughout the research process we particularly sought to learn from the experience of online and media-driven mass engagement from outside the UK and have benefited greatly from the support of deliberative democracy pioneers America*Speaks* in producing this document.

In order to gather a variety of opinion on how 360 degree deliberative mass engagement on policy issues might best work in the UK, we observed and documented the CaliforniaSpeaks deliberative engagement process that was run by America*Speaks* in 2007, produced a number of case studies on different process approaches, undertook desk research and spoke to a number of key figures who are working on relevant areas.

B1   Results and Analysis

In this section we explore findings from desk research and interviews undertaken. Interviewees uncovered a number of areas of consensus and contention around the concept of creating a large scale deliberation and engagement process facilitated, primarily, through mass media and new technology. Interviewees helped to identify where the opportunities and pitfalls of such a process may lie.

> *"I think that this [project] is opening up an undiscovered country as most of the online involvement stuff that's happened is all about campaigning and not really about governance or policy. So I think that there's real opportunity for governance and policy to do some experimentation and figure out what might work."* Interviewee

It should be noted that amongst the interviewees advising the project there was a broad support for running a deliberation process on a mass scale and that the individuals interviewed were those already engaged in various public engagement and technology-related activities. General expectations were voiced that effective mass deliberation on policy was "the logical next step" in the engagement arena.

> *"At the end of the day somebody has to break through and do something like what you're describing. And somebody will end up doing it."* Interviewee

The main sources of contention amongst the group were around how to best make such a process work, particularly regarding to whom it would appeal, what its measurable impact would be and how to clarify and communicate the purpose successfully to a large and diverse audience.

> *"I do basically think it's a good idea – why not? But you need to be clear about what you are trying to achieve, managing expectations. You need to know why you are doing it."* Interviewee

The remainder of this section is therefore structured around addressing four key questions which raise those contentious points.

1. Why undertake deliberative engagement on a mass scale?
2. What are the risks and opportunities of undertaking a large scale engagement process?
3. What are the benefits and disadvantages of using technology for mass engagement?
4. What are the barriers and motivations to participate?

1. Why undertake deliberative engagement on a mass scale?

Many of the reasons are the same as for any smaller scale deliberative process:

- **Addressing complexity:** complicated issues require deeper understanding and higher levels of engagement – a deliberative process helps equip participants to deal with complex issues
- **Filling public debate gaps:** many important issues are not picked up by media agencies despite being of critical public importance
- **Overcoming preconceptions:** unbiased evidence on which to base any decisions can be presented in an equal and balanced way to all participants
- **Building social capital:** encouraging deliberative engagement may stimulate community engagement and activity[32]
- **Creating opinion shifts:** provides an opportunity to stimulate societal change
- **Public education:** raising awareness based on fact not marketing
- **Improved policy making:** a more focused and deeper understanding of what motivates and what matters to individuals and groups – better targeting of resources

The benefits as outlined above would potentially be multiplied in a mass engagement process. The issue in question is whether this number would be a large enough percentage of the UK population to make a widespread impact on public awareness of and engagement with a particular policy issue.

Additionally, taking such deliberation to a mass scale could take the lead in opening up a recognised new public space within which citizen and state are enabled to engage in a more meaningful and effective way. One of the questions raised during this research process was how institutions, specifically government should relate to and interact with any such emergent more informal or 'networked' space.

2.1 What are the risks of a large scale engagement process?

i) Unclear purpose

Any mass engagement process could have a variety of different purposes at its heart. Clarification at the outset of what it is and is not aiming to be achieved is therefore of paramount importance. This still allows for the process itself to be organic in terms of the way it is designed, managed and grown. Once those instigating the process have clearly determined what the purpose is – and is not – it is essential to communicate this message with clarity and to get that message across successfully to the very large numbers of people participating.

Failure to carry out this step could end in a mismatch between participants' expectations and eventual outcomes leading to widespread confusion and disillusionment amongst participants. Gaining press support in conveying the purpose clearly would be very important in achieving this.

ii) 'Thin' engagement

One of the main concerns of interviewees was that an overambitious target in terms of the numbers involved could compromise the quality and depth of the engagement and deliberation carried out.

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32 Creating social capital through the deliberative discussion, Stein, Imel, Henderson (2004)

"I do think that if anything, mass engagement means thin engagement... I'd err on getting 200,000 people over two days rather than 2,000,000 in half an hour." Interviewee

A process with clearly defined goals and carefully managed expectations would go some way to combating this. However it must be recognised that people will themselves choose to be involved on a number of different levels, from less engaged activities such as text voting to deeper involvement such as creating and publishing online video content. Recognising and clarifying that individuals want to be engaged in an issue to differing levels and with varying frequency is a necessary part of defining the deliberative elements of the process itself. Work such as that by the Pew Internet and American Life project[33] on breaking down the ways in which people use technology reflects this assertion and builds the case for taking an approach providing multiple pathways in to any one process.

These multiple routes of access should therefore seek to present online and offline options as well as introducing variation appealing to different societal groups in order to be representative. In essence, beginning similar conversations or asking similar questions in a number of differing ways and to differing depths.

iii) Lack of Integrity

If not carried out in the most open way possible from the outset, a mass engagement process could be seen as being skewed or as 'rubber stamping' decisions that have already been made. This could undermine the final result of the deliberation exercise. Needless to say, accusations of bias due to imbalanced funding sources or partisan leadership could undermine and invalidate the entire process.

"The solution to the problems about being too close to government is to have a transparent process right from the start... people who don't like the process and results will try to find ways to undermine it so it needs to be transparent." Interviewee

The integrity of the process must be placed beyond doubt by ensuring high standards of accountable and independent conduct amongst all parties involved in running it.

iv) Untested benefits

We already know that when citizens deliberate face-to-face the experience can be a transformative one which contributes to political efficacy[34]. Their opinions can shift radically and their perceptions of others can also change, as debates become humanised rather than polarised[35]. However, there is more limited evidence[36] around the extent to which these benefits will be maintained when processes are mediated via the broadcast and online media and still further removed from the face to face experience by taking place on a mass scale. Some degree of scepticism over the efficacy of such a process in terms of its final impact on public opinion, in comparison to other methods, was evident amongst those interviewed.

"I do think the media themselves can do more to change opinion in traditional reporting than such a process." Interviewee

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[33] A Typology of Information and Communication Technology Users (2007) Pew http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/213/report_display.asp

[34] Deliberation and "Better Citizens"* (2002) Robert C. Luskin, Fishkin, J

[35] Gavelin, K., Wilson, R., Doubleday, R. (Involve, 2007) Democratic Technologies

[36] Luskin, R. C., Fishkin, J. S., & Iyengar, S. (2004, May). *Considered opinions on U.S. foreign policy: Face-to-face versus online deliberative polling*. Paper presented at the International Communication Association Conference, New Orleans, LA.

