

Dialogue Methods: A Typology of Community Dialogue Processes

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Summary

Dialogue processes in which institutions and communities interact are becoming increasingly common. This paper defines dialogue processes and sets out the most common types of dialogue process currently being used. To bring some clarity to the huge range of different titles currently used for dialogue process, this paper groups together dialogue processes with different names but very similar features. The types of dialogue process described are: 1) Consensus conference, consensus panel, citizens panel; 2) Deliberative polling; 3) Citizen's Jury; 4) Standing panel; 5) Charette; 6) Reference panel, advisory council, oversight group, citizen review panel; 7) Qualitative discussion groups/workshops, focus groups; 8) Public hearing/hui; 9) Deliberation; 10) Internet dialogue. Each dialogue type is illustrated by the listing of: alternative names, references, key features, issues addressed, participants, setting, those using it and the resources used. This paper can be used by those thinking about the range of dialogue processes available and for those wishing to select a dialogue process for a particular issue.

1 Definition of Community Dialogue Processes

Dialogue, public dialogue, public participation, citizen participation (Fiorino 1990) are a range of processes which are referred to in this paper under the generic heading of *community dialogue* processes. There is considerable variation in the way in which these different terms are used in the literature, however there are two elements that are believed to characterise a genuine community dialogue process. For a process to be a *community dialogue* process it should involve the following elements (Kass 2000):

- Deliberation – careful consideration of evidence, social interaction, discussion and debate, consideration of a range of views, and the opportunity to re-evaluate initial positions.
- Inclusion – involvement of a diverse range of individuals and groups, including previously excluded groups who are not represented in the normal stakeholder discussions.

The relevant literature promotes a range of arguments for using community dialogue processes (Controller and Auditor General 1998), (Hillary Commission 2001). These have been summarised by Fiorino (1990) who identified three major reasons lying behind the desire to conduct community dialogue processes. These are:

- A *normative argument* – that the community has a right to such dialogue processes simply as a consequence of its right to democracy. In our terminology we call this a *citizens' rights-based reason*.
- A *substantive argument* – that such processes are as likely, or more likely, to get to a correct conclusion than a system just using expert advisors (some believe an example of this is the discovery of the hazardous nature of Agent Orange). In our terminology we call this a *quality-based reason* – improving the quality of decisions that are made.
- An *instrumental argument* – that community dialogue processes increase the legitimacy and ease of implementation of the results of decision making processes. In our terminology we call this an *acceptance-based reason*.

This leads to us to define community dialogue processes as: *specifically designed processes at the community level (rather than government and institutional) that involve both deliberation and inclusion and are based on the belief that such inclusion is a citizen's right, may improve the accuracy of decision making and/or may assist in the community's acceptance of decisions.*

2 A Typology of Community Dialogue Processes

There is considerable information about community dialogue processes available from the literature; however, while dialogue processes are described under a range of different names, in a number of cases such names describe very similar processes. The proliferation of dialogue process names increases the literature’s inaccessibility, which is unfortunate because it already suffers from its spanning of a wide range of sectors and disciplines. The purpose of this typology is to assist in reducing the number of different names for dialogue processes so that different names reflect some significant differences in the processes they describe. The different mainstream dialogue processes which have been identified from the literature are set out in Table 1 below.

Name of dialogue process	Description
Consensus conference, consensus panel, citizens panel	A group of citizens are brought together to learn about, discuss, and give their views on an issue. Participants do not usually have decision-making authority. It is not intended as a mechanism to determine, but rather to inform public policy and stimulate debate.
Deliberative polling	A large, demographically representative group of people conducts a debate on an issue, usually with the opportunity to cross-examine key players. The group is polled on the issue before and after the debate. Participants do not have decision-making authority. Can have little opportunity for participants to deliberate with others.

