

DELIBERATION

IN

LYTTELTON

**Deliberative Democratic Theory in Action: A Community Group
Responds to Energy and Climate Issues**

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Claire Buttigieg

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the under-studied area of deliberative democratic politics at the local level, while adding to the literature on deliberative theory itself. Empirical research was conducted through the qualitative tools of participant observation in Project Lyttelton's Energy Matters Workshop and in-depth interviews with Project Lyttelton members, workshop participants and local government representatives. A comparative analysis was also undertaken between two locally focussed initiatives looking at citizen engagement and democracy in relation to climate change.

The findings of this research suggest that Project Lyttelton's Energy Matters Workshop answers the call for a deliberative approach through its use of the key institutional features of deliberative democratic processes. The research findings also show that local deliberative initiatives may not be about reaching consensus or agreement in relation to a particular issue such as climate change. Rather, they may be focused on building up a network of citizens that discuss new ideas, build awareness, invigorate public engagement, highlight shared interests and motivate new initiatives.

However, the research data also draws attention to compelling, and as yet unanswered questions, about just what conditions are needed for local deliberation to affect public policy and climate change decision-making, how deliberative practices could be integrated within government structures themselves, how the current political framework (and context) could act as a spur to those at the local level, and how local participation and deliberation could have a voice in the largely international climate change arena.

This research adds to the scholarship on deliberative theory by examining what deliberation looks like at the local level, while providing further empirical research for deliberative theory itself.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

In my local community of Lyttelton, as in many other locales around New Zealand, an on-going conversation about climate change and energy concerns has been taking place over coffee, between neighbours, and in local workplaces. This conversation gathered momentum when the grass-roots community group Project Lyttelton initiated and facilitated a workshop on energy and climate change issues. The 2008 Energy Matters Workshop was to provide the community with a more formal platform, on which they could come together and talk about their place, about energy and climate change, and the links between the two.

There appears to be general consensus that climate change is a problem, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stating that we can expect a range of climate change impacts in the next century, including global warming, rising sea levels, and an increase in extreme weather events. Concerns over climate change have led to calls for citizen participation in the public sphere, and influence at the decision-making level with many of these calls implying or calling explicitly for a more deliberative response.

Calls for citizen participation have come not only the local level, but from international institutions such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), particularly as they relate to decision-making, policy formulation and adaptation around climate change (UNFCCC, 1992; IPCC, 2007). They reflect concerns over the ability (or inability) of local communities to have a voice, particularly a decision-making voice, in the largely global climate change debate, even when the effects of climate change will impact local places first. This call for public participation in decision making is being “promoted both instrumentally as a means of ensuring decisions are better geared toward their objectives, and as an empowering end in itself, ceding communities greater control over the decisions that affect their lives” (Few, Brown & Tompkins citing Bloomfield, Nelson & Wright, Parkins & Mitchell, 2006:4).

Many of these calls imply, or call explicitly for a more deliberative response. As Few, Brown & Tompkins (2006:4) argue “climate change adaptation needs to forge an honest and creative deliberative approach that can be more democratic and can yield genuine benefits for the process of societal adaptation” (see also Larsen & Gunnarsson-Ostling, 2009:261). Although there have been these ongoing calls for local community participation in the climate change debate, there appears to be little empirical research directed towards strictly community-level initiatives. The literature on deliberative democratic theory also appears to focus primarily on non-local deliberation; where local deliberation is mentioned the focus tends to be on representative models of deliberation such as minipublics. The reasons for this are unclear; perhaps it is because local community groups have only recently shifted from ‘talk’ to ‘action’ in relation to climate change, or because the local level has historically been seen as having little influence and hence of little empirical or theoretical interest. However, given the recognised importance of the local level responses to climate changes, there is a need to expand our knowledge in this area.

This thesis will address the under-researched issue of ‘local’ deliberation by examining the case-study of Project Lyttelton and the Energy Matters Workshop (EMW). It will examine whether and how deliberation took place in the EMW and with what outcomes, in order to shed light on the potential and pitfalls of such local initiatives and the strengths and weaknesses of deliberative democratic theory from a practical and local perspective. This will also enable a preliminary assessment of whether initiatives like EMW can meet the expectations of those calling for local deliberation in the climate change debate.

Background: The Climate Change Context

In recent years, scientific research and debate over the existence of climate change has moved towards a degree of consensus and solidarity. The consensus is that climate change is occurring, that it is the result of increased greenhouse gas proliferation in the

atmosphere, and that most of the greenhouse gas proliferation in the atmosphere is due to human activity (IPCC, 2001; IPCC, 2007; Kolbert, 2006; Tyndall, 2007; Stern, 2007; Giddens, 2009; Staudt, Huddleston & Kraucunas, 2008). As stated in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) 2007 Synthesis Report:

Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level (2007a:2).¹

The two major intergovernmental climate change institutions, the IPCC and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), work with slightly different definitions of climate change. The UNFCCC definition of climate change explicitly refers to climate change as concerning human activities that:

... have been substantially increasing the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases ... [which] will result on average in an additional warming of the earth's surface (1992:2).

In contrast, the IPCC's definition includes "both climate change and climate variability with human and non-human elements, with the human element going beyond greenhouse gas emissions to include other sources of human influences on the climate system" (Pielke, 2007:1845).

The IPCC was established in 1988 from an amalgamation of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and describes itself as policy-relevant and yet policy-neutral, never policy-prescriptive.² This intergovernmental panel, is the leading body for the assessment of climate change,

¹ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's main objective is to come up with a consensus picture of the current state of knowledge and a summary of the latest research that could potentially inform policy at a variety of levels.

² The IPCC's organizational framework. See (www.ipcc.ch/organization/organization.htm).

reviewing and assessing the most recent scientific, technical and socio-economic information produced worldwide, and is currently working towards its Fifth Assessment Report. The IPCC states that we can expect a range of climate changes in the next century, including global warming, rising sea levels, increased extreme weather events, and extended ice melt in the Arctic, and that if greenhouse gas concentrations were to stabilize at current levels, warming and sea level rise would continue for centuries due to time lags associated with various climate processes (IPCC, 2007a:12).

The way in which different regions in New Zealand adapt to the impacts of climate change will depend on a number of factors, including: geography, political engagement and influence, culture, infrastructure, and resilience. In the Canterbury region in eastern New Zealand, where the case study is based, water scarcity and security are already causing ongoing conflict between a diverse range of stakeholders, including members of the public, landowners, and local and regional government. That is, “the availability of water is going to be a critical issue ... [D]ecreased rainfall and increased risk of drought in the east of the country will put pressure on water supplies for agricultural, industrial and domestic use” (Renowden, 2007:95).

Another factor in how New Zealand will be impacted by climate change relates to the financial cost of our Kyoto Protocol obligations.³ New Zealand continues to have “high rates of emissions per capita and per unit of GDP, with gross emissions projected to be 31 per cent in excess of the Kyoto Protocol baseline during the 2008-2012 period” (Betram & Terry, 2008:6). Whether exceeding the set emissions target will impact upon New Zealand, and the nature of that potential impact, is still open to debate. It would appear to include not only direct economic costs, but also costs related to how the rest of the world sees us. For example, carbon miles related to transport and production methods, as well as changing perceptions of New Zealand’s clean green image, may reduce the profitability of exports and tourism by devaluing the New Zealand “brand”.⁴

³ Kyoto Protocol (KP): negotiated in Kyoto, December 1997. Came into force February 2005.

⁴ New Zealand’s clean green image: ‘A backlash to New Zealand’s vow of purity’ www.economist.com/world/international/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=15763381 and ‘New Zealand was a

Some argue that progress will not be made through the Kyoto Protocol style of intergovernmental agreement, mainly because “binding targets are only ever likely to work at a national or local level” (Giddens, 2009:192), and because climate change is “a global issue that can only be addressed, ultimately, by local action” (Kenny, 2005:39). While this thesis endorses this emphasis on the local, it is not meant to imply that a more comprehensive adaptation and mitigation response across all levels of society is not needed.

Mitigation, adaptation and resilience

Although both mitigation and adaptation strategies are vital in their own right, many emphasize the importance and co-benefits of adaptation and mitigation as complementary strategies, with a focus on building resilience and sustainable outcomes (see Tompkins & Adger, 2003; Laukkonen & Blanco, 2009; Saavedra & Budd, 2009; Larsen & Gunnarsson-Ostling, 2009).⁵ Adaptation is defined here as a process of change in response to external stimuli, whereas mitigation is defined as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, or as a way to avoid the unmanageable.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s 2007 Synthesis Report notes “there is high confidence that neither adaptation nor mitigation alone can avoid all climate change impacts; however, they can complement each other and together can significantly reduce the risks of climate change” (Saavedra & Budd, 2009:247). The complementary strategies noted above are attempted at the local level by Project Lyttelton, who action them through various projects, including transport, renewable energy, and decentralized food production.

friend to Middle Earth, but it’s no friend of the earth’ www.guardian.co.uk/environment/cif-green/2009/nov/12/new-zealand-greenwash/print.

⁵ For further discussion on adaptation/mitigation pathways see (Larsen & Gunnarsson-Ostling, 2009; Kane & Shogren, 2000; Laukkonen et al, 2009).

Mitigation, and public mitigation policies such as the Kyoto Protocol, focus on reducing or offsetting greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere by setting binding targets generally requiring the input of large emitters, with a primarily top-down focus. Another way of framing mitigation is to look at its aim, which is to try and avoid the unmanageable, “we mitigate climate risk by curtailing greenhouse gas emissions to lower the likelihood that bad states of nature occur ...” (Kane & Shogren, 2000:75). Examples of mitigation technologies and practices include: replacing fossil fuels with renewable heat and power (solar, wind, bio-energy); changes to transport to minimise use of fossil fuels (more fuel efficient vehicles, bio-fuels, non-motorized transport); improve energy-efficiency of buildings and appliances; reduction of carbon emissions through more efficient conversion of fossil fuels (IPCC, 2007b; Kane & Shogren, 2000).

The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research describes adaptation as “a process of deliberate change in anticipation of or in reaction to external stimuli and stress” (Nelson, Adger & Brown, 2007:395), and notes that this is concerned with “actors, actions, and agency” (ibid:398). Adaptation is necessary to address those unavoidable or predicted impacts resulting from warming and climate change already in the system. The IPCC notes that the “array of potential adaptive responses available to human societies is very large” including the technological, behavioural, managerial and policy related (IPCC, 2007c:19).

Resilience is a term used by many of those writing about climate change adaptation to mean the ability not only to deal with external changes or shocks, but, wherever possible, to react “actively and positively to them” (Giddens, 2009:163). Many local communities and organization, including Project Lyttelton, are endeavouring to build resilience in an active and positive manner. This approach to building resilience is vital, because in addressing climate change, a sensitive and controversial subject often “about economic costs and lifestyle changes in the context of responsibilities and values ... the potential for backlash and conflicting interests is enormous” (Dallas, 2008:47).