It is also true to say that although positive effects have been reported, that the benefits and risks of deliberative processes have not yet been conclusively explored.

> *"Despite the widespread endorsement, and increasingly also usage, of the norms of deliberative decision making, our current knowledge of the effects of such processes remains scant."[37]*

If a mass deliberation process on policy were to happen it will therefore be critical that effective evaluation is built into the process itself. The need to study outcomes over time, such as the sustainability of engaging meaningfully with large numbers of people, the impact of the process on long term opinion shift, and the impact upon policy decision making would be crucial to advancing understanding of the longer term social value of mass deliberative engagement on policy issues.

2.2 What are the opportunities of carrying out a mass engagement process?

i) A mandate for change

The UK is facing a number of difficult policy problems as spoken of by various organisations and individuals including Harvard Scholar Dr. Archon Fung[38], the LSE[39] and OECD[40] amongst others. All agree that national politics will for the foreseeable future be dominated by the so called 'wicked issues'[41]. The question of how to gain mass public support for the potentially controversial decisions that must be made on pressing wicked issues such as climate change, healthcare and pensions may be answered in part by making more open and inclusive decisions on a mass scale.

The real policy impact of any engagement process would be affected in part by the percentage and demographic profile of the population as a whole that became involved.

> *"Sometimes deliberative events are large enough in scale that they rise above the din and get people's attention...The fact that they are being raised on that scale takes on a meaning that becomes a new form of public institution – that's very useful. I think the scale of participation is very important."* Interviewee

When it comes to making significant societal changes on tough issues, a policy decision emerging from a process which has taken place in the open, with active citizen input that has explicitly demonstrated its independence will have greater legitimacy than one which does not.

If such a process could be scaled up without losing significant depth or diversity, it may be possible to provide our political leaders with a strong public mandate to address the most difficult policy problems facing our nation. A mass engagement process could help reveal common ground and to deal with the

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37 Journal of Public Deliberation (2008) Grimes,M.

38 Fung, A. (2002) ,' Creating Deliberative Publics:Governance After Devolution and Democratic Centralism', The Good Society (Vol. 11)http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/good_society/v011/11.1fung.pdf

39 Dunleavy P, Margetts H, Bastow S, Pearce O and Tinkler J (2006b) Why is it to hard to achieve organizational innovation in government? EDS Innovation Research Programme, London: LSE

40 OECD (2001), 'Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making', OECD: Paris, pp. 23, 24, 28.

41 Wicked problems are highly complex, circular, fluid and changeable social problems which society faces to which there is no one simple solution. See Rittel, Horst .W. J. and Webber, Melvin M. "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," Policy Sciences, 1973, 4:155-169

polarisation on contentious issues that prevent necessary policy change from going ahead with strong support.

ii) Rebuilding the civic realm

It is clear that traditional institution-based approaches to today's wicked policy problems are not delivering satisfactory results. Wicked policy problems that characterise today's policy climate are complex, interdependent and often require large groups of individuals to change their beliefs or actions to ensure success. They need the willing involvement of large numbers of individuals to make any real impact.

There is pressing need to revitalise this increasingly important and historically failing connection between citizen and state in many Western democracies. A mass engagement process with integrity, purpose and transparency could significantly strengthen the civic culture and stimulate opening up of new spaces for citizens and the public realm to engage meaningfully and productively with each other. The nurturing of improved civic and social networks which would be an inherent part of any mass deliberative process would be a key measure of success for evaluating a mass engagement process's impact on society – with the ideal being that momentum gathers spontaneously and spills over, creating positive side effects;

> *"The optimal outcome is if all those people who are out there voting after the fact start talking online about whatever issue and that many to many participation take up would be a sign that an issue has taken hold and will not be a one time blip. If you can engage people in that fashion I think you will get all kinds of payoffs...to get them off the sidelines and into more engagement and involvement with politics."* Interviewee

The implementation of a more equitable civic space to engage on public policy could contribute towards redefining and reinvigorating civil society in the UK- on the citizens' terms.

iii) Accountability and trust

Making policy with the public on a mass scale provides a unique opportunity to increase trust in government. It also promotes a widespread increase in public understanding of the trade-offs and dilemmas involved in policy decision making. Taking this more open approach to policy-making, one which actively invites public scrutiny and criticism in to improve the policy decision making process could increase trust in institutions.

If a more open approach to policy making and government is to be achieved, then a clearly defined and transparent mass engagement process which enables policy makers to express uncertainty and to embrace criticism could be valuable in formulating better public policy and in improving public services.

iv) Harnessing public energy

We are currently experiencing a rebalancing of power between existing institutions and emerging citizen-centred networks. People are self organising around single issues that are important to them and bypassing traditional political channels of influence. This is reflected in the trend away from party membership and voter turnout[42] and towards single issue activism and campaigning.[43]

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42 Seyd and P Whiteley, 'British party members: an overview', Party Politics 10, no 4 (2004).
43 Serving a Cause Serving a Community, (Demos, 2006)D.Alexander, S.Creasy

The uptake of new technology lies at the heart of this movement as a key enabler and therefore any mass engagement process using collaborative technology would seem to demand a similarly networked approach. There is a tremendous opportunity to harness the work done by existing and emerging online and offline networks to drive a mass deliberation process onward exponentially and to take discussion to a local level more effectively.

3. What are the benefits and disadvantages of using *technology* for mass deliberation?

i) Convenience

People are busier than ever and have less time and energy to participate in activities outside work and home[44]. This does not necessarily mean they do not want to engage with policy issues. Single issue activism is an area where people are coming together on areas of personal interest.[45] Traditional engagement opportunities can make it difficult for people to participate in terms of time, money and travel to a venue. New asynchronous methods offered by technology mean a less time-dependent means to engage provided by the convenience of mobile phones and computers and TV.

> *"Central to successful public policy making, Britain must now redefine the relationship between individuals, communities and public services for a time-squeezed population that increasingly views consumer choice and non-political activism as their priority."[46]*

On the other hand, many people will not find the time to participate if they perceive that either the technology medium or policy area is not relevant to them.

ii) Choice

A technology focused project will provide people with more choice and control over how they engage with an issue. The depth to which they engage can be at any point on a scale from surface level activity to fully engaged participation. The time at which they participate and place from where they participate are made flexible through providing a variety of different media through which the process works. Multiple pathways and flexible technology could help to attract a more diverse range of users. Combine the online and tech-based elements of such a process with face to face discussion and targeted outreach, and the process could be truly inclusive.