<p>Citizen’s Jury</p>	<p>A group of citizens meet to carefully examine an issue of public significance. Jury receives, questions, discusses and evaluates presentations by experts on a particular issue. Participants do not usually have decision-making authority. Provides good opportunities for participants to deliberate with others.</p>
<p>Standing panel</p>	<p>National level standing panel available as a market research instrument for quantitative and qualitative research and consultation. Involves little power equality with process administrators. Participants do not have decision-making authority. Has no opportunity for participants to deliberate with others.</p>
<p>Charette</p>	<p>A workshop where members of the public engage with experts to jointly design solutions, can include brainstorming issues and possible solutions. Good opportunity for participants to deliberate with others. Participants usually have some decision-making authority.</p>
<p>Reference panel, advisory council, oversight group, citizen review panel</p>	<p>Often a relatively small group of experts or community representatives that meet with key decision-makers to review proposals or policy options and may submit proposals. Can open the possibility of significant participant</p>

	<p>interaction with decision-makers and other participants. Often established to provide advice on a specific project. Participants may have some decision-making authority (e.g. the right to veto).</p>
<p>Qualitative discussion groups/workshops, focus groups</p>	<p>Meeting with community members or stakeholder representatives to discuss issues. Can be used as a process to both inform and collect views and also foster debate. Can provide good opportunities for participants to deliberate with others. Participants do not usually have decision-making authority.</p>
<p>Public hearing/hui</p>	<p>Open, public fora in which interested citizens hear presentations regarding plans/issues and, ideally, voice their opinions and influence the direction of policy. Participants do not have decision-making authority. Can have little opportunity for participants to deliberate with others. Involves little power equality with process administrators.</p>

Each of these processes is described in detail in Appendix One. In each case the key features of the processes are described. The description includes: a list of issues addressed by the process; those who participate in the process; the settings in which they take place; those who use the process; the resources required by the process. References to the relevant literature are also given in the appendix. These processes provide a smorgasbord of options for selection by those planning dialogue processes.

3 Appendix One: Typology of Dialogue Processes

Name(s) of dialogue process	Key features	Issues addressed	Who participates?	Setting	Those using the process	Resources used in the process
<p>Consensus Conference</p> <p>Consensus panel</p> <p>Citizen's panel</p> <p>(The term <i>Consensus Conference</i> comes from Denmark where the citizen's panel process originated.)</p> <p>References for this section: IDEA 2001; Middendorf 1997; OECD 2001; Wynne 2000.</p>	<p>A group of lay people are brought together to learn about, discuss, and give their views on an issue.</p> <p>Participants have access to a range of experts that can provide information and answer questions.</p> <p>As the name implies these conferences seek the group's consensus views.</p> <p>Participants do not usually have decision-making authority.</p> <p>It is not intended as a mechanism to determine, but rather to inform public policy and stimulate debate.</p>	<p>Been used with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food irradiation • air pollution • radioactive waste management • plant biotechnology • science, technology and community cohesion. <p>In New Zealand, Talking Technology ran three processes on science and technology issues: Plant biotechnology, 1996 & 1999 Biological pest control, 1999</p> <p>Depending on the model, it can allow knowledge to be built up over a period of time with ample opportunity for reflection (and discussion with others).</p>	<p>Direct participation of interested lay people.</p> <p>10-20 people (by convention 16).</p> <p>Lay volunteers, with no prior knowledge of the topic.</p> <p>Selected by steering committee as "representative" of the general public (socio-economic & demographic characteristics).</p> <p>Because of small numbers you cannot be sure the results will be representative of the community as a whole.</p>	<p>Meet together for 1-3 days or a couple of hours on several occasions (e.g. 3/year).</p> <p>Can meet privately first and then usually in public, with media.</p> <p>Often used in 'national' issue settings.</p>	<p>Denmark, United Kingdom, Norway, Australia, New Zealand.</p> <p>Government departments and research councils.</p>	<p>Independent facilitator.</p> <p>Information for the panellists: preparatory demonstrations, lectures, experts for questioning (selected by stakeholder panel).</p> <p>Conclusions made available via report or press conference.</p> <p>Typical cost UK £ 85-100,000.</p>

Name(s) of dialogue process	Key features	Issues addressed	Who participates?	Setting	Those using the process	Resources used in the process
<p>Deliberative polling</p> <p>References for this section: IDEA 2001; Middendorf 1997; Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment 2000; OECD 2001.</p>	<p>A large, demographically representative group of people conducts a debate on an issue, usually with the opportunity to cross-examine key players.</p> <p>Can meet for between 2-4 days.</p> <p>The group is polled on the issue before and after the debate.</p> <p>Participants do not have decision-making authority.</p> <p>Can have good opportunity for participants to deliberate with others.</p>	<p>Can address a wide range of issues.</p> <p>Literature suggests that information does not necessarily make the public any more supportive of an issue.</p> <p>Many participants make their decisions based on core personal values and literature suggests that more information may have no effect on people's perceptions and opinions.</p>	<p>Direct participation of interested lay people.</p> <p>Perhaps several hundred people.</p>	<p>Varied settings. Can be more suited to local-level settings.</p>	<p>The United Kingdom; the New Zealand Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. (PCE used a pilot process of running a focus group before and after information was provided to participants.)</p>	<p>Typical cost UK - around £200,000 pounds.</p>