The sceptic's debate in relation to climate change

Climate change sceptics have been part of the dialogue around climate change since the 1980s, and remain a vocal presence in the climate change debate today, both in relation to scientific research and public policy. Incidents such as those involving emails leaked from the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia (“Climategate”), which allegedly showed scientists colluding to withhold scientific information and interfering with the peer review process have resulted in vigorous debate by climate change sceptics, the science fraternity, and the general public.⁶ This type of event is of concern, because it appears to have an impact on civil society and its perception of climate change. For example, current research by the Pew Research Centre shows that the proportion of Americans who believe in climate change has fallen from seventy one per cent, to fifty seven per cent in just eighteen months.⁷ This has the potential to impact upon both governmental policy-making and community initiatives in relation to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Climate change scepticism is now a “divisive party-political issue in the UK and US” with anecdotal evidence that at the level of (local) District Councils in the UK, the views of some climate sceptics are holding back action to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change (Ward, 2010:23). As will be discussed in later chapters, climate change scepticism is also present at the local government level in New Zealand, potentially impacting upon the ability of local communities to mitigate and adapt.

The Turn towards Local Participation and Deliberation

It is argued by many theorists that stakeholder participation and engagement at the local level can deliver a range of benefits in relation to internal and external efficacy, civic engagement, and climate change. These benefits include awareness-raising, resilience-

⁶ Climategate. In November 2009 a number of emails and other data were hacked from researchers at the University of East Anglia (this material was part of the IPCC's fourth assessment report). See (www.guardian.co.uk/environment/series/climate-wars-hacked-emails).

⁷ See George Monbiot 'Death Denial' at www.monbiot.com/archives/2009/11/02/death-denial/.

building, integration of local issues such as energy supplies, transport, food production, and waste disposal, and the mobilization of local knowledge and expertise. As Cheyne and Comrie note, local participation can foster “a sense of belonging, civic responsibility and better political knowledge” (2002:162), while Nelson and Adger claim the instrumental benefits of “enhanced efficiency of decision-making, increased trust in government, and increased capacity at the local scale” (2007:409). Nelson and Adger also note the less instrumental benefits associated with participation, namely “giving a voice to vulnerable and marginalized stakeholders, recognition of diverse knowledge systems, and increases in the depth of civil society and citizenship” (2007:409).

Ward notes that concerns that a fair, ambitious or legally binding agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions was not reached at the Copenhagen Climate Summit (COP15 United Nations Climate Change Conference) have led to renewed calls for “local level innovation to deliver climate solutions ... with renewed attention [being paid] to the groundswell of community-based activism” (Ward, 2010:21).⁸ Many other writers, including Kenny, (2005); Hayward, (2008); Giddens, (2009); IPCC, (2007); and the UNFCCC, (2007) also underline the importance of adaptation and community-driven action that highlights a bottom-up, local or decentralized approach. For example, Hayward notes that “adaptation [to climate change] is not something that can be done to a community” rather it is “something that needs to be done by a community, determined by its own values and needs” (2008:45), and according to Saavedra and Budd, “although national policies are essential, the responses to climate change must be local” (2009:247).

Approximately two decades ago a ‘deliberative turn’ occurred among democratic theorists (Carpini, Cook & Jacobs, 2004; Dryzek, 2000; Chambers, 2009; Niemeyer, 2008). This shift in democratic theory saw an increasing emphasis on interpersonal engagement enabling “reflective deliberation that is potentially transformative of people’s preferences, interests, and beliefs” (Goodin, 2008:38). More deliberative forms

⁸ Copenhagen Climate Summit, 2009 was the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP15), and the fifth meeting of the parties to the Kyoto Protocol (MOP5).

of democracy, it is argued can improve policy outcomes and enhance the legitimacy of the political process.

Although many theorists have called for deliberative citizen engagement at the local level, deliberative democratic theory does not appear to have fully engaged with deliberation at this level. Jacobs and Cook writing in 2009, note that their analysis is based on one of the first comprehensive studies of a critical component of democratic citizenship: “the process of citizens talking, discussing, and deliberating with each other on public issues that affect the communities in which they live” (2009:3). Levine and Fung respond to the question of why there is such a gap between scholarship and practice in the field of deliberation, by arguing that “most academics are interested in varieties of deliberation that have a clear influence on political outcomes” so that for them a “gathering of a few dozen citizens is insignificant” (2005:280).

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into four further chapters. Chapter Two reviews and synthesises the literature on deliberative democratic theory. It sets out the claims made in this literature for deliberation and the features identified by theorists as being constitutive of deliberation.

Chapter Three introduces the research methodology, before turning to Project Lyttelton and the Energy Matters Workshop, as well as other examples of local democratic participation in the climate change debate. It discusses the local response to climate change by examining why institutions such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research call for engagement at this level. The Transition Town Movement and the World Wide Views project will be assessed as examples of whether and how new forms of deliberative democracy can be used effectively to address climate change issues. Following these examples, the chapter will turn to an explanation of Project Lyttelton itself, in an attempt to answer questions about its origins and evolution as an active community group. The chapter will end with a

description and review of the Energy Matters Workshop and a consideration of whether and how these initiatives meet the IPCC's and Tyndall Centre's expectations for local participation in climate change.

Chapter Four analyzes whether the Energy Matters Workshop (the workshop) meets the aims and criteria for deliberative events as set out in earlier chapters. This chapter will consider whether and how the workshop addressed the deliberative conditions of inclusiveness, rationality, agreement and efficacy using material gathered primarily through interviews. Finally, consideration will be given to the interface between deliberation, efficacy and government, and whether and how this may hinder or facilitate locally driven initiatives.

Chapter Five is the concluding chapter and focuses on the core of this thesis. It highlights key findings, while asking some final questions of local participation and deliberation, the issue of climate change, and the role of government. In addition, it uses the case-study to reflect back on deliberative theory, highlighting various possibilities, and suggesting where deliberation might go from here.

Chapter 2: Deliberative Democratic Theory

Introduction

As noted in Chapter One, there are high expectations for the role that deliberative democracy may play in helping us to address the problem of climate change. High expectations also characterise many of those involved in promoting deliberative democracy more generally. The Deliberative Democratic Consortium for example, sees deliberation as “a powerful, transformational experience for everyone involved ... which can result in attitudinal shifts toward the institutions and practice of democracy overall” (Torres, 2008:1).⁹ This chapter outlines the major elements and claims of deliberative democratic theory.

Deliberative democracy is a nascent and wide-ranging movement, grounded in a call for democratic renewal that encompasses citizens and their engagement with democratic practices. Deliberative theorists are interested in questions such as” “how does or might deliberation shape preferences, moderate self-interest, empower the marginalized, mediate difference, further integration and solidarity, enhance recognition, produce reasonable opinion and policy, and possibly lead to consensus” (Chambers, 2003:309).

This chapter will begin with a brief characterisation of the ‘deliberative turn’ in democratic theory. This is followed by an examination, first, of the major advantages said to accrue from a deliberative approach to democracy, and, second, of the role envisioned for the state by deliberative democratic theorists. I then discuss the key features of democratic deliberation: inclusiveness, rationality, agreement and political efficacy. The chapter ends with a discussion of the major criticisms of deliberative democratic theory.

⁹ The Deliberative Democracy Consortium. Composed of more than thirty organizations working to renew democracy through citizen participation and deliberation. See (http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=271).

The Deliberative Turn

Approximately two decades ago a ‘deliberative turn’ occurred among democratic theorists (Carpini, Cook & Jacobs, 2004; Dryzek, 2000; Chambers, 2009; Niemeyer, 2008). This shift in democratic theory saw a turn away from an aggregative or ‘vote-centric’ model of democracy, which sees public participation in terms of relatively fixed preferences aggregated through the mechanism of voting and representative democracy. Instead, deliberative democratic theorists called for interpersonal engagement “reflective deliberation that is potentially transformative of people’s preferences, interests, and beliefs, while continuing to question the existing aggregative model and its reconciliation of predetermined interests” (Goodin, 2008:38). Although theorists of deliberative democracy continue to critique the aggregative model, deliberative democracy is not generally seen as a separate or substitute democratic model, but rather a part or extension of representative democracy and the legitimacy it imparts. More deliberative forms of democracy, it is argued, can improve policy outcomes and enhance the legitimacy of the political process.

The deliberative turn occurred at a time when democracy itself appeared to be in decline. As Button and Ryfe note, deliberative democratic theory has developed “against a sociopolitical backdrop that includes increasing political and economic inequalities, the ongoing marginalization of already disadvantaged groups, steady declines in various forms of political participation, the institutional demobilization of the public, a widespread distrust of government, and a general disaffection with politics” (2005:26, note Smith 2003). Deliberative democrats contend that deliberative democracy “offers a positive and hopeful avenue for reviving democracy, an alternative that promises to improve democratic accountability and legitimacy” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:8). This potential to revive democracy is based on what deliberation has to offer in the areas of preference transformation, legitimacy and policy outcomes.

Preference transformation

A fundamental difference between deliberative and aggregative models centres on the nature and role of preference formation. Unlike the aggregative model, the deliberative model does not treat a citizen's pre-established preferences and individual interests as fixed. Deliberative democratic theorists argue that deliberation has the potential to transform, or change the substance of, participants' preferences and opinions. A transformation of preferences is possible by reflective deliberation as a result of inclusion and unconstrained dialogue. Without exposing and discussing views and the grounds for holding them, a citizen cannot possess a meaningful understanding of their own or others' preferences. While "deliberative democracy like the term 'civil society' is a debated concept," (Hendriks, 2006:491), there is near-consensus around the view that the central tenet of deliberative theory is that reflective deliberation can be transformative of people's views (Carpini, Cook & Jacobs, 2004; Smith, 2003; Niemeyer, 2008; Hicks, 2002, Button & Ryfe, 2005).

This emphasis on opinion formation and transformation leads to a focus on the processes that inform the public's reasoning and decision-making. Here deliberative democrats have distanced themselves from the well-known work of John Rawls, who downplays the social and interactive aspects of deliberation because, as he argues, public reason can be undertaken by the solitary thinker (Peter, 2007). In response to Rawls, other theorists argue that public reason actually requires not only unconstrained dialogue, but also a genuine attempt to appreciate other deliberators, and to search for reasons that are acceptable to all (e.g. Hartz-Karp, 2007; Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009; Button & Ryfe, 2005). However, having engaged in a fair and open deliberative process, citizens may nevertheless decide not to change their preferences or opinions; although as Button and Ryfe, echoing many other theorists, assert, "they are more likely to do so in an inclusive information-rich setting in which citizens are encouraged to reason with another about broader issues of mutual concern ..." (2005:28). Although the theoretical position posited by deliberative democracy rests in large part on the process and facilitation of preference transformation, some deliberative theorists argue that this is too strong a point if it

“requires convergent, homogeneous preferences”; rather, what is required is the “relatively more modest goal of establishing a common view of the political dimension” (Knight & Johnson, 1994:283).