> *"You need multiple ways, you can't have a system where everyone has to participate in all the elements for months."* Interviewee

iii) Widening horizons

It has been argued[47] that likeminded people flock together in an online context. However, research from the Pew Internet and American Life project[48] shows that in fact, when using the internet to find out

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44 Henley Centre Headlight Vision, Planning for Consumer Change (2007)
45 For example, on environmental issues, between 1971 and 2002 Friends of the Earth grew from 1000 members to 119,000 and between 1981 and 2002 Greenpeace grew from 30,000 to 221,000 members
46 *Participation Nation* (Involve, 2007) Ed. S.Creasy,
47 Sunstein, C. (Princeton University Press, 2002) *Republic.com*
48 E-Gov and E-Policy Survey (2004) http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/141/report_display.asp

information, people are more likely to be exposed to views opposing their own. This could lead to a quality of deliberation and understanding on tough issues that are higher than through conventional media alone.

iv) Expanding the Reach of Face-to-Face Deliberation

Rather than replacing traditional forms of engagement, technology can enhance the reach and power of face-to-face deliberation. The experience of America*Speaks*' 21st Century Town Meeting® has demonstrated that the integration of keypad polling, groupware computer systems and interactive television can help to connect very large groups of people together and aggregate their priorities. By combining these technologies with deliberation, everyone can have a voice among hundreds or thousands of discussions.

v) Digital Divide

Certain groups of individuals will be less likely to engage with the online element of a mass deliberation process and some groups will not be able to engage with those elements at all. However, the use of incentives with more traditional mass media channels such as TV and newspapers, which have wider demographic audiences, could achieve better representation.

Involving those who do not have access to technology would require alternative methods for soliciting input.

Catering for many different levels of media literacy is an issue for a scaled-up engagement process hoping to engage a diverse range of people through technology. Interfaces must be tested rigorously by a diverse user group for usability and relevance to avoid poor uptake and drop out.

vi) Cost and Complexity

A large scale deliberation process using technology and mass media will be complex to run and potentially expensive[49]. In terms of cost per participant involved, it is likely that through an economy of scale you would get a "bigger bang for your buck", i.e. a lower cost per person.

Such large numbers being involved could also, as interviewees pointed out, deliver value through generating indirect participation through creating a 'buzz' and embracing the many-to-many communication opportunities – such as user generated content and the open source options that are available.

4.Who would participate in a mass engagement process and why?

i) Demographics and representation

In addition to the issues outlined in the Digital Divide section above there are further questions to be asked around which demographic groups would participate in any process, be it online or off.

> *"There's the issue of public talk as a tool for policy advice is a more liberal, lefty endeavour. It is not something that a more paternal conservative political order is necessarily going to champion or feel is their right as a citizen."* Interviewee

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49 Total cost of deliberations: £900,799

The desire to include and involve excluded groups was expressed by many interviewees; it was thought that young people in particular would stand to gain through a more technology-based format.

> *"Technology might not be in the world of certain people, but for young people it is their lives – it is relevant. It makes a pretty sensible strategy to use that to get them involved in politics and policy."* Interviewee

Whether or not the process would have to be fully representative in order to ensure legitimacy was another contentious issue.

> *"I think that just getting people involved at this point is the important part – we are not going to have a completely representative sample of people unless you really go out of your way. Just getting them involved at the start is the important part, focus on diversity later."* Interviewee

> *"The digital divides is a big issue. It won't be a representative process – does that matter. Also, who actually blogs - just a group of interesting fanatics? Again, not representative."* Interviewee

Supplemental recruitment methods are advocated by organisations such as America*Speaks* who believe that a process must be demographically representative in order to have credibility. The first step in achieving this is to determine who must be involved in the process, in order for it be seen as legitimate. Next, a recruitment strategy should be developed to identify points of contact with groups who may be underrepresented. Implementation of the outreach strategy is characterised by frequent performance measurements and necessary adjustments. This approach would ensure participation by more than the 'usual suspects' thereby increasing the process' political capital with the public, the media, and decision makers.

ii) Decision Makers: connecting with power

Whether or not decision makers need be directly involved in a process was a divisive issue amongst interviewees.

> *"No politician would listen to information captured in this way and it's quite an expensive and time consuming process to run."*

> *"Public dialogue unattached to power is just hot air? I think this is overly cynical, but if there's a legitimate way to be heard that's very important but you're asking people to give up their time to participate, to get engaged – so you do have to make an opportunity to be heard."*

Where the outcomes of a process are policy-oriented, involving decision makers can create the conditions for direct implementation of public priorities. Decision makers who experience and understand a process are better positioned to incorporate the principles of public engagement in their own work. Like any other important constituency, decision makers must be involved early on to ensure they too are engaged in the process. Also like other stakeholders, a process' relationship with decision-makers must be free from their bias or influence.

Some of those who were interviewed thought that giving voice to a large number of people would negate the need for decision makers to be directly involved in a process focused on 'citizen voice'. Others thought that the support of key decision makers throughout a process was central to ensuring change and impact.

> *"The important thing is to get policy makers to buy into it. Some have a preconception on what feedback is valuable and what is not. Getting those people to receive guidance from it and to accept the project is a little bit humbling as it is recognition that we [the decision makers] don't have all the answers."*

Whether to use a model which directly involved politicians or to include them as participants on a level playing field would be dependent on the overall aims and framing of the process.

iii) Irresistible Engagement

Ensuring that the process is highly engaging is a priority. Initiatives such as the BBC's 360 degree multiplatform project Springwatch[50] attract millions to engage beyond merely viewing the broadcast programme. This project involved people in observing wildlife in their neighbourhoods, watching programmes both broadcast TV and online as well as interacting online. Important lessons in terms of the formats and subject matter that large numbers of people will actively seek to engage with can be adapted from various popular models already in existence.

> *"You need equal parts of the fun of TV and then the serious 'this is about the future of the country' type of stuff."* Interviewee

Concerns were expressed that when government becomes directly involved in engagement processes that there may be a tendency to undervalue the entertainment or game elements which can underpin attracting the public to participate on a mass scale.

> *"People have no reason to engage in this way. You would probably rather go and watch something more engaging or interesting or just do something else."* Interviewee

Successfully combining genuinely entertaining and engaging elements with meaningful and serious deliberative engagement will require partnerships between those instigating the policy deliberation process and those designing its mass appeal to be carefully managed.

iv) Creating Ownership of the Process

We know that key to getting citizens to buy into any engagement process is allowing them some explicit scope to shape the process itself. This can happen in a number of ways, through face to face events, by supporting citizens to add or amend questions to those proposed or to be involved in setting the agenda in the first place through online discussion, capture and dissemination of stories through YouTube and other social networking sites.