Name(s) of dialogue process	Key features	Issues addressed	Who participates?	Setting	Those using the process	Resources used in the process
<p>Citizen's Jury</p> <p>(Registered trademark of the Jefferson Center, USA)</p> <p>References for this section: IDEA 2001; Jefferson Center 2000; Middendorf 1997; OECD 2001; Wynne 2000.</p>	<p>A group of lay people, broadly representative of the population at large, meet to carefully examine an issue of public significance.</p> <p>Can use a quasi-courtroom setting.</p> <p>Jury is receiving, questioning, discussing and evaluating presentations by experts on a particular issue.</p> <p>Participants may not have decision-making authority. Some believe the process loses credibility if the sponsoring body does not accept the results.</p> <p>Provides good opportunities for participants to deliberate with others.</p>	<p>In the US issues addressed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro Solid Waste • Physician-Assisted Suicide • Land Use Plan • Issues in K-12 Education • Minnesota's Electricity Future • Comparing Environmental Risks • Hog Farming • Traffic Congestion Pricing. 	<p>Direct participation of interested lay people.</p> <p>12-20 (usually 18) individuals, randomly selected and demographically representative – a microcosm of the public.</p>	<p>Meet for 4-5 days.</p> <p>Planning a citizen's jury typically takes 3-4 months.</p> <p>Can occur in national or local level settings.</p>	<p>In the USA citizen's juries must be conducted or carefully monitored by the Jefferson Centre, a non-profit organisation.</p> <p>Used by the Ministry of Health in France in a review of the health system.</p> <p>In India with farmers.</p> <p>Similar processes used in by Territorial Local Authorities in New Zealand.</p>	<p>Large resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jurors are paid a stipend for their time. • Professionals are involved in the selection of the jury. • Independent facilitators. • Considerable staff time in preparation and running of the jury. • Writing up and disseminating of jury findings. <p>Key components of a US citizen's jury are an Advisory Committee, Telephone survey, Jury selection, Charge, Witness selection, Hearings, Recommendations, and Evaluation.</p> <p>Typical UK cost £15-25, 000.</p>

Name(s) of dialogue process	Key features	Issues addressed	Who participates?	Setting	Those using the process	Resources used in the process
Standing panel References for this section: IDEA 2001; Middendorf 1997; Irwin 2001; OECD 2001.	<p>National level standing panel available as a market research instrument for quantitative and qualitative research and consultation.</p> <p>Involves little power equality with process administrators.</p> <p>Participants do not have decision-making authority.</p> <p>Has no opportunity for participants to deliberate with others.</p> <p>A tool for ongoing public consultation in decision-making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of satisfaction with public services • Public consultation on the Biosciences • Gene therapy. <p>Could be used for tracking attitudes.</p>	<p>Direct participation of lay people.</p> <p>5,000 members of the public, selected as being “representative of the United Kingdom population in terms of age, gender, region and a wide range of other demographic indicators”.</p>	Used in national settings.	The United Kingdom Government, where it is called the Cabinet Office People’s Panel.	A company, MORI, manages the panel for the UK Government.

Name(s) of dialogue process	Key features	Issues addressed	Who participates?	Setting	Those using the process	Resources used in the process
<p>Charette</p> <p>References for this section: Killerby 2001; communications with officials.</p>	<p>A workshop where members of the public engage with experts to jointly design solutions, can include brainstorming issues and possible solutions.</p> <p>Good opportunity for participants to deliberate with others.</p> <p>Participants usually have some decision-making authority.</p>	<p>Urban planning issues in New Zealand, e.g. Waitakere City Council design of under-bridge with the citizens that used it most; designing playgrounds with children & parents.</p> <p>Conservation issues in New Zealand, e.g. Department of Conservation areas linking with local community around pest control solutions.</p> <p>May best suit issues where parties can generate ideas themselves and help make a better decision.</p>	<p>Direct participation of interested lay people – as local “experts” about their area and their needs.</p> <p>Face-to-face meetings, has been used in New Zealand with iwi representatives.</p>	<p>Often working with people from one geographical area to solve local problems.</p>	<p>New Zealand Territorial Local Authorities (e.g. Rotorua, Waitakere); and government departments eg Department of Conservation Area Managers in Northland and Fiordland.</p>	<p>Expert involvement (could include architects, engineers, sketchers etc.).</p> <p>Decision-makers need to be present, normally require follow-up with the end product and possible wider consultation.</p>