Legitimacy

Representative democracy derives its legitimacy from the fact that elections are open to the entire enfranchised population, regardless of what proportion of the population actually participates. This openness to all citizens enables the claim that the result is an expression of popular will. But a number of deliberative theorists (Knight & Johnson, 1994; Bohman, 2004; Button & Ryfe, 2005) argue that it is necessary to “jettison the idea that democratic decisions derive legitimacy from their relation to the popular will” (Knight & Johnson, 1994:284). Knight and Johnson highlight this point by noting that “if there is such a thing as democratic legitimacy – a point about which we are unsure - then it does not arise because outcomes reflect the popular will” rather it is “legitimate if at all, because it is produced by the sort of reasoned argumentation under fair procedures that defines deliberation as a critical ideal” (ibid:284). Bohman also argues that democracy should not seek to “discover some unified general will” (2004:29) because this is unlikely to exist in large complex pluralistic democracies.

Many deliberative theorists argue that the deliberative process can confer legitimacy in ways that elections cannot. Although Dryzek notes that “deliberative legitimacy can either substitute for or supplement other sources of legitimacy” (2007:16), Button and Ryfe argue that “the source of legitimacy is not the predetermined will of individuals, but rather the process of its formation, that is, deliberation itself” (2005:27). Hicks notes that legitimacy rests on a “commitment to public justification” (2002:224) while Seyla Benhabib’s argument for legitimacy rests on the “free and unconstrained deliberation of all about matters of common concern” (Hicks, 2002:226). That is, many deliberative theorists argue that the outcomes of deliberative democracy will be seen as legitimate because of processes that were inclusive, voluntary, reasoned and equal (Button & Ryfe,

2005: Bohman, 2004). However, Larsen and Gunnarsson-Ostling note that will the deliberative process is important to legitimacy, so are “deliberative outputs” (2009:261).

Although a range of deliberative theorists claim a connection between deliberation and legitimacy, any claim of deliberation to greater legitimacy than aggregative forms of democracy is not straightforward. This is due largely to the fact that face-to-face deliberation is limited to relatively small groups of participants. Nevertheless, deliberative democrats such as Joseph Cohen, Bernard Manin and Robert Goodin have attempted to address some of the difficulties associated with democratic legitimacy in large complex contemporary democracies by highlighting ways in which deliberation might take place without being fully inclusive. For example, Joseph Cohen puts forward the idea that “outcomes are democratically legitimate if and only if they could be the object of a free and reasoned agreement among equals – ‘could be’, rather than actually being” (Dryzek, 2004:242). Similarly, Bernard Manin asserts that “as political decisions are characteristically imposed on all, it seems reasonable to seek, as an essential condition for legitimacy, the deliberation of all or, more precisely, the ‘right’ of all to participate in deliberation” (Dryzek, 2004:243).

Other deliberative theorists looking to address legitimacy issues have considered a range of representative models, including mini-publics, such as citizens’ juries and deliberative polls. These juries and polls see selected citizens participate in proceedings that call to mind the interests of non-attending citizens, a representative rather than directly participatory process (Goodin, 2008; Young, 2006). But, in response to and in critiquing this form of deliberative initiative, John Dryzek argues that Goodin’s response “intensifies the legitimation problem for those elected representatives because members of the broader public are asked to take it on trust that the deliberators really are calling to mind and internalizing broader sets of interests” (Dryzek, 2004:246). James Fishkin’s response is the deliberative opinion poll. This sees a “representative sample of citizens brought together to agree to a set of topics to reflect upon, receive information on those issues, and then discuss them with one another before a national television audience” (Hicks, 2002:227). But, as noted by Dryzek above, problems remain in persuading those

who did not take part in deliberative opinion polls, or citizen juries that their reflective deliberation would be the same as those who did participate in the process.

In conclusion, although deliberative theorists as noted above argue that improved legitimacy is an advantage of deliberative democracy, its path is not straightforward. This sees deliberative theorists exploring the boundaries around legitimacy in ways that include deliberative processes and the common good, limited forms of inclusion, and the use of various representative models such as mini-publics. While the arguments around legitimacy remain a contested aspect of deliberative democratic theory, they also expand the possibilities, scope, and questions asked of an ever-evolving deliberative democratic model in the complex and diverse contemporary world.

Better outcomes

It is argued by deliberative theorists that not only does the deliberative process confer greater legitimacy on decisions, but also that decisions themselves will be improved by incorporating deliberative processes. Some deliberationists argue that public deliberation leads to wiser, as well as more legitimate, public politics (Torres, 2008; Levine, Fung & Gastil 2009). For example, the Deliberative Democracy Consortium notes “central to our work is that conviction that the outcomes of deliberation result in qualitatively better, more lasting decisions on policy matters” (Torres, 2008:1). According to Jacobs and Cook, research is showing that “deliberation has important and increasingly valuable roles in putting issues on the government agenda, developing broad proposals for lawmakers to consider, and creating incentives for policymakers to respond to the broad public” (2009:166). Levine and Fung argue that their studies of deliberative activities show that “people are willing to discuss public issues and can sustain serious, in-depth conversations about technical or highly divisive matters” and that “the products of deliberation are often excellent” (2005:272).

In contrast to these ‘instrumental’ outcomes, others emphasise the ‘intrinsic’ outcomes of democratic deliberation, that is, the effects experienced by the participants themselves.

Many participants, it is argued, derive intrinsic value from public deliberation, which can raise awareness, educate people about pertinent issues, and be an empowering or community building experience (see Smith, 2003 & 2008). And, as Levine and Fung argue, intrinsic outcomes are also important because deliberation can reinforce support for itself when it is successful, “a rewarding turn at public speaking sparks future involvement” (2005:273). Nevertheless, Button and Ryfe highlight a growing preference for instrumental justifications of deliberation (2005), while voicing concern that “instrumentalism may blind us to other equally significant ways of conceiving and justifying deliberation” (2005:25).

The relative importance of intrinsic and instrumental outcomes remains a contested point in deliberative theory and practice (Levine, Fung & Gastil, 2005; Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009; Button & Ryfe, 2005). Although instrumentalism may be the preferred outcome for some practitioners, many other deliberative theorists argue for an “integrated deliberative system” (Hendriks, 2006:486). As Button & Ryfe note, “any complete or adequate account of deliberation will have to resist the tendency to choose between its instrumental purposes and its value as an end in itself” (2005:30) and that it is “unwise to separate outcomes and influence into some sort of dichotomous relationship because posing citizen empowerment as a separate and stark alternative to government policy making and expertise sets up a false choice” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:164).

Although Jacobs and Cook tell us that discursive participation is extensive (2009:153), it would appear that most deliberation does not directly impact decision-making or policy at an authoritative level. This may be linked to numerous competing interests at various levels, and to public deliberationists having “only recently turned their attention from the question of generating and organizing public discussion to that of linking talk to action” (Levine, Fung & Gastil, 2005:276).

One way of increasing the influence (and legitimacy) of deliberative democracy’s processes and outcomes, it is argued, may be to ‘scale out’ deliberation to include more participants and more diverse participants, or to ‘scale up’ so as to address issues of

national or international concern such as climate change and sustainability (Levine, Fung & Gastil, 2005). For example, innovators such as the Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED) have focused on climate change and sustainability, not only at the local level, but also nationally, calling for state and policy involvement where necessary (see Church, 2005).¹⁰

One problem with trying to gain influence at the governmental level, however, is as Bohman (2004:53) notes, “the state is not ideally suited to the realization of communicative democracy, precisely because it is a unitary form that refers to a specific body of citizens within a bounded territory.” Communicative democracy as argued by Iris Marion Young, and used by Bohman above, refers to a more “disorderedly, demonstrative, disruptive political behaviour ... incorporated as just another mode of communication” (Hall, 2007:84), or the “acceptance of a more open model of political communication” (Hicks, 2002:239). Thus, it would appear that future efforts to promote public engagement need to focus in part on “redesigning government to authorize genuinely democratic deliberative forums with decision-making power” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpi, 2009:167), although how this might happen across the range of diverse deliberative initiatives remains a critical challenge for deliberative democracy.

The State in Deliberation

The ability of deliberation to produce better instrumental outcomes in the form of public policy and decision-making clearly relies, to a significant degree, on the nature of the connection between deliberative events and the state or other powerful actors. According to Levine and Fung, “for the results of a deliberative process to count, powerful actors must be encouraged, persuaded, or obliged to heed them” (2005:276), while a successful deliberation also requires “the realistic expectation of influence (that is, a link to decision makers)” (ibid: 273). But just how a deliberative process and its outcomes can influence decision-makers remains a question of some concern to theorists and practitioners alike,

¹⁰ Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED). ANPED works to empower Northern civil society in creating and protecting sustainable communities and societies world-wide. They have Special Consultative status to the UN Economic and Social Council. See (<http://www.anped.org/>).

with Levine and Fung asserting that “this seldom happens, and rarely does it occur in a fully deliberative way” (ibid:276).

The role of the state remains a contentious issue in deliberative theory, with concern being expressed by some theorists that the state may actually co-opt civil society. For instance, John Dryzek asserts that there is an ongoing need to “retain a critical orientation towards the contemporary state” (Smith, 2003:126), because of concerns about the possibility and realization of authentic deliberation within state bodies. Nevertheless, many deliberative theorists do argue for engagement with the state (Goodin, 2008; Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009; Fainstein, 2007). The Deliberative Democracy Consortium contends that successful deliberation is important because it can be “a powerful, transformation experience for everyone involved – citizens and leaders alike – which can result in attitudinal shifts towards the institutions and practice of democracy overall” (2008:1).

This call for engagement is in part a response to various economic and structural fundamentals both within civil society and the state. For example, Goodin notes in arguing for engagement with the state that “deliberative democracy has to work through existing institutions such as those of representative democracy, and political parties who are supported by public funds” (2008:7), while Iris Marion Young maintains that the state has a strategic role, because it is the “only institution powerful enough to transform other structures” (Fainstein, 2007:384). Jacobs and Cook (2009:166) taking a slightly different path, claim that “better connecting of citizen deliberation to government could give broad publics the persistent and loud presence that special interests currently enjoy.”

Jacobs and Cook in considering how a relationship with the state might evolve, note that “future efforts to promote public talking need to focus in particular on redesigning government to authorize genuinely democratic deliberative forums with decision-making power” (2009:167). But it would appear that before government can give deliberative forums decision-making power, public opinion needs to find a way to be heard. That is, as Smith notes, the “mechanisms for the transmission of public opinion to the state are of

particular interest if the reflective judgments of citizens are to affect political decision-making processes” (Smith, 2003:75). But as Iris Marion Young notes “there are only small and poorly working mechanisms through which citizens can ... send reasoned messages to government officials about what those priorities are, and hold government accountable” (Fung, 2004:52). This point is highlighted by the Deliberative Democracy Consortium (2007:4) who assert “even when civil society is active, engaged and energized, there must be a framework that entrenches their engagement in the governing and decision-making institutions of their lands. It seems that this is where the most important change must take place.”