> *"Have a TV show, then have local meetups using packs, or use blogs in some ways they are designed for deliberative discussion, that's what they're about. Why build something more complicated? You need a hub, a leader, someone who'll start talking and give their opinion."* Interviewee

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[50] http://tinyurl.com/2gmegy

Citizen initiated groups working at a local level can add to the reach of a mass engagement process but it is worth noting that many active citizens have experienced more than their fair share of public processes that have been manipulated or have produced nothing beyond a report that ends up on a shelf. In order to earn the public's trust and ensure that participation is meaningful, it is essential that people have the ability to transparently see how their participation will make a difference. Giving people a chance to add to the policy options being discussed and set priorities for discussion can play a significant role in creating a sense that everyone's participation matters.

v) Differing Motivations

There is currently a strong user generated content presence on the web, particularly from younger people. Although this indicates that certain groups do not find technology a barrier to online participation, other groups certainly do. Pew's typology study[51] and Ofcom's consumer engagement segmentation model[52] of different kinds of technology user reveal different motivations and attitudes towards technology across different demographics. Recognising the need to appeal to different types of user is key to any mass engagement process in order to ensure inclusion and maximum participation.

> *"It's about creating multiple channels through which folks could both let others know about the process and to arm up their heads around the issue – that's how to use social networking in this scenario before you even start deliberating."* Interviewee

vi) Targeting Engagement

It is a fact that certain individuals are more engaged and involved in civil society than others. A 2007 Ipsos MORI report identifies such engaged individuals as 'sociopolitical influencers' – those who hold sway in their communities.[53] IPDI (Institute for Politics Democracy and the Internet) have also studied this active section of society in their report *Polifluentials*[54].

Reaching out to such individuals would be essential in widening the participation reach of the project in the hope that they would invite and influence less naturally engaged individuals to participate thereby improving outreach into groups less likely to participate. Reaching these individuals is important to the success of a mass deliberation process as although trust in and deference towards experts and institutions is in decline the proportion identifying word-of-mouth as their best source of ideas and information has increased from 67% in 1977 to 92% in 2005.[55]

vii) User generated engagement

Viewpoints captured on video and pda devices by process participants were seen by interviewees as being a valuable way of helping the public set the agenda on the issues that matter most to them.

> *"Spontaneous reactions to events, a rapid organising of collective action at the grass roots, peer to peer communications. These are the characteristics of this movement."* Interviewee

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[51] Typology of ICT users (2007) http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_ICT_Typology.pdf
[52] Ofcom consumer engagement research: http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/consumer_engagement/
[53] Socio-Political Influencers, MORI (2007)
[54] Polifluentials Institute for Policy Democracy and the Internet, Washington (2007)
[55] Socio-Political Influencers, MORI (2007)

The subsequent effect would be in improving interest and participation levels by chiming more closely with popular interest and methods of popular choice for involvement. The spontaneously produced content that already exists on the web is not necessarily heard by decision makers and so cannot feed into a process of change.

> *"I think that if people are given an opportunity to be heard in a meaningful way, people are excited by that opportunity. Increasingly as citizens feel isolated from democracy this gives them a fresh chance to be heard and that's a very motivating factor."* Interviewee

B2. Case studies

The case studies presented below have been chosen to illustrate varied aspects of deliberative and multiplatform engagement that have been undertaken to date - with a particular focus on learning from the US experience. We have not chosen to focus on some of the better known large deliberative processes from the UK in this report such as YourHealthYourCareYourSay as they have already been documented elsewhere.[56]

1. The **Voices and Choices, Ohio** case study aims to show how a combination of different techniques including online, face to face and mass media can be successfully combined to upscale deliberative engagement to a large regional conversation.

2. The **Ontario Citizens Assembly** case study demonstrates how deliberation can be undertaken very thoroughly on a large local scale primarily using face to face methods with some online support. It also demonstrates how the results of a medium sized deliberation event may not reflect the views of the wider populace and looks at some of the reasons why this might be.

3. The **Sinceslicedbread** case study shows how an incentive can help achieve more diverse representation, how an online initiative can be grown primarily using word of mouth, how interest can be sustained beyond the initial timeframe of the project using a website and how the subject opened for discussion can be defined by the participants themselves.

4. The **ByThePeople** case study shows a way of using Deliberative Polling® to reach a representative group of people, it demonstrates that people are willing to engage on the issues that are relevant to their own lives, and demonstrates a model for national-local reach using TV, online and face to face in conjunction.

5. The **CaliforniaSpeaks** case study shows how large face to face deliberative events can link into a wider deliberative process on a single issue, in this case healthcare and how the outcomes of the process are taken up by decision-makers as a result.

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[56] Your Health Your Care Your Say, http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4138622

# Case Study 1: Voices and Choices, Ohio

Background

In 2002, it became apparent to local leaders that Northeast Ohio was in a "quiet crisis", the likes of which threatened the well-being of the 16-county region. While the rest of the United States seemed to be emerging from a recession, Northeast Ohio continued to spiral downward, with unemployment rates higher than the national average and the average annual wage of workers remaining stagnant. In just two years, Northeast Ohio lost over 15% of its manufacturing jobs, with devastating impact to all facets of life. Per capita income rates were losing ground against national averages, sliding from 98% of the national average in 1990 to 94% by 2002.

Within this environment, the philanthropic organizations of Northeast Ohio came together to create the Fund for Our Economic Future with a mission of revitalizing the regional economy. The Fund launched in February 2004 with 30 founding members and a goal of pooling $30 million dollars for economic development grant making over a three-year period. Today, the Fund includes more than 90 funding organizations, which have stepped forward to commit their dollars, ideas, and hard work to improving the region's economic future.

In early 2005, the Fund awarded a grant to America*Speaks* to launch a unique program to engage tens of thousands of citizens and leaders in setting the region's economic priorities, called **Voices & Choices**. The Fund created Voices & Choices out of the recognition that many reinvigoration plans have already been developed behind closed doors and by a handful of leaders, but not enough work has been done to engender the public support needed for any of them to succeed. Such support is critical if the region is to muster the political will for change and create an environment in which regional initiatives can flourish.