Name(s) of dialogue process	Key features	Issues addressed	Who participates?	Setting	Those using the process	Resources used in the process
<p>Reference Panels</p> <p>Advisory Councils</p> <p>Oversight Groups</p> <p>Citizens Review Panels</p> <p>References for this section: IDEA 2001; Middendorf 1997; Kass 2001; OECD 2001.</p>	<p>Often a relatively small group of experts or community representatives that meet with key decision-maker(s) to review proposals or policy options and may submit proposals.</p> <p>Can open the possibility of significant participant interaction with decision-makers and other participants.</p> <p>Can provide a means for citizens or their representatives to deliver policy proposals directly to policy makers.</p> <p>Often established to provide advice on a specific project.</p> <p>Participants may have some decision-making authority (e.g. veto).</p>	<p>Used with a very wide range of issues.</p> <p>Useful at the beginning of a consultation project to determine the range of issues to be addressed; in the middle to assist with buy-in; and at the end to assist with analysing responses and communicating results.</p>	<p>Typically participants are ‘experts’ or representatives of well-defined stakeholder groups.</p> <p>Technical experts often dominate the actual decision-making process and lay panel members are disadvantaged by the scientific and technical content of the issues.</p>	<p>Can occur at local or national levels.</p>	<p>New Zealand users include: Ministry of Justice Maori Reference Group; Land Information New Zealand Advisory Group for the review of the Public Works Act; Ministry of Youth Affairs Youth Development Strategy reference group.</p> <p>Provides face-to-face discussion with decision-makers, can allow early influence on scope and methods used in a consultation project.</p>	<p>Varies considerably.</p> <p>Requires secretariat services.</p> <p>May use independent facilitators.</p> <p>Travel and meeting expenses of group members.</p>

Name(s) of dialogue process	Key features	Issues addressed	Who participates?	Setting	Those using the process	Resources used in the process
<p>Qualitative discussion groups / workshops</p> <p>(Some people would use the term focus groups).</p> <p>References for this section: IDEA 2001; Middendorf 1997; Irwin 2001; Kass 2001; OECD 2001; Wynne 2000.</p>	<p>Meeting with community members or stakeholder representatives to discuss issues. Can be used as a process to both inform and collect views and also foster debate.</p> <p>A good process for issues where in-depth qualitative views are required.</p> <p>In a workshop setting, will often involve presentations followed by group discussion.</p> <p>Can provide good opportunities for participants to deliberate with others.</p> <p>Participants do not usually have decision-making authority.</p> <p>Can involve an expert resource person whom the participants can question about issues.</p>	<p>Extremely varied, in the science area includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biosciences • pest control • public health • Genetically Modified Organisms • nuclear power. <p>May have good potential for science – allows small groups to engage in dialogue with experts.</p>	<p>Direct participation of interested lay people and/or representatives of well-defined stakeholder groups.</p> <p>Allows the collection of comments and suggestions from representatives of certain target groups with a specific interest in a policy proposal or decision.</p> <p>Because of small numbers can't guarantee it will be statistically representative of the community as a whole. May require a number of groups to ensure good representation.</p>	<p>Often used in local settings or in multiple locations for national issues.</p> <p>In a true focus group would use a trained, neutral facilitator. Often this model is being abandoned in favour of interested members of project teams being present to engage in dialogue with the participants.</p>	<p>Very widely used.</p>	<p>Depending on who facilitates and writes up notes, cost of setting up a focus group \$500-5,000.</p>