In theorizing how this may be achieved, consideration needs to be given to why the state, both at the local and national level, might not involve citizens in policy development and decision making. It would appear that a number of difficulties stand in the way of citizen engagement, including the technocratic, managerial systems of governance seen in local and regional government, and the gate-keeping undertaken by hierarchical institutions in regard to decision-making. For example, even with current legislation in place to encourage and enhance citizen involvement in local government decision-making in New Zealand, this has been slow to happen. Elizabeth Plew notes in reviewing the Selwyn District Council’s approach to consultation under the Local Government Act 2002 that “the LGA 2002 does not appear to have modified or changed to any great degree the Council’s way of doing things ...” (2009:46).

Key features of Deliberation

It is argued by most theorists that certain elements need to be present for genuine or legitimate democratic deliberation to take place, although considerable disagreement exists about exactly how to specify those elements. Jacobs and Cook (2009:10) highlight five conditions under which they state “public talk may invigorate citizens, restore the legitimacy of political decisions, and establish authentic democracy: universalism, inclusivity, rationality, agreement and political efficacy”, while Carpini and Cook note five principal characteristics (2004:318). In contrast, Blowers and Boersema (2005:2),

argues that there are “two key features to a democratically deliberative process, it must be inclusive and it must encourage unconstrained dialogue”. Janette Hartz-Karp in contrast, characterises deliberative democracy as a process that requires “influence (the ability to affect the content of official policy), inclusion (equal opportunity of persons to participate in public deliberation), and deliberation (the ability to access information, understand issues, reframe questions, receive respect, engage in dialogue, and place one’s interests before others)” (2007b:73).

Although deliberative theorists appear to differ over the key processes of deliberation and their relative importance, some of the differences amount to alternative packagings of similar elements. The categories of inclusiveness (all persons affected by a decision have an equal chance to respond), rationality (reason giving requirement), agreement (commitment to public reason) and efficacy (citizens feel they can make a difference) appear to cover those nominated by most theorists. Before turning to a discussion of these processes, it is noted that Jacobs and Cook also nominate universalism, “all citizens entitled to participate in the process of political dialogue be present” as a condition separate from inclusivity which they define as the need to “include the range of diversity of citizen voices” (2009:9). Here, both of these conditions will be assimilated under the category of inclusiveness.

Inclusiveness

Most theorists emphasize the importance of inclusiveness in the deliberative process (Blowers, Boersema & Martin, 2005; Benhabib, 1996; Chambers, 1996; Cohen, 1997; Young, 1999; Dryzek; 1990; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Smith, 2003), with Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson going as far as to argue that inclusiveness is “the primary criterion of the extent to which deliberation is democratic” (2004:10). Inclusiveness has a number of dimensions. It can mean that all persons who could be affected by a decision or policy should have the opportunity to participate in the deliberation (i.e., what Jacobs and Cook call “universalism”). For example, Iris Marion Young notes that for the “process of political communication to be properly democratic it

must include all persons likely to be affected by a decision” (2006:50). It can also refer to the deliberative process itself. An illustration of this is given by Jacobs and Cook who argue that “all citizens have an equal right to be heard, to introduce and question claims” (2009:9), and Darrin Hicks who notes that “in deliberation, all should have the equal chance to express their wishes, desires, and feelings; all should have an equal chance to introduce, question, and counter any and all arguments” (2002:226).

As noted above, Hicks asserts that deliberative democracy “justifies a much stronger ideal of inclusion than is typical of representative theories of democracy” (2002:226). Nevertheless, this focus on inclusion may be problematic, particularly in relation to the “scale of the deliberating body” in large complex societies (ibid:227 see Dryzek). Responses to the problem of size have resulted in more representative approaches, such as deliberative opinion polls. Thus, although most deliberative democrats call for inclusive public participation, it remains somewhat underspecified conceptually.

Rationality

The condition of rationality (the reason-giving requirement of deliberation) stipulates that parties to deliberation rely on what Jurgen Habermas calls the ‘force of better argument’. Habermas argues that public deliberation “if properly conducted, leads to rationally justified policy decisions” (Peter, 2007:133). The objective then is to “frame pressing problems, to identify attractive, feasible solutions to them, and to persuade rather than compel those who may be otherwise inclined to recognize their attractiveness and feasibility” (Knight & Johnson, 1994:286).

Many theorists emphasize the importance of rationality in deliberative initiatives and argue that public talk must rely on acceptable reasons (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Cohen, 1997). However, the role of rationality has been a matter of contention, with deliberationists being criticized as “excessively preoccupied with reason as the method of communication in deliberative activities” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:16). This preoccupation with reason may lead to a “set of stringent

demands on citizens regarding the acquisition and processing of information that is unrealistic for most individuals and invites or perhaps requires a dependence on experts that discourages the direct engagement promised by deliberationists” (ibid:16). Additionally, the high value placed on reason may potentially exclude “public talk that is impassioned, extreme, and the product of particular interests” (ibid:16). This notion of deliberation as primarily based on reason may ultimately “discredit on seemingly democratic grounds the views of those who are less likely to present their arguments in ways that we recognize as characteristically deliberative” (ibid:17).

Therefore, the possibility exists through the primacy of rationality in deliberation that the use of a “plurality of speaking styles” may be discouraged (Hicks, 2002:239), including non-discursive forms of communication such as humour, poetry and art (see Iris Marion Young, 2006). Nevertheless, while deliberative theorists continue to claim that there is a place for non-discursive forms of communication in deliberation, they also note that “their deployment only makes sense in a context where argument about what is to be done remains central” (Dryzek, 2000:168). Whether and how rational argument and non-discursive forms of communication can work together remains a contested point.

Agreement

The role and range of reason-giving in deliberation is not the only issue open to debate amongst deliberative theorists. Deliberative theorists also differ over whether the goal of deliberation is agreement and/or consensus. But it would appear there is some accord that in the ideal deliberative case, consensus will result because “deliberation has the effect of transforming the substance of participants’ preferences” (Knight & Johnson, 1994:282). Although it appears that not many theorists would argue that deliberation inevitably leads to consensus, “many believe that deliberation under the right conditions will have a tendency to broaden perspectives, promote toleration and understanding between groups, and generally encourage a public-spirited attitude” (Chambers, 2003:318 citing Benhabib, 1992; Chambers, 1996; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, Cohen, 1997; Dryzek,

2000). At a minimum, participants may achieve some degree of mutual understanding that may facilitate later cooperation and agreement.

Deliberative theorists contend that a commitment to public reason should be the core of deliberative democracy because it not only calls for “vigorous citizen deliberation [to] generate agreement” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:12), but also allows “those deliberating to disagree while continuing to collaborate and to cooperate” (Hicks, 2002:241). As Knight and Johnson (1994:286) note, deliberation need not lead to agreement because “disagreement and conflict are not only the starting point of deliberation but a primary creative resource” and “even if deliberation does induce a shared understanding of the dimensions of conflict, this may serve simply to focus attention on the depth of disagreement.” They conclude by noting that “faith in the power of deliberation to establish consensus should not blind us to either of these possibilities” (Knight & Johnson, 1994:286).

As noted above, many deliberative theorists, even in arguing that some agreement will result from a deliberative process (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009; Smith, 2003; Blowers, Boersema & Martin, 2005; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004), note that disagreement may remain. For example, Jacobs and Cook (2009:13 citing Gutmann and Thompson, 2004:20, 36) assert that “although immediate agreement may not be possible the commitment of democratic deliberation to the pursuit of principles of mutual respect facilitates justifiable agreement in the future and promotes mutual respect when no agreement is possible by helping dissidents be more easily reconciled to the outcomes.”

Nonetheless, there appears to be general accord amongst deliberative theorists that although consensus is not a requirement of deliberative democracy, participants in deliberation should be endeavouring to reach agreement (Blowers, 2005; Hicks, 2002; Smith, 2003). For example, Levine and Fung note that a deliberative initiative may lead to “informed, substantive, and conscientious discussion, with an eye toward finding common ground if not reaching consensus” (2005:274). Habermas also highlights these issues in his contention that “rather than consensus, democratic deliberation is best

understood as being orientated towards mutual understanding, which does not mean that people will always agree, but rather that they are motivated to resolve conflicts by argument rather than other means” (Smith, 2003:59).

Political efficacy

Deliberations can be viewed as democratically effective in the sense that they imbue participants with a sense that they can make a difference. For example, Levine and Fung (2005:272) contend that “people are willing to discuss public issues and can sustain serious, in-depth conversations about technical or highly divisive matters ... and when “deliberation is well organized, participants like it. In fact, they find it deeply satisfying and significant.” Jacobs and Cook (2009:155), discussing a study by Walsh (2004), also note that “public talkers enjoyed their interchanges about politics in her qualitative study, and 73% of a national sample of participants in deliberative polling rated their experience with the highest score.” It would also appear that “the products of deliberations are often excellent ... deliberators may be asked to ... make policy recommendations, pose public questions to politicians, or take voluntary actions in their own communities” (Levine, Fung & Gastil, 2005:273).

The points noted above highlight different dimensions of what is often called political efficacy. It is argued that the concept of political efficacy is “at the heart of many explanations of citizen activity and involvement” (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995:346). Political efficacy was defined by Campbell, Gurin & Miller as “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e. that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties” (1954:187).

In relation to this thesis, democratic deliberation is described by Jacobs and Cook as improving the confidence of citizens in their own efficacy (2009:13). It would appear that deliberation is internally efficacious when it results in changes to participants’ understanding of themselves and the world that make them more inclined to engage in political activity. External efficacy refers to the ability of deliberative events to have

particular impacts on the political world outside deliberation. For example, the policy recommendations made by a deliberative initiative may (or may not) influence decisions taken by government (or other) agencies. Intermediate between the two may be the possibility that participants, having acquired increased confidence in their ability to make a difference, become involved in (typically local) civic activity that itself has political (including social or economic) impact.

In considering the instrumental and intrinsic outcomes of deliberation from an efficacy perspective, Johnson argues that both approaches are necessary to reach the goal, of what she describes, as deliberative empowerment (2009:680). That is, deliberative empowerment includes both the individual and institutional, and instrumental and intrinsic levels, which are “characterized by inclusive, equal, and well-reasoned public argumentation, the mutually acceptable resolution of which serves as a moral justification for policy decisions” (ibid:680).

In asking whether and how the practices of deliberation can attain these goals, Johnson argues that democratic empowerment is a necessary precursor to deliberative empowerment, and includes the “capacities, capabilities, and opportunities of citizens directly to influence public policies” (ibid:680). At the individual levels this includes an “increase in agency, autonomy, political literacy and skills, and social capital” while at the institutional level there needs to be an opportunity for citizens to “engage in and with inclusive, equitable, transparent procedures and institutions that yield legitimate and just public policy” (ibid:680). Dryzek also addresses this approach through his discussion of ‘public space’. In his concept of public space, Dryzek includes deliberative spaces open to nearly unlimited participation, such as citizen forums, cafes, and the internet, and ‘empowered space’ including empowered stakeholder dialogues, cabinet, or a legislature (2007:12).