The Voices and Choices Process
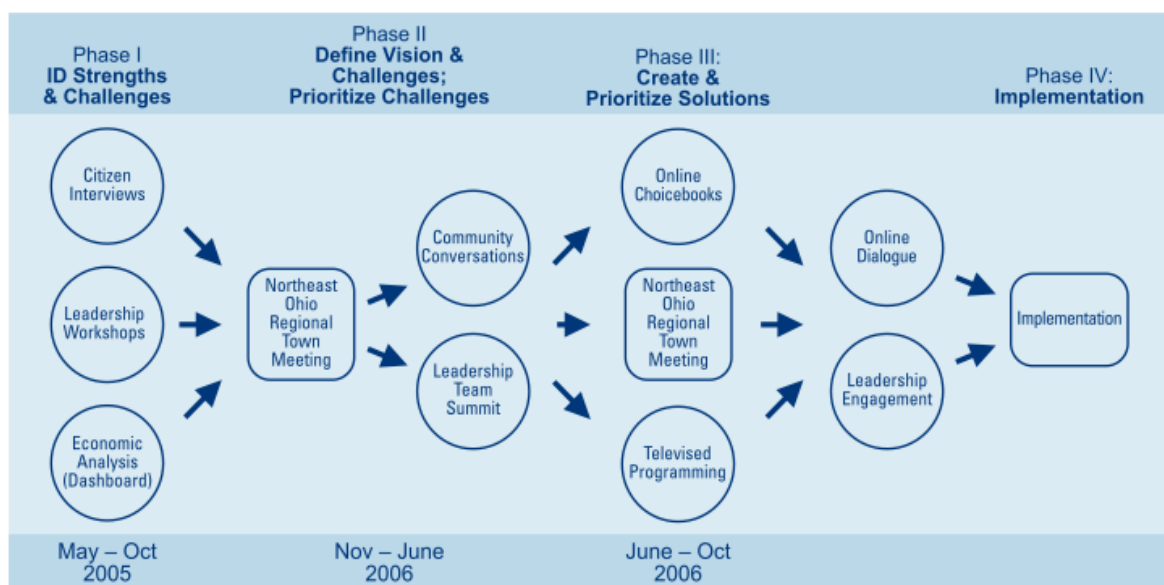
The Process

The Process

Between August, 2005 and December 2006, Voices & Choices engaged more than **21,000 citizens and leaders** in deliberations to identify the greatest challenges facing Northeast Ohio. In March 2007, the project announced a regional action plan, called Advance Northeast Ohio to implement the priorities that emerged from the process.

America*Speaks* and the Fund designed a unique public engagement strategy that engaged thousands of people through the integration of multiple models of participation in order to create a truly regional discussion (see above).

In the Autumn and early Winter of 2005, Voices & Choices engaged nearly 5,000 citizens and leaders through three kinds of forums.

- **Leadership Workshops:** Over the course of three weeks in late August and early September, the program engaged more than 1,000 regional leaders in a series of eleven four hour workshops across the region, supported by keypad polling and groupware computers. Each workshop involved about 100 leaders, including elected officials, business leadership, university presidents, non-profit directors and other leadership.

- **Citizen Interviews:** Working with a team of local universities, Voices & Choices launched its Citizen Interviews effort in August of 2005. Based on an Appreciative Inquiry methodology, Voices & Choices prepared an interview protocol that helped individual citizens interview other citizens about the region's greatest strengths. Over a four-month period, more than 8,000 interview protocols were distributed with commitments to conduct interviews and 3,000 reports were collected.

- **Regional Town Meeting:** In November 2005, Voices & Choices convened a 21st Century Town Meeting® for a demographically and regionally representative group of 750 citizens to begin prioritizing regional challenges. The large-scale town meeting integrated keypad polling, groupware computers and intimate facilitated deliberation.

Following the November Regional Town Meeting, Voices & Choices sought to bring thousands of additional people into the process of prioritizing the region's greatest challenges. To do so, Voices & Choices launched its **Community Conversations** – decentralized discussions that took place in homes, schools, churches, community centres and places of work. Most Community Conversations lasted 1-2 hours and included between 8 and 200 people.

The first two phases of the Voices & Choices process identified a set of six top challenges facing the region. In response, the initiative convened six Tough Choices committees to identify a diverse set of options for addressing each of these challenges. These Tough Choices (options for setting the region's economic agenda) went through an extensive vetting process by citizens and leaders in the third phase of Voices & Choices:

- **Online Choicebooks:** Voices & Choices partnered with Ascentum to design online interactive workbooks that allowed thousands of people to learn about the Tough Choices and express preferences between them. Citizens could complete any number of the Choicebooks, coming back to the website at their own pace. At the end of the process,

participants received a summary report of their responses and were encouraged to bring this information to the upcoming Regional Town Meeting.

- **Regional Town Meeting:** In September 2006, Voices & Choices convened 900 citizens in Akron to review the Tough Choices and make decisions about the regional priorities for Northeast Ohio. The priorities articulated at the Regional Town Meeting constitute the primary strategies that are driving implementation of the region's economic agenda.

- **"Make Your Choice":** Voices & Choices partnered with 10 television stations in the Cleveland and Youngstown markets to educate the public about the tough choices that were being dealt with in the Online Choicebooks and at the Regional Town Meeting.

- **Online Dialogue Circles:** Following the Regional Town Meeting, the public was invited to go online to participate in small group discussions, called Dialogue Circles, to discuss the priorities that emerged from the process and what they meant for implementation.

- **Leadership Briefings:** Prior to finalizing the agenda, Voices & Choices worked with hundreds of leaders to secure their commitment to the final regional priorities in order to ensure their support at the announcement of the action plan.

Impact

A regional action plan called Advance Northeast Ohio was announced in March 2007, which emerged directly from the public priorities that were produced from the Voices & Choices process. Along with the 90 philanthropic organizations that make up the Fund for Our Economic Future, 70 public and private institutions have joined Advance Northeast Ohio as implementation partners – each making a commitment to the regional action plan.

The scale of participation in Voices & Choices had a dramatic impact on the political environment of the region as the notion of regional cooperation has started to take root across Northeast Ohio. The Mayor of Cleveland, for example, adopted regionalism as one of his most prominent agenda items. Regional cooperation was a focal point for the mayor's first state of the city address and the mayor proposed a series of ambitious proposals to foster greater cooperation between Cleveland and suburban governments. Similarly, other mayors and leaders have begun to take steps in response to the regional conversation.

Case Study 2: Ontario Citizens' Assembly

The process

In 2006-2007 a randomly selected group of 103 citizens took part in a long term face to face deliberative process in Ontario, Canada. The subject of the deliberation was around reform of the electoral system. The participants met twice a month over eight months and examined the existing electoral system and learned about other systems.

At the end of the process, they voted for or against the proposal to adopt a particular course of action as informed by the process they had participated in. They consulted with the public through meetings and written submissions. Using what they learned and heard, they recommended that Ontario adopt a new electoral system. That recommendation was outlined in a report submitted to the government on May 15th 2007.

One of the guiding principles of the Assembly was to Involve as many Ontarians as possible in the process. The citizens selected for the Assembly would be at the centre, but a significant part of their role would be to take into account what they heard from people across the province. The idea being that the more people who could be engaged that the more meaningful the deliberations and decision of the Assembly would be.