Name(s) of dialogue process	Key features	Issues addressed	Who participates?	Setting	Those using the process	Resources used in the process
<p>Public Hearings / hui*</p> <p>References for this section: IDEA 2001; Middendorf 1997; Ministry of Justice 1997; Kass 2001; OECD 2001; Wynne 2000.</p> <p>* Hui is a Maori term commonly translated as 'meeting or assembly'.</p>	<p>Open, public fora in which interested citizens hear presentations regarding plans/issues, and ideally voice their opinions and influence the direction of policy.</p> <p>Can achieve good results from breaking large groups into smaller groups for discussions.</p> <p>Participants do not have decision-making authority.</p> <p>Can have little opportunity for participants to deliberate with others.</p> <p>Involves little power equality with process administrators.</p>	<p>Extremely varied.</p> <p>Not a good process if the stakeholders are very opposed to the issue or proposal being addressed.</p> <p>Can result in bad media, especially if the meeting is confrontational.</p> <p>Has a chequered past – communication can be very one-way.</p> <p>Can be effective if well organised.</p>	<p>Direct participation of interested lay people.</p> <p>Can target any population group. Naturally suits liaising with a specific geographical community.</p> <p>Can be quite informal to suit a range of people.</p>	<p>Often used in local settings or in multiple locations for national issues.</p> <p>Can be a useful first step or component in a larger programme of participation.</p>	<p>Frequently used internationally (UK, Australia, USA, NZ), from community groups to Parliamentary Select Committees.</p> <p>New Zealand Maori and many other first nations people have a particular cultural association with hui/open fora.</p>	<p>Cost of setting up the meeting.</p> <p>Publicity costs.</p> <p>Venue hire and catering.</p> <p>May use Independent Facilitators.</p> <p>If breaking into small groups – flip-chart paper, etc.</p> <p>Must have the time required to hear from many voices.</p>

Name(s) of dialogue process	Key features	Issues addressed	Who participates?	Setting	Those using the process	Resources used in the process
<p>Deliberation</p> <p>Kettering dialogue</p> <p>Reference for this section: Social & Civic Policy Institute.</p>	<p>Citizens working with each other to understand their own and others' views about issues.</p> <p>Draws attention to tensions between beliefs and motives.</p> <p>Encourages people to look for common ground, from where they can work towards solutions.</p> <p>Involves:</p> <p>Framing the issue, developing an issue guide, holding deliberation forum(s), and reporting views from the forum.</p> <p>Provides a good opportunity for participants to deliberate with others.</p>	<p>New Zealand: growing, selling and use of marijuana; economic development.</p> <p>US examples: rural development; reducing smog; environmental protection; adult literacy; state taxation</p> <p>Issues which suit deliberation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be of concern to a broad spectrum of community members • Should require choices but not have clear answers • Should require collaborative effort to be effectively addressed • May be those that could not be resolved in the past and need a new approach. 	<p>Direct participation of lay people.</p> <p>Can be used with a range of different sized groups. 20 participants recommended.</p>	<p>Can be used at a variety of levels. Developed particularly for use with local issues.</p> <p>Sessions of two hours in length are recommended.</p>	<p>The Kettering Foundation, USA.</p> <p>The Social and Civic Policy Institute, New Zealand (Porirua and Opotiki)</p> <p>The Social and Civic Policy Institute have adapted the process and produced a guide for New Zealand, "Public Policy in Practice: A Handbook on Deliberation".</p>	<p>Venue costs; facilitator(s); may involve questionnaires, analysis, etc.</p>

Name(s) of dialogue process	Key features	Issues addressed	Who participates?	Setting	Those using the process	Resources used in the process
<p>Internet dialogue</p> <p>References for this section: IDEA 2001; Middendorf 1997; OECD 2001.</p>	<p>Generic term for any form of interactive discussion that takes place through the internet.</p> <p>Can include on-line chat events, digital debates, and online discussions.</p> <p>Participants do not usually have decision-making authority.</p> <p>Potential for true deliberation dependent on the design, the way sites are used, and the extent of internet sophistication amongst users.</p>	<p>Has been used with a range of issues – particularly issues with an ICT focus. Issues addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public perceptions of landscape • electronic consultation • e-government planning. 	<p>Direct participation of interested lay people.</p> <p>Can be restricted to a selected list of participants, or open to anyone with internet access.</p> <p>Participation may be self-selecting and unrepresentative. Can have anonymity.</p>	<p>Can be used in local or national settings.</p> <p>This type of dialogue could also be used as part of other dialogue processes.</p>	<p>European government agencies, United Kingdom Local Authorities.</p>	<p>Resources and expense varies considerably.</p> <p>One advantage is that many responses can be collected quickly and analysed using search tools.</p>

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