Johnson, like some other theorists (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009; Smith, 2003; The Deliberative Democracy Consortium, 2007) argues that the:

characteristics of the participant group, nature of topic, level of jurisdiction, and model of deliberation are not critical factors in realizing deliberative empowerment. But what is critical is that elites wielding ultimate policy decision-making power be motivated and committed to share it by specifically incorporating into their substantive and procedural decisions deliberative democratic outputs (2009:681).

That is, Johnson's research argues that "institutional empowerment may be primarily determined not by the characteristics of the deliberative democratic model but by the political context in which that model is actualized" (2009:697).

Critical Perspective on Deliberative Democratic Theory

Iris Marion Young: centered and de-centered deliberation

Iris Marion Young, as a deliberative theorist herself, critiques deliberative democratic theory from the inside. She is concerned with the 'centeredness' of some conceptions of deliberative democracy which assume "deliberation takes place in a single forum within a bounded group within a delimited time" (Young, 2006:46). Young argues that deliberative democracy needs to be conceived of as essentially de-centered, a term she takes from Habermas and his argument that democratic theory should rid itself of assumptions about the "collective will of the people controlling social processes" (Bohman, 2004:49) such as takes place in a "face-to-face interaction in a single forum" (ibid:55). Young argues against conceiving of society as a whole, particularly in large complex democracies, mainly because "this conception of democratic will formation assumes that there is a single collective whose will it is" (Young, 2006:44). That is, the de-centered view sees "democratic politics [as] embedded in the context of large and complex social processes the whole of which cannot come into view, let alone under decision-making control" (Bohman, 2004:49). Or, as Bohman (2004b:29) argues "the decentered approach has several advantages. It does not see democracy as the expression

of a collective unified will, nor as tied to a special set of institutions or communal locations.”

Young de-centers democracy along two dimensions, at “the micro-dimension of the communicative processes that constitute decision making and at the macro-dimension of the scale of interlocking levels of governance from cities to regions to global society” (Bohman, 2004:49). The micro-dimension requires “recognition of the place of social perspectives in just and wise democratic decision making” (ibid:49). The macro-dimension requires “having smaller units embedded in larger units whenever the scope of people’s actions and contexts of interaction constitute a common world” (ibid:49).

In an attempt to answer concerns over how de-centered democracy across many sites may be evaluated, including government, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, Young introduces the criterion of ‘linkage’ by which she means “processes, institutions, and individual moral agents that operate formally and informally to connect local deliberation with other sites of discussion, particularly authoritative decision making” (Hayward, 2008b:85 quoting Young). Young contends that linkage is necessary because “it asks for evidence that various mediated sites and occasions for discussion across diverse social spaces and, over an extended time, are connected to one another” (Young, 2006:53). For example, Young notes that we can ask “whether and how activities in civil society are linked to the content of mass media, and whether and how these are linked to the agenda and responsiveness of actors within state institutions” (ibid:52).

In relation to issues such as energy and climate change being effectively addressed by community groups and other stakeholders, Young attests that:

sites and occasions of the discussion of a social problem should also be linked with each other for mediated communication to be politically efficacious and for the outcomes it generates to be normatively legitimate ... Often they are not – thus a space of public opinion will not consolidate (2006:52).

In responding to Young's frustration that local community groups when addressing environmental problems assume a centred view of deliberation "where a single body talk together in a single encounter" (Hayward, 2008b:79 quoting Young), Hayward argues that this does not have to be the case. Instead she asserts that local deliberation can be a "de-centering strategy that enables communities to resist domination, transform understandings, and build resilience in the face of climate change" (2008b:80); by using the criterion of linkage "individuals actors intervene formally, or informally, to connect local talk with other communities' discussions" (ibid:80). That is, "linkage unlocks imaginative possibilities for countering the isolating or exclusionary effects of centred deliberation while respecting the grounded perspectives of local communities" (Hayward, 2008b:92).

In answering why the de-centering project is potentially efficacious, and linking to Johnson's discussion of deliberative empowerment, Bohman (2004:54) maintains that "the proper conclusion to the de-centering project is a new sort of polity and an innovative set of dispersed and differentiated institutions that make it possible for people to exercise their political rights to resist domination and to exercise influence over decisions at a variety of levels." Chambers also reminds us that deliberative democratic theory is a normative theory that can be used as a critical tool to "suggests ways in which we can enhance democracy and criticize institutions that do not live up to the normative standard" (2003:308), thus not only advancing deliberative theory but also potentially expanding the possibilities for a renewal of democratic participation, decision-making and influence (Fainstein, 2007; Bellon, 2008).

Other criticisms

Deliberative democracy remains an evolving force within democratic theory, and it continues to be critiqued and debated by deliberative theorists, academics, practitioners, and citizens, from a variety of perspectives. One strand of criticism is focused on the lack of empirical research available on public deliberation and civic engagement. As Carpini

and Cook note “unfortunately empirical research on deliberative democracy has lagged significantly behind theory” (2004:316). Nevertheless, empirical research is now being undertaken (see Mendelberg, 2000; Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009) on the democratic benefits of public deliberation for example (Carpini, Cook & Jacobs, 2004:324).

Another criticism levelled at deliberation is that it can be dominated by non-deliberative talk, strategic behaviour, and elite opinions (Button & Ryfe, 2005:22), or it can be criticized as “elitist, exclusionary, manipulative, divisive, oppressive and politically insignificant” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:15). These criticisms are levelled at deliberative democracy partly because it is seen as “unachievable in modern, large and complex societies” (Elstub, 2007:14) and aimed at individuals with higher levels of education and income, or systematically disadvantaged in other ways (ethnicity, class, gender). Another concern relates to the use of reason as the prime method of communication, leading theorists (Dryzek, 2000) to note that “a more expansive notion of public talking would include unruly and contentious communications from the margins” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:16).

In acknowledging the range of criticisms as noted above, some deliberative theorists are also looking to a broader range of challenging questions about deliberation and democratic practices. For example, Simone Chambers argues that the potential exists for some form of participatory elitism when the mass public (mass democracy) is abandoned in favour of deliberative events such as mini-publics or similar ventures. That is, Chambers asks “do citizens who participate in face-to-face deliberative initiatives (and only a small fraction do) have more democratic legitimacy than the mass electorate?” (2009:344). Chambers argues that these assemblies, as examples of democratic deliberation, are fully democratic “only to the extent that they can convince the general public that they have made policy choices worth pursuing” (ibid:344).

Other theorists question what deliberative democracy and its impacts mean for the state, with its “relatively simple procedures of inclusion, when the state is no longer the sole venue of democracy” (Warren, 2002:650), and with an “increasingly complex political

terrain ... more pluralized, and increasingly dependent on information negotiation and deliberation to generate political legitimacy” (Urbinati & Warren, 2008:387). This could also include a new appreciation of participation and representation as complementary forms of citizenship, while noting that deliberation might create problems for modern democracies as “steering systems for coordination and aggregation of preferences” (Jenssen, 2008:79). These questions are part of the ongoing work facing deliberative democracy, theorists and practitioners alike.

Conclusion

While deliberative democratic theory is a heterogeneous and still-evolving field, it rests on the belief that the right kind of discussion with others can improve understanding of political issues, and improved understanding can result in changed preferences. It is perhaps this, and the expectation of greater agreement and less polarization as a result, that at least partly accounts for the calls for deliberative forms of citizen participation on climate change. The forging of an engaged and empowered citizenry through the auspices of deliberative democracy remains a challenging work in progress. The following chapter profiles three such initiatives in the climate change arena.

Chapter 3: Case description and methods

Introduction

This chapter introduces Project Lyttelton and the Energy Matters Workshop (EMW) and describes the methods used to study it. The aim of applying the methods is to determine whether and how deliberation took place in the EMW and with what outcomes. The EMW was chosen to shed light on the under-researched issue of ‘local’ deliberation, including the potential and pitfalls of such local initiatives, and to explore the strengths and weaknesses of deliberative democratic theory from a practical and local perspective. The strengths and weaknesses of the EMW in meeting the expectations of those calling for local deliberation in the climate change debate can be evaluated more effectively if placed in the context of other deliberative initiatives in this area. To that end, this chapter provides an account of the Transition Town Movement and the World Wide Views Project – both of which also focus on local participation, citizen engagement, democratic innovation and climate change – and compares them to the EMW.

Research Methods

The case: Project Lyttelton and the Energy Matters Workshop

As discussed fully later in this chapter, Project Lyttelton (PL) is a community non-profit organization, incorporated as a society with a number of paid and unpaid members. It is committed to building a resilient and sustainable community, through a range of initiatives addressing local concerns such as energy, transport and food production. As part of addressing concerns over energy and climate change, Project Lyttelton initiated and ran a public forum in August 2008, the Energy Matters Workshop. The workshop’s focus was on building resilience and sustainability in the local area. To determine, whether and how deliberation took place in the EMW, and with what outcomes and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the EMW’s approach, the qualitative research approaches of participation observation and semi-structured

interviews were applied. Participant observation, used by the researcher at the Energy Matters Workshop, also enabled potential interviewees to be identified.

Using a qualitative approach

Most theorists writing on the qualitative approach note that it allows the researcher access to people's thinking, perceptions and understandings, giving us a clearer appreciation of the motives, actions, and rationality behind the opinions and decisions of the participants. The qualitative approach can encourage this by allowing those participants to speak for themselves using ideas and language of their own (Arksey & Knight, 1999; May, 2001; Punch, 2005; Berger, 2000; Deacon & Pickering, 1999). The approach undertaken here uses the qualitative method because the research was assessing the qualities of a project and the relationship to its context, and these could be determined in part only through how the project was experienced and interpreted by its participants.

As noted by many theorists, the qualitative method allows new issues to emerge which neither the literature nor the researcher had predicted and which may necessitate a degree of flexibility in approach (May, 2001; Punch, 2005; Arksey & Knight, 1999). Therefore, one of the advantages of the qualitative method is that it may allow for a broader range of interviewee-driven responses (Bryman, 2004:145), which could be particularly valuable when we have a limited understanding of an event or trend, or when we wish to advance an existing theory. This approach can be "wonderfully unpredictable" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:12) in that the researcher must listen to each answer given, and may have to organize the next question on what was said. Rubin and Rubin (2005:15) calls this wonderfully unpredictable style the "responsive interview model", a term used to communicate the idea that the qualitative approach is a "dynamic and iterative process."

Another aspect of the qualitative approach is that it encourages researchers to reflect on their own role, recognizing that research is a two-way process, and that researchers inevitably affect and are affected by the research context (May, 2001; Punch, 2005),

whereas the quantitative approach views the researcher as a detached observer attempting to minimize researcher bias in collecting data.