Technology Components

- Website which provided members of the public who were not part of the Assembly to follow along using the same materials as the deliberating group
- Online forum hosting public discussion about the work of the assembly
- Assembly meetings were broadcast on TV

Core group
103 citizens
52 women and **51** men
Age groups: (18 to 24): **11, (**25 to 39): **23**, (40 to 54): **32,** (55 to 70): **26**
16 face to face meetings of the assembly

Outreach beyond core group:
41 Public meetings held across the province
4 Public outreach meetings targeted at excluded groups
501 members of the public presented at a public consultation meeting
Assembly meetings were also televised

Impact

In May 2007, the Assembly recommended by a decision of 94 votes to 8 that Ontario should adopt a form of mixed member proportional representation instead of the existing first past the post system.

The Assembly's recommendation was then put to the Ontario voters in a referendum on October 10th 2007. The proposal was rejected by 63% of voters. This stands in marked contrast to the 84% of the Citizens' Assembly members who supported the proposal.

The result raises interesting points. Advocates of deliberation argue that the randomly selected citizens represent society at large. How can we then explain this discrepancy?

For some the problem is that while the assembly members had access to accurate information the general public were not provided with good information through the media and thus weren't able to make an informed decision.

NDP Leader Howard Hampton supported this view saying that "the referendum had no chance. All across the province, people didn't know what the issue was. They didn't know what mixed member proportional stood for."

Others believed that it was the Assembly members who were manipulated by the process and that the public saw through what was an essentially flawed proposal. Some thought that the electoral body – elections Ontario didn't explain the issues clearly enough to voters.

Case Study 3: Sinceslicedbread.com

Background

The online community consultants EchoDitto ran the sinceslicedbread project in 2004 for the Services Employees International Union (SEIU). The purpose of the project was to generate interest and new ideas around policy making amongst the general public, particularly those who are not traditionally participants in policy making.

Process

The project was funded by the SEIU who commissioned EchoDitto to run an American Idol style policy competition. The idea being that any American with an idea could submit it to the competition, and then any American could vote on the best idea. The best idea would then win a $100,000 cash prize. It was billed to the public as a competition asking the question "What's your common sense idea?"

Over 22,000 ideas were submitted – most of those were unique entries .1000 of those ideas were actually submitted by post. The next stage after the initial idea submission stage closed was that people could vote for others' policy ideas and rate them on a star scale. The public cast 41,081 ballots from every state across the USA during two rounds of voting.

They could then also comment and review the various policy ideas. 48,000 reviews were submitted, there were 22.5million hits, and 125,000 unique visitors to the site. All of this interest and participation was initially generated without a publicity campaign – solely on word of mouth.

As the site developed, top reviewers and top taggers were regularly contacted and used as a mini-focus group and a word-of-mouth marketing engine to continue to grow site activity and improve site features. The prize was also seen to be instrumental in driving the project forward, and as interest grew, media attention also focused on the competition with more than 125 media stories in diverse publications. The contest also attracted the attention of more than 351 blogs and support from organizations including MoveOn.org, Democracy for America, and Rock the Vote. The real discussion and community on the site was generated in the idea reviewing process, where people engaged in a lot of dialogue and discussion. Although idea reviewing was closed when the voting process began, idea reviewing was re-opened after the contest ended due to popular demand.

Once the idea submission stage had closed, a panel of experts took the ideas and narrowed them down to 75 of the top rated ideas and these were then voted out by the public on elimination each week. When 21 ideas were left all contestants were brought to Washington DC on the day of the State of the Union address and all of their ideas were published in a book.

The demographic research done on participants showed a skew towards middle and lower income groups which was unusual for an internet based policy initiative. The structure of the entrance conditions required entrants to produce a reasonably developed policy idea. Entrants were

committed enough to go through this process in order to get involved in the competition. This skew towards middle and lower income may have been incentivised particularly by that $100,000 cash prize – a real incentive for lower income people and not so much of an incentive for higher income.

Impact

After the final event and the publication of the ideas in a pamphlet there was a lot of enthusiasm to continue the project. A kit was constructed which helped support people to take their ideas to a member of congress and try and get elected officials to adopt the ideas. Some local cities also requested that they could use the software for policy deliberations.

After the competition closed, respondents were surveyed, and for respondents who thought sinceslicedbread should shift its focus towards implementing ideas, only one advocated another ideas contest. This suggests that prize money may not be necessary to sustain and continue building the community. The most resounding theme was a call for sinceslicedbread to become a force for idea-implementation, not just idea-generation. One of the final three ideas was actually introduced as legislation by Hilary Clinton - sinceslicedbread community members sent more than 10,692 emails and faxes to their senators, asking them to support Senator Clinton's Minimum Wage bill.

Case Study 4: Deliberation Week

Background

Deliberation week was a series of coordinated deliberations run by 'By The People' (BTP)- itself an ongoing project organized by MacNeil/Lehrer Productions- a television production company based in the USA. BTP aim to bring the views of informed, "ordinary" citizens to a national discussion on the important issues of the day. Since it was launched in 2002 BTP has supported in excess of 200 Citizen Deliberations across the USA and more than 100 national and local Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) programmes, on a wide variety of issues from national security to healthcare.

One of the aims of BTP in general is to bring together diverse groups of citizens who don't usually participate in conversations on civic and policy issues. In order to reach out into the community BTP utilise a network of local clubs and organizations, community colleges, and PBS stations, which host events around the country. Events range in type from day-long dialogues to evening expert panel presentations at community colleges – they include both film screenings and conversations at local libraries.

Process

Deliberation Week was a project that ran in 2005 and engaged citizens in discussion around key policy issues. BTP supported Citizen Deliberations across the US during the week of October 22-29, 2005. Events focused either on healthcare or education, two issues prominent on the national agenda which related closely to individuals' concerns. The Citizen Deliberations ranged from day-long discussions using Deliberative Opinion Polls® and therefore using a random sample of participants to smaller scale conversations with participants drawn from local community groups. Community colleges also held a number of Deliberation Week events. Participants at each event had the opportunity to explore national and local concerns related to healthcare or education.

There was a PBS broadcast of the events which took place shortly after the deliberation week forums covered by local PBS stations and their civic partners.

A national online deliberative poll® also took place in coordination with the event which informed citizens. This online element took place over five weeks as participants engaged in weekly small group dialogues with trained moderators, using special software and interacting through voice rather than text. They discussed balanced briefing materials and posed questions to experts from different points of view. Their views changed significantly about policy options, about public officials and about each other.