Participant Observation

As many qualitative research theorists note, participant observation (PO) is a form of field research which gives immediate access to a raft of social processes (immediacy) that allows us to obtain information about what people do in contrast to what they say they do (Berger, 2000; Deacon & Pickering, 1999). Participant observation is about being there and observing verbal and non-verbal behaviours. Therefore, PO appears to be a particularly good tool when observing potentially deliberative processes. The opportunity to study people in real-life situations is important because it can be an unobtrusive way of gaining information, helping you to determine what questions to ask participants that you may go on to interview. As Deacon and Pickering note “observation produces a continuous stream of data which is at one and the same time a body of findings and a renewed set of hypotheses” (1999:261). The continuous stream of data received during participant observation calls for a flexible and focused approach from the researcher.

I attended Project Lyttelton’s ‘Energy Matters Workshop’ as a researcher using participant observation as my qualitative research tool. My “gatekeeper” (Deacon & Pickering, 1999) for this event was a member of Project Lyttelton team, who having introduced me to the main group, left me to my research. In this role I was influenced by Berger’s comments that although participant observation is “one of the most interesting forms of research”, it is also extremely difficult because “human beings are so difficult to fathom and because interpersonal and individual/group communication and relationships are so complicated” (2000:170).

My existing relationship with Project Lyttelton and members of the local community gave me access that was notably beneficial, but also created some difficulties. These difficulties coalesced around the small groups which formed the main part of the workshop, and the impact I might have had on these participants. These groups were not

rigid, but formed and reformed as people came and went from them during the day; this meant that I had to continually field questions about my role and research, even though I had introduced myself (and my role) to the larger group at the start of the day.

Berger highlights the two roles of observational research: (a) participant as observer - where the researcher participates with the group being observed and is a functioning part of the group, and (b) observer as participant – where the observer is a neutral outsider who participates for the purpose of making observations (2000:162). I had decided on the participant as observer role, because I had felt that taking part in the activity would generate more information than would be possible without participation. But, as Deacon and Pickering note, participation can hinder observation, with a “balance [having] to be struck between remembering the practical necessities of taking notes and observations while responding to requests to help or take part in observed events” (1999:268). In hindsight, taking notes and observations did occasionally get sidelined while I was taking part in group process or responding to requests from participants; moreover, the participation part of PO did not appear to give me more information and data than would have been possible without it. On reflection, it may also have been less unsettling (the Hawthorne effect) if I had been strictly an observer, rather than a participant observer.¹¹

Finally, I also felt some empathy with Deacon and Pickering’s comment that “the hardest task in fieldwork is to study people who are politically or culturally akin to the fieldworker” and who may share similar beliefs (1999:262). I had entered the research arena with an existing interest in energy matters, only to study a group who had also expressed a similar interest as can be seen by their involvement in the workshop. The difficulties posed by this insider’s disadvantage-through-familiarity were addressed through careful note-taking, reflection and the use of an interview approach that allowed for unpredictability.

¹¹ Deacon, D (1999:266). The Hawthorne effect: unintended consequences of observational research in changing the behaviour of the observed.

Interviewing

Qualitative interviewing is a dynamic, flexible, adaptive, and iterative process, according to many people writing on the subject (Jensen, 1991; Rubin & Rubin, 2005), “with questions that tend to be much less structured than those used in quantitative research” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999:148). This approach allows participants to be open, spontaneous, and to speak about the issues “using language and ideas of their own” (Arksey & Knight, 1999:6) as they are “not confined to a limited range of answers” (Punch, 2005:168), while addressing what is “valid to them personally, allowing for rich, detailed data” (Devere, 1993:14).

Jensen writing on qualitative interviewing notes that “language is both the tool and the object of analysis” (1991:32), while Rubin and Rubin argue that qualitative interviews are “an extension of ordinary conversations, where interviewees are partners in the research enterprise rather than subjects to be tested or examined” (2005:12). When reflecting on the semi-structured interviews undertaken for this research, I found that both Jensen, 1991 and Rubin and Rubin, 2005 comments highlighted aspects of the process that were both important and demanding.

Following on from the participant observation undertaken at the ‘Energy Matters Workshop’, interviewees were selected based on their involvement at the workshop and with Project Lyttelton. This saw a number of longstanding members of Project Lyttelton being asked to participate in interviews, as well as participants of the Energy Matters Workshop, and Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury. All the interviewees involved were in some way related to Project Lyttelton, whether through the workshop, or through other ongoing relationships. A semi-structured interview technique was used allowing for a broader range of responses (Bryman, 2004:145), accompanied by a list of general themes for discussion. The structure of the interviews was directed by the interviewees’ responses and what they saw as relevant, while attempting to retain a focus on the general themes and underlying research questions.

Ten people were interviewed over a two-month period. Two interviewees were initially travelling overseas, which accounts for the length of the interviewing period. Three people were interviewed from Project Lyttelton, four from the Energy Matters Workshop, and three from local government. The interviews varied in length from thirty minutes to one and a half hours, with the disparity in interview length being participant driven.

Potential interviewees were initially contacted by telephone. If the contacts agreed to participate in the interviews an information sheet (Appendix Two), and consent form (Appendix One) were sent to them prior to the interview. The interviews began with a description of the project, relevant background information, and why they had been chosen to participate. The interviewees were given an opportunity at this point to ask questions or clarify any information that had been given. Following the interview, participants were also given an opportunity to clarify any points, voice concerns, or add other comments. Although this opportunity was offered to all interviewees, no one asked for any further information, clarification or expressed any concerns.

After undertaking the first few interviews, concerns that Rubin and Rubin raise in relation to qualitative interviewing became apparent, and included: “how do you get people to stay focused, how specific should questions be, and how do you get people to elaborate on what they say?” (2005:12). The aforementioned was also impacted upon by the existing relationships I had with a number of the interviewees, which resulted in conversation going off topic at times. I reviewed my interview technique, taking note of Rubin and Rubin’s (2005:13 citing Greetz, 1973) claim that to get “thick descriptions” (depth, detail and richness) in interviews requires “main questions, probes, and follow-ups.” I also developed an ability to adapt and respond to a variety of situations found in the field, whether this was loud background noise, boiling kettles, interruptions, or crying babies.

Finally, the qualitative research methods used with this research (participant observation and interviewing) enabled a range of deliberative processes to be experienced, and their limitations noted, by the researcher. Participant observation not only allowed deliberation

to be viewed, it also acted as a guide to those who were interviewed later. Although this was a learning process for the researcher, it added a level of understanding and depth that would have been impossible through a strictly theoretical approach.

Description and comparison of local initiatives

This section now turns to an analysis of the case study Project Lyttelton and its public forum the Energy Matters Workshop. Also reviewed here are the Transition Town Movement and the World Wide Views Projects, as comparative projects in the public sphere. Like the case study, these initiatives examine aspects of local participation, democratic innovation and climate change. Initiatives such as these are assessed because, as Johnson notes, they potentially “illuminate the prospects for, as well as challenges in, realizing the values on which deliberative democratic theories are based” (2009:679).

As discussed in Chapter One, multiple intergovernmental groups, international organizations, theorists and climate analysts call for some form of local participation in the climate change debate and its decision-making processes. These groups, including the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, the UNFCCC¹², IPCC¹³, and UNDP¹⁴ have numerous, and at times intersecting reasons for highlighting democracy and local participation, and what they envisage for them. These are summarised below.

The ‘local versus global’ issue: it is argued that although climate change is acknowledged as a global issue (be that environmentally, economically, politically, or culturally), its effects will be experienced first and foremost at the local level. Because citizens will have to live with the consequences of climate policies that address this issue, their views (and participation) should be taken into consideration. As Bedsted and Kluver note “citizens have to live with the consequences of climate policies. Their views should therefore be taken into consideration” because the consequences of these policies may

¹² UNFCC Article 6, (1992:17)

¹³ IPCC Third Assessment Report (2001:899).

¹⁴ UNDP ‘Adaptation Policy Frameworks for Climate Change. See (www.undp.org/climatechange/adapt/apf.html).

mean that “citizens will have to invest in new technology, develop new consumer patterns, modify their houses and even their livelihoods” (2009:3).

The scientific/social issue: many climate analysts and theorists argue that climate change can not be effectively addressed as merely a scientific issue; it is also a social issue. This argument sees the ‘science’ as part of the wider societal and cultural landscape, not separate from it. As Weber notes, climate change is not just a scientific question, rather the “dominant factors shaping the impacts of climate on society are societal, as opposed to technical, or energy related” (Weber, 2008:135).

The local knowledge issue: this argues that at the community level there is a raft of local knowledge and experience, or “multiple knowledges or ways of knowing” (Weber, 2008), and that citizens through this knowledge and local experience are able to effectively highlight emerging local issues, and possibly come up with innovative ways of dealing with them.

The top-down, one size fits all, bureaucratic approach issue: this argues that too often the climate change debate is overly centralized, top-down, simplistic and disempowering, “leaving little room for robust democratic debate and choice with respect to governance institutions and policies” (Weber, 2008:133); a one-size fits-all, bureaucratic approach. For example, writing on the potential impacts, risks and vulnerabilities of New Zealand agriculture to climate change, Nick Cradock-Henry notes that interviewees “[felt] threatened by a growing disconnect between decisions made by central government, and the farm-gate, where those policies have their biggest impact” (2008:15).

The awareness-raising and education issue: many writers argue that grassroots or local participation matters because it effectively builds awareness of the climate change issue; encourages behavioural change through awareness building; and helps remove opposition and hostility to public policies addressing climate change (Church, 2008; Few, Brown & Tompkins, 2006). As noted by World Wide Views on Global Warming Project (Ward, 2010:24), the potential exists that “when people are engaged in a much more proactive

and deliberative way than is usual, concern about climate change, and interest in tackling it, tend to be magnified.”

The efficacy/local action issue: local participation builds feelings of efficacy and produces locally focused actions that are an essential part of strategies to address climate change. Specifically, local participation and action may show that change is possible and that communities can effectively participate in this; help meet local targets that may complement or assist national ones; build understanding of how local action may be connected to global climate change; help support new projects and community scale infrastructure, and ultimately give communities greater control over the decisions that may impact upon their lives (Church, 2008; Few, Brown & Tompkins, 2006).

The democracy issue: whether and how democracy will prove to be resilient in the face of climate change is still uncertain, and if it is not adaptable, will “democratic rights and freedoms be undermined and eroded” (Ward, 2010:4). Bedsted and Kluver note the “emerging democratic gap between global policy makers and citizens, as more decisions become global in scale” (2009:5). Weber counters this argument by asserting that because there has been a move towards a more participatory and deliberative type of democracy, there may be an opportunity to “adopt and effectively implement, governance arrangements and strategies that are not draconian, coercive, and top-down in character” (2008:135).

The Transition Town Movement and the World Wide Views on Global Warming project provide useful examples of some of the key features of deliberative democracy, as well as some of the issues noted above. The following section comparatively explores whether these two cases meet all or some of the expectations of deliberative democratic theory.

The Transition Town Movement

The Transition Town movement is a civil society-based social movement attempting to bring about the transition to a low-carbon sustainable economy. This rapidly expanding

grassroots movement targets climate change and peak oil through local community-based action and public empowerment and engagement around climate change.

The Transition Town movement's primary focus is on re-localization (decentralization) as a response to climate change and resource depletion. In essence local transition initiatives "re-localize all essential elements that a community needs to sustain itself and thrive ... while building resilience to the damaging effects of peak oil ... and climate change" (Brangwyn & Hopkins, 2008:7). Transition initiatives are involved with a wide range of local activities, including promoting locally-grown food, teaching gardening and cooking skills, encouraging energy conservation, establishing locally-owned renewable energy companies, and building supportive communities around these activities (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2010:7 citing Hopkins, 2008).

Seyfang and Haxeltine in their national survey of Transition Initiatives asked groups to describe their greatest achievements to date. Sixty nine per cent described their awareness-raising and community engagement activities, forty per cent noted food- and gardening-related activities, and eleven per cent noted energy-related activities (2010:7). Seyfang and Haxeltine describe Transition Initiatives as "experimental green projects within a niche movement" formed as substitute spaces to mainstream organizations. Because of this dynamic, "their ability to act symbiotically for incremental improvement is limited" (2010:8). The Transition Movement's focus on community-level action is inspired, in part, by a belief that the "current political regime will fail to function, and political processes will fail to catalyze the changes needed" (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2010:9). Although the Transition Movement recognizes national and international agencies as having a significant role to play, it is as yet not broadly engaged with these political elites. The Movement's relationship with the state may be due to its committed environmentalist core, or to concerns with co-option by the state (see Smith, 2003 citing Dryzek). Or, as noted by Hopkins, rather than contesting or engaging with the political authorities, "the movement seems to assume the existing regime will wither away" (ibid:9), leaving a space that initiatives like the Transition Movement could possibly fill.

The Transition Movement also encourages a focus on networking. However, as Seyfang and Haxeltine note “this networking is internal to the niche itself, supporting its own development” and “[seeking] working relationships with other local organizations on an ad-hoc basis” (2010:12). Once again, although the Movement is working with a range of actors, engagement with the state is limited; it is argued that its “relative lack of well-resourced partners” may ultimately hamper its continued growth (ibid:13). Although Seyfang and Haxeltine critique the effectiveness of the Transition Movement, other theorists argue that the transition movement utilizes a “network that unites people throughout the nation and the world experimenting with what works and what doesn’t work in hundreds of diverse communities” (Belew, 2009:3), and is “testimony to the will of certain communities in experimenting with new forms of democracy to environmental ends” (Guglielmi, 2009:7).¹⁵

The processes of learning and behaviour change through education and information-giving events are also considered to be a core part of the Transition Movement. These learning processes include setting up and facilitating steering groups, and running participative workshops. Awareness raising is also considered a prerequisite for action and transition expansion as well as a valuable opportunity for social learning, although Seyfang and Haxeltine do critique this by noting that groups may be stuck in awareness-raising, and “not attending to the needs of those who want to move on to action” (2010:15).

It also appears that some transition movement groups use deliberative tools such as the Open Space Technology model¹⁶, but whether and how they are used across the transition movement is difficult to ascertain. As noted in the Transition Initiatives Primer:

by the end of each meeting [Open Space Technology], everyone has said what they needed to, extensive notes had been taken and typed up, lots of networking

¹⁵ Silvia Guglielmi writing for the think tank Demos. Was involved with the Italian thinktank ‘Vision’ and their conference in 2009 on the ‘Kyoto of the Cities’ looking at climate change, cities, democracy and policy.

¹⁶ Open Space Technology. See description of EMW in Chapter 3.

has taken place, and a huge number of ideas had been identified and visions set out (Brangwyn & Hopkins, 2008:26; see Transition Town Totnes, Open Space Day on Energy).¹⁷

Transition Town Totnes also notes that “we aim to create a decision making and membership structure that is as open, democratic, transparent, inclusive and effective as possible and we welcome feedback and suggestions that will help us achieve this” (nd:1).¹⁸ Not only are face-to-face meetings happening within the Transition movement, but new participatory initiatives such as ‘Transition Aotearoa’ (the TT social networking site) are growing rapidly in numbers. Within and between communities, the increased use of online technologies to facilitate and strengthen discussion and increase democratic participation appears to be resolutely expanding.

Awareness raising, education, and community building are also prime concerns and areas of action in the Transition Movement. While the Transition Movement appears to be philosophically disinclined to engage with policy-makers, there is growing evidence that this may be changing. Ed Miliband, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change was a ‘keynote listener’ at the United Kingdom’s Transition Network Conference in 2009. The Transition Town Totnes group has been chosen as one of the UK Department of Energy and Climate Change’s ten ‘low carbon communities’, being awarded six hundred and twenty five thousand pounds for the ‘Transition Streets’ project in 2010. As the Transition Town Totnes group notes, the Transition Streets model will “educate and empower people to decide for themselves how best to decarbonise their lives [and has] huge implications for how Government tackles climate change in communities, offering genuinely bottom-up engagement coupled with ongoing behaviour change.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Open Space Day on Energy. See (http://totnes.transitionnetwork.org/Eney/OpenSpaceDayOnEnergy_LiveHere).

¹⁸ See (http://totnes.transitionnetwork.org/Central/About_us).

¹⁹ ‘Transition Town Totnes Celebrates Emerging as one of DECC’s Low Carbon Communities. See (<http://transitionculture.org/2009/12/21/transition-town-totnes-celebrates-emerging-as-one-of-deccs-low-carbon-communities/>).

In conclusion, the Transition Movement can be seen as an example of a civil society based social movement with a local focus, attempting to transition to a low-carbon sustainable economy, using a range of democratic processes. If the importance of influence and outcomes as part of the deliberative democratic model is acknowledged (as it is by many theorists) then the Transition Movement's limited, but growing engagement with the state is of particular interest to deliberation.

World Wide Views on Global Warming: From the World's Citizens to the Climate Policy-makers

The World Wide Views on Global Warming project (WWViews) was launched in March 2009 as the "first-ever, globe-encompassing democratic deliberation" (Bedsted & Kluver, 2009:3). The project, initiated and organized by The Danish Board of Technology and the Danish Cultural Institute, is relevant to this thesis because of its focus on innovative citizen participation and deliberative democracy as a way of gaining influence in climate change policy. Although not a grassroots-initiated project, WWViews models new forms of democratic participation and deliberation that highlight the importance of citizen inclusion in decision-making.

The aim of the project was to encourage political elites and decision-makers to engage with citizens when formulating public policy in relation to climate change, not only at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference but into the future.²⁰ The WWViews project deployed a number of the arguments noted above for the use of local and deliberative processes in addressing climate change, including: an acknowledgement of the importance of society and citizen voice in the climate change debate; the place of local knowledge; the place of bottom-up, decentralized, empowered citizen engagement; and awareness raising and education.

WWViews selected four thousand citizens in some thirty-eight countries: approximately one hundred from each country, chosen to reflect the demographic distribution and

²⁰ United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15), 2009.

diversity in their respective countries and regions in relation to age, gender, occupation, and education (Bedsted & Kluver, 2009:4). These citizens received impartial information about climate change along with a list of twelve identical predefined questions clustered in to four themes (climate change and its consequences; long-term climate goal and urgency; dealing with greenhouse gas emissions; and the economy of technology and adaptation). The questions were chosen to be of direct relevance to the Copenhagen meeting and were identical in order to allow for cross-national comparisons. After receiving these questions the groups were left to deliberate, and to vote on alternative answers to the predefined questions, which resulted in a large number of recommendations phrased in their own wordings. WWViews then synthesized these results, coming up with clear policy recommendations (Bedsted & Kluver, 2009:4) which appeared to indicate “that the more people learn about and consider climate change issues, the tougher they want climate change policies to be” (ibid:11). One impression from the results stood clear: “participating citizens mandate their politicians to take fast and strong action at COP15”.²¹ The results were available almost instantly through WWViews website to other participant groups, or any interested individual (Bedsted & Kluver, 2009).²²

As WWViews notes:

[T]hrough deliberation, citizens who do not represent stakeholder groups learn what competing expert and stakeholder groups think, test their ideas against others holding different views, and then reach a considered judgment that integrates all of this new information with their own values, worldview and life experience (Danish Board of Technology, 2009:2).

Sustainable Aotearoa New Zealand (SANZ), New Zealand’s national partner to the WWViews on Global Warming, states that “the overarching purpose is to set a path-

²¹ World Wide Views on Global Warming: Policy Recommendations. See (<http://www.wwviews.org/node/277>).

²² Also available instantly were photos and videos from the various meetings continuously uploaded to a media share server. Some countries also arranged to link through internet videoconferencing.

breaking precedent by demonstrating that political decision-making processes on a global scale benefit when everyday people participate” (Sustainable Aotearoa New Zealand, 2009:1).²³ Although SANZ was initially involved in the project, it was unable to continue due to a lack of financing, a problem faced by several other potential partners (Bedsted & Kluver, 2009).

As the stated aim of this process was to get citizens informed and considered views heard by decision-makers, the results were targeted at politicians, negotiators and interest groups engaged in the UN climate negotiations leading up to Copenhagen Conference and beyond. The process of informing relevant stakeholders of the results was left to the national and regional participants. Following Copenhagen, WWViews UK (Involve) noted that “we did make efforts to hold conversations between participants and representatives from the Department of Energy and Climate Change, but ultimately these fell through” (World Wide Views on Climate Change, 2010). As has been noted earlier, the political context within which projects such as the WWViews exist are complex and difficult, as can be demonstrated by the lack of tangible commitments arising out of Copenhagen, and the difficulties experienced by ‘Involve’ in engaging with the state.

Project Lyttelton

Project Lyttelton is a grassroots community group based in the township of Lyttelton. Lyttelton is a thriving port town sitting on the edge of Te Whaka-raupo (Lyttelton Harbour); it is fifteen minutes from Christchurch and part of the wider Banks Peninsula region. Statistics from the 2006 New Zealand census show that Lyttelton has a population of 3,075.²⁴

Project Lyttelton, originally known as Project Port Lyttelton (PPL), evolved in the early 1990s with an initial focus on historic restoration, while working under the umbrella of

²³ SANZ. See (www.phase2.org).

²⁴ 2006 Census. See (www.stats.govt.nz).

the 'Main Street Programme'.²⁵ This project provided an opportunity for residents to come together and discuss how they saw the town of Lyttelton developing. On completion of this project, participants decided that Lytteltonians needed to create a vision for themselves, and a new body 'Project Lyttelton' was formed. Project Lyttelton's vision statement describes Lyttelton as a "Portal to Canterbury's historic past, a vibrant sustainable community, creating a living future." Project Lyttelton (PL) notes that this vision statement has always been used to measure any potential project's suitability and has been a significant factor in their success.²⁶

Project Lyttelton is a community non-profit organization, incorporated as a society with a board of nine. The board currently consists of one chair, a secretary/treasurer, and seven board members. Project Lyttelton has a paid membership, as well as non-financial members and a range of supporters. Meetings are held once a month and are open to the wider community, with all reports, minutes and accounts freely available to the public (with minutes put onto PL's website).