Impact

Engaged a diverse group of individuals to take part in a deliberative process – people who may not have otherwise been involved in policy conversations. This is on account of the method of participant selection used in the Deliberative Opinion Polling® method.

Demonstrated the kind of opinion shifts took place when people became more informed about the issues in question and discussed them productively.

Case Study 5: CaliforniaSpeaks

Background

On August 11th 2007 America*Speaks* and a number of supporting organisations led a state-wide conversation on the future of healthcare in California, known as CaliforniaSpeaks. One of the biggest ever single day face-to-face citizen engagement processes[57], the ambitious initiative engaged around 3,500 people at eight simultaneous events across California.

Involve attended the event and this case study is based on observations we made and interviews carried out.

Nearly five million Californians live without health insurance and millions of others struggle with skyrocketing costs and the threat of losing their own coverage. Early in the year, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declared 2007 the "year of health care reform." In response, state leaders developed a wide range of major reform proposals that would be considered by the state legislature.

Schwarzenegger's proposal involved a mixed set of measures, including a requirement that employers provide health insurance or pay into a state insurance pool, that health care providers and insurers pay a new fee, and that all individuals be legally required to carry health insurance. California would use the new fees to expand free or low-cost health insurance to those with low incomes, would allow higher income individuals to purchase "catastrophic" insurance, and would require insurance companies to sell insurance to any applicant – known as 'Guaranteed Issue'.

By mid-year, two different proposals from the Democratic leadership that also relied on an employer mandate merged into Assembly Bill 8 (AB8) and were seen as the most politically viable alternative to the Republican Governor's proposal. Another Democratic bill with significant support among the public proposed a single pay or system, SB840. A similar bill to SB840 had passed the legislature in a previous session and was vetoed by the Governor. Republican legislators also introduced a series of proposals for various free-market based reforms.

The Process

The aim of the public engagement process was to discuss proposals for reforming California's health care system and send a message to state leaders about the public's priorities. The process used America*Speaks*' 21st Century Town Meeting® methodology. Participants at eight meeting sites sat in small groups with trained facilitators and used keypad polling and groupware computers to aggregate their ideas and priorities. Governor Schwarzenegger participated in the event, as did the Speaker of the State Assembly, the President of the State Senate, and the Minority Leader of the State Assembly.

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[57] –In 2002, America*Speaks* convened 4,300 New Yorkers at a single-site 21st Century Town Meeting® to provide the public with a voice in shaping the designs for the World Trade Center site after the attacks of 9/11.

Gordon Brown's recent Citizen Juries were run on a similar model as we saw here. The difference in California was the scale of the process. Six hundred people participated in the Los Angeles site, which was linked to seven other meeting sites by satellite, similar to Live8. In addition to the eight primary sites, America*Speaks* organized several low tech community meetings, which could view the larger meetings through a webcast and vote through the internet.

1) Electronic keypads were used to capture participants' votes throughout the day
2) Networked-laptop computers were used at each table to capture small group discussions
3) A satellite system linked the eight meetings sites
4) Informational website – the event was streamed simultaneously over the web

8 Meeting Sites: San Diego, Riverside, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, Fresno, Oakland, Sacramento and Humboldt County.
400 Trained Facilitators: volunteered their time to support the small-group dialogue.
3,500 Californians attended
120,000 People Contacted: In order to ensure that a diverse group participated.
300,000 Letters Sent
+2,000,000 Phone Calls
6 non profit Foundations**:** Blue Shield of California Foundation, The California Endowment, and The California Wellness Foundation. Additional funding was provided by the Alliance Health Foundation, the Sierra Health Foundation, and the San Francisco Foundation.

Impact

It is hard to measure the precise impact of the process thus far. We do know that the process mobilised hundreds of participants to contact their legislators by phone or mail, encouraging them to act on health care reform this term. In fact, each participant left the venue with infopacks to support them in writing to congress and to editors – this paper pack was complemented by further online resources.

Ninety-five percent of participants reported having discussed California's healthcare system with others since the town meeting. Participants were also significantly more likely to have taken action on the healthcare issue since August; 40% reported having contacted their representative compared to 12% for non-participants. Eight-percent said they had contacted the media compared to 3% of non-participants.

The Governor and members of the Legislature who participated in CaliforniaSpeaks have kept healthcare reform on the state's agenda. In late December 2007, the California state Assembly approved the first phase of a $14.4 billion plan to extend medical insurance to nearly all residents. However, the announcement of a $14 billion budget deficit for the state stalled the legislation in the Senate.

Before the end of the regular legislative session in mid-September, Governor Schwarzenegger called a special legislative session specifically to address healthcare reform. Many of the areas of negotiation surround the issues of greatest concern among CaliforniaSpeaks participants such as making sure any required healthcare coverage remain affordable and holding insurance

companies accountable for regulating costs.

At the time of writing the legislation has been passed by the California State Assembly, but has stalled in the State Senate following an announcement that the state faced a $14 billion budget deficit. Legislative leaders are looking to take the process forward.

B3. Process Components

In the table below we explore and explain some of the various components that could fit into a mass engagement process. Providing a number of ways in to a process will enable individuals to participate on their own terms - offering different levels of engagement to different demographic profiles which in combination could be a powerful way of reaching a broad group of people in a way that will appeal to their diverse engagement requirements.

The tools described below are broken down into particular applications for the purposes of this document. However, this is an artificial division for reasons of clarity. The significance of these various components is their ability to form a meaningful, accessible and efficient whole system and the aggregator below is intended to:

1. Explain the component clearly

2. Suggest some possible uses for it in a deliberative process

3. Point out main advantages and disadvantages

Component	Uses within process	+/-
Text messaging Text messages are short, typed messages sent to or from mobile phones, they can also be sent from computers to mobile phones and vice versa. The most common form of text messaging is that which is	Remote comment posting to the web e.g. to Twitter, Facebook enabling people to contribute to online discussion when unable to access a computer terminal Sending out informational or motivational messages such as reminder texts for time-limited participation exercises or reminders to attend local face to face meetings Submitting answers to deliberative questions remotely using a	**+** Many people across demographic boundaries have access to mobile phones and are familiar users of the technology. **+** Young people are particularly well represented as mobile phone users. Good for targeting this underrepresented age group.

sent person to person but text messages can also be used to interact with automated systems for example information request services, polling and voting systems and reminder and advice services.	text and respond survey format Receiving snippets of information designed to inform deliberation and to promote consideration of the issues when unable to access a computer terminal Connecting shared interest groups together either to keep people informed of local events no matter where they are	**+** Short messages are simple, easier to understand and to write for those put off by long sections of text **+** Good to stay engaged with those who are not confident or regular internet users **-** Older people may not generally be such confident users of mobile phones and are less likely to own a mobile phone **-** Complex ideas are not easy to get across in text message format. More suitable for prompting or communicating discrete pieces of information. **-** Fees often apply to using text messages – this may be a barrier to low-income participants
User created video and images Whether from mobile phones, webcams or video cameras, the user generated	Video commenting using camera phones sent straight to web Video commenting to be used on TV broadcast or edited into longer videos made available on demand	**+** Many people across demographic boundaries have access to mobile phones and are familiar users of the technology. **+** Enables those less confident expressing

images both still and moving have been acting as a new way of information sharing for people online and off. Mobile phone screensavers are replacing the wallet-photo, and Flickr and Facebook are enabling sharing of experience both social and professional in new ways.	Video or image diaries of individual's engagement experiences which can be updated throughout the process to bring in the human story Possibility of online video to video conversations e.g. Seesmic Receiving clips or images straight to mobile that are designed to inform deliberation either online or face to face at a later date Video comments and blogs can be actively invited from a wide variety of individuals, not just self-selecting members of the public, giving real citizen faces and voices a public platform.	themselves through written submissions of information to participate **+** Young people are particularly well represented as mobile phone users. Good for targeting this underrepresented age group. **-** Particular demographic groups such as older people may not generally be such confident users of this technology. **-** Difficult to quantify benefits
Blogs A blog is a type of website, usually created in a diary format. It is highly interactive and participative as its user generated content format relies on the maintenance of an active community of commenters and contributors to connect on issues of common interest or disagreement. Bloggers tend	Centralised blogs can stimulate hubs of activity and conversation around which a network of bloggers and specific interest groups can build conversations and deliberative discussion A central blog could be used to host a discussion between experts with opposing views that others could then comment on and contribute to in a structured way Celebrity bloggers could attract specific audiences into engaging with the issues online	**+** Blog platforms enable people to contribute on a number of levels - as creators or owners, as authors, commentators or post-raters. **+** Blogs can be used to host video and image content which is very stimulating and visual – appealing to different ways of engaging **+** Blogs can be easily connected into many networks

to utilise many interactive and social-media tools in order to keep in touch with their online network of readers and contributors.	Existing blogging communities can take on the issues being discussed and bring them to specific constituent audiences in a powerful and immediate way Bloggers can provide very useful ongoing criticism of the online process if engaged with effectively	**+** Bloggers tend to be active participants in a community and as such can act as an influence on others to participate **-** May be intimidating for people to post comments and opinion into the public domain, particularly on controversial topics **-** Although good for stimulating connections and conversation blogs are not so useful for directly collecting hard data **-** Blogging comments can become adversarial and unproductive at times **-**Anonymity may lead to hostility
Video on Demand On demand refers to the trend towards consuming media whenever and whenever the person accessing the information requires it, usually used in	Enables any broadcast programmes produced as a focal point to be watched at the viewer's own convenience via the web hub Can easily be used to post out to YouTube and other external	**+** Bite-size convenient format **-** Particularly difficult to access on public computers or using slow internet connection

relation to video clips, TV, film or radio. Most often accessed online although increasingly using mobile devices.	sites rather than holding content on a central hub – therefore enabling better outreach	
Social Networking sites A social networking site is a tool that individuals use to keep in touch with one another. The sites enable their members to interact online in a number of ways such as such as chat, instant messaging, email, video, voice chat, file sharing, blogging, discussion groups,	Conversations on social networking sites can raise awareness about the process and enable people to begin discussing the issues. Sites can be used to arrange meet-ups and offline events thereby translating online discussion into offline action Citizen-initiated discussion and formation of groups on social networking sites is a useful barometer of public interest in the process	**+** Britain is embracing the social networking phenomenon – good outreach to many regular users **+**Many young people are involved in social networks – this could enable access to certain excluded groups **+**Campaigning on single issues is carried out successfully over social networks **-** Citizen-owned medium means that messages cannot be uniform – may lead to confusion of key messages **-**Difficult to quantify benefits
DigiTV Digital Interactive Television (DiTV) is a system through	Voting and polling can take place through the TV interface, thereby reaching demographic groups less likely to engage	**+** Can enable people to feel they are included in participation as they are watching a broadcast

which moving images and sound are broadcast and received. In contrast to analogue (traditional TV) the information is compressed into computerised binary information which takes up far less bandwidth allowing more channels to be broadcast, and allowing interaction via the 'red button' system.	with an online voting mechanism Polling opportunities and information can be provided at point of access to a captive audiences as the television focal point programming is broadcast	television programme **+** Can provide resources and further information on how to get involved to those unable to access the web **+** Polling or voting through TV **-** Clunky interface compared to the web **-** Purely digital channels have fewer viewers
Online Ratings Reputations are made online with user-generated ratings systems creating trust or otherwise.	Can be used to enable citizens to select most relevant ideas or solutions, making sure that the issues remain relevant Enables the process direction to be guided by citizen participants	**+** Helps to identify good comments and popular ideas and so distils arguments and articulate points –giving them more attention and focusing discussions **+** Keeps the process open to criticism and input– more transparent way of working **+** Keeps the process and discussion relevant to the majority of participants **-** May be abused or hijacked

Deliberative online surveys Online surveys which aim to provide education on the subject in question as part of the surveying process rather than simply seeking opinion.	Helps people to understand the issues in question more fully before answering questions regarding opinion or decisions that should be made on those issues Could be used to gather data on informed opinion by the end of the process Can be used as a compulsory precursor to placing a vote, thereby ensuring a sample of respondents have been exposed to certain pieces of information	**+** Accessed over the web at the individual's convenience so could increase numbers participating and enable those who cannot attend events to join in a deliberative activity **-** Can involve a lot of working alone and reading– this way of learning and working does not suit everybody and may exclude particular groups from engaging with the process
TV/Mass media Mainstream television and the press both online and off.	Press coverage can spread the reach of the debate and could be partnered to run exercises and deliberative events which then feed back into the central process. Local media can captures specific community based audiences and be used to recruit participants to take part in regional face to face deliberative events	**+** Good mass outreach to millions of people **+** Good demographic spread of potential audience when compared to the web **-** Not interactive unless combined with other activities
Meeting kits Practical kits which contain all of the ingredients needed to set up a deliberative	Local organisations, families and small groups can deliberate in a safe environment	**+** low-tech enables those who are not confident online to participate in a similarly deliberative experience to the online versions

discussion at home or in the community. This may include question suggestions, an agenda and tools to assist recording and reporting back.	Those with special needs and learning difficulties can be assisted to deliberate and voice opinion with human support	**+**Enables participants to tailor the deliberation experience to a level and format they favour **-**Cannot fully control the quality of deliberations

C. Appendices

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