Project Lyttelton, acting through the wider Lyttelton and Banks Peninsula locales, is committed to building a resilient and sustainable community in response to threats such as climate change. Although sustainability remains a contested term, with debate continuing as to whether it is "well-honed principle, a concept, a positive vision, a normative idea or a discursive construct" (Adger & Jordan, 2009:5), it is described here as:

both a set of outcomes and processes which consider not only the long-term viability of social relations and ecosystems, but also collective decision making, participation and governance. The outcome of this sustainability approach may result in greater awareness and a shift in beliefs and practices (O'Riordan, 2009).

Ultimately, Project Lyttelton and similar local groups and networks might be seen as addressing the claim made by the Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED) in

²⁵ Main Street programme – set up to revitalize small towns in the 1990s, based on a partnership between local government, the business community and the community at large.

²⁶ Introduction to Project Lyttelton. See (www.transitiontowns.org.nz).

Europe that sustainable development “cannot be achieved locally or nationally without the effective participation of the voluntary and community sector” (Church, 2005:11). Through its commitment to sustainability, Project Lyttelton has addressed a raft of innovative ‘local concerns’ including transportation options, energy strategies, and food production. Local action is important on a number of levels because it shows people that change is possible in their community, and that they can be involved in engaging with, and directing this change.

Belief in the co-benefits of adaptation and mitigation as discussed in Chapter One, are seen in a variety of Project Lyttelton initiatives. For example, diverse local action under the PL umbrella has resulted in various transportation initiatives; car pooling, cycle schemes, bikes on buses, community owned and shared vehicles, insulation schemes and warm walls, a biodigester and green waste minimization, wind power, and local food production through three community organic gardens. Other activities, which may be seen as building or strengthening community capacity, include a thriving farmer’s market; community festivals (a summer street party, and a winter festival); newspapers; an ever expanding time bank scheme; a communications project that includes a website, and a community resource centre.

Project Lyttelton also works on developing and maintaining networks and linkages to others as part of its core work. This work answers one of Chris Church’s concerns that “one of the problems of local action is simply that it is local ... [T]here is a need for more effective co-operation and networking that can make local to local links” (2005:23). In its networking and linkage work, PL is continually acting to broaden public debate around issues such as climate change, under the umbrella of sustainability. This conversation and engagement appears to be taking place across a raft of different community groups in New Zealand, including: Transition Towns, Hampden Community Energy, and Lincoln EnviroTown Trust amongst many others. This networking approach has resulted in PL establishing relationships with Christchurch City Council, Environment Canterbury and various Community Boards. Other networks and contacts include: the Hikurangi Trust (Todd and Tindall Foundation’s collaborative action group on climate change); Lyttelton

schools; Plunket; various Time Bank groups nationally; Living Economies Aotearoa (complementary currencies); Delta Fellowship (church based group); New Brighton, St. Albans, Waiheke Island, and Gore Transition Towns; Canterbury Community Trust; Lyttelton Port Company, and the Ministry of Social Development. These relationships, which continue to expand and evolve, encourage and facilitate the exchange of information, ideas and shared interests in a symbiotic fashion.

In meeting its objectives, Project Lyttelton works through the ‘Appreciative Inquiry’ model, which is seen as a guiding principle in all its efforts. Appreciative Inquiry addresses empowerment and community participation, and works on the assumption that “whatever you want more of, already exists in all organizations” (Hall & Hammond, nd:1). This approach is seen as highlighting and building on the existing strengths and resources of an organization or a community such as Project Lyttelton (Hall & Hammond, nd:2).²⁷ A Project Lyttelton member notes that the Appreciative Inquiry model is part of “building up a belief system in the community, just doing that the whole time, the culture and belief you can do it” (A3, 2008).

Local people can get involved with Project Lyttelton in a number of ways, including PL workshops or brainstorming sessions, as a way of ‘talking’ with others about issues of interest or concern. In July 2007, Project Lyttelton ran a forum called the ‘Imagine Lyttelton Harbour Basin’ project, where sixty members of the community got together to talk about themes and values as part of a community conversation. There were ten recommendations from this, and although none of these outcomes became formal projects, participant A3 (PL) notes that the “themes [from this workshop] have been in everything ... they just became part of our way of being or thinking” (2008).²⁸

²⁷ Appreciate Inquiry? See (www.thinbook.com).

²⁸ Recommendations included: Treaty of Waitangi; affordable housing; energy; education.

The Energy Matters Workshop

As part of addressing concerns about climate change from an ‘energy’ perspective, Project Lyttelton ran a public forum, the ‘Energy Matters Workshop’ in August 2008. The theme of the workshop was: ‘What needs to happen for energy matters to become sustainable and resilient in the Lyttelton and Harbour Basin area in the face of climate change and peak oil?’ It was open to anyone who wished to attend. The workshop’s focus was on getting a diverse group of local people together, including business people and local authorities, to have an initial conversation about energy matters, climate change, and building a resilient community.

As a deliberative exercise, The Energy Matters Workshop is an example of how this type of forum may not always be about reaching agreement or consensus in relation to a particular issue. Rather it may be focused on building up a network of citizens, with a broader goal of discussing new ideas, building awareness, highlighting shared interests and inspiring new initiatives. As Jacobs and Cook note “where options do not exist, public deliberation can help formulate options that do present mutually advantageous outcomes ... [and] the identification of shared interests, and the recognition of mutually beneficial options” (2009:161).

The Energy Matters Workshop saw approximately eighty people from a variety of backgrounds attend the one day event. They included people from the local community, business people, students (Geography Department, University of Canterbury), Community Board members, and Christchurch City Council staff. The workshop was facilitated by a Project Lyttelton member, using the ‘Open Space Technology’ model. This model was used because its main aim is to give groups wanting to take part in discussion the space and time to address an issue, and find its own way. With all the participants in one group, the facilitator introduced the workshop, discussed its aim, and talked about the Open Space Technology method, why it was being used, and how it would work. Time was given for participants to ask questions at this point. From my observation, it appeared that participants were initially a little unsure about the actual

process. The facilitator then went on to discuss the process in more depth, asking participants who had a particular interest they wanted to explore to write this on a large piece of paper, which would be hung on the main wall.

After this initial discussion, participants were given time to consider what had been said, and ultimately thirteen topics were written onto paper and hung on the wall. Rather than beginning with all thirteen topics, the topics were split into two groups. Seven topics were initially considered. Participants who had not written up a topic, then got up, looked at the subjects as noted, and went to where the subject initiator had gone to sit (spread out around the building). From my observation this process seemed to work reasonably smoothly, with participants seemingly quite excited about the range of topics, and quickly going off to their group of choice. These topics were then explored further as the group saw fit, with participants free to move between the groups at any time. The initiator of the topic stayed with that group until a break was called. After the break, and following the earlier process, a further six topics were put up for discussion.

The initiator of each topic wrote down on paper all the ideas put forward by participants, and if this initiator had any particular experience with the topic, would often answer questions put forward by others. When a new person came into the group, they would give a brief overview of what had been said. It appeared that the groups were conversationally very active, with free flowing conversation and most people present participating at some time or another. Participants seemed to feel free to come up with ideas, which were then discussed, and to ask lots of questions, which were then answered or discussed in the group. Because people were free 'to use their feet' and move between groups at any time, it was difficult to say how long people were generally staying in a group. However, this did appear to depend on their level of interest going into a group, and what they discovered there.

At the end of the allocated time, the groups came together and presented the results of their discussions. These presentations were in a form agreed on by the group; some were presented orally (usually with more than one person presenting the group's findings and

ideas), while others also utilized diagrams or pictures. As each group presented their work, time was given for the main group to ask questions or discuss findings. These results were later compiled, put onto Project Lyttelton's website and sent to all participants. People who had said they wished to continue with an issue were then linked to the initiator of a topic (if the initiator had agreed to this) and left to go forward with the topic as the group saw fit. Although some participants appeared to find the process a little confusing at times, most people seemed to enjoy the freedom to move between groups and the opportunity to hear about and discuss a range of topics, staying longer with a subject that interested them, then moving on to another.

From within this framework, a range of innovative topics and issues were discussed, often by people who, it appeared, had come to the workshop with enthusiasm, but limited knowledge. The topics included: a community/cooperative wind farm for Lyttelton/Harbour basin; bio-fuel from a harbour sewage plant; energy efficiency and conservation; sustainable transport; photovoltaic and solar energy use, energy from green waste; industry carbon reduction in Lyttelton; household carbon budgets; retrofitting buildings/insulation; wave/tidal power, and transport – including car pooling through the tunnel with a hitching post for cycles. Although not all topics were followed up, the wind farm, biodigester, green waste and transport options saw ongoing participation and engagement by workshop members.

At the end of the workshop, the facilitator addressed the main group, explaining what was going to happen to the information gathered (put onto the PL website), and how contact could be made with a group if the participant wished to continue with a specific issue (initially through email contact). Participants were slow to leave, gathering in twos or threes to enthusiastically discuss the day, and any plans they had in relation to ongoing groups. Two initiatives to come out of the workshop were the wind farm project and the biodigester scheme.

Although not explicitly addressed above, the role of facilitator in community events remains open to ongoing questioning and debate, particularly as it relates to the

introduction of ‘expert’ facilitators from outside the community. For example, Gavin Kenny highlights the importance of “targeting people who might be called innovators or leaders of change; people who are already proactively adapting and providing leadership in their community” (nd:8). The facilitation undertaken at the workshop was approved of by all interviewees. This included not only an affirmation of her facilitation style, but also an acknowledgement of her role and goodwill as an existing proactive community member.

Although the workshop facilitator acted as a ‘non-expert’ facilitator, Button and Ryfe note that “the deliberative movement around the globe is spearheaded by a relatively small cadre of experts” (2005:21). For example, it would appear that “the contemporary enthusiasm for deliberative approaches has spawned a new industry of ‘process experts’ and consultancies each offering, promoting even, particular methods” (Blowers, Boersema & Martin, 2005:3). This focus on expert facilitators is potentially a concern, because of the risk that they “may overlook the conceptual implication of their practical choices ... and that such customization may obscure the fact that the local ways in which they model deliberation offer more general, culture-wide lessons” (Button & Ryfe, 2005:22). This concern over ‘customization’ highlights a possible tension between process experts and preconceived ideas about what they think a community should address, rather than highlighting and working with existing local issues. Interest and concern over ‘process experts’ was highlighted by an Energy Matters Workshop participant who noted that “they [expert facilitators] often just tell you how it is going to be” (B1, 2008). The EMW with its use of a Project Lyttelton member as the facilitator was less likely to suffer from the issues noted above.

The wind project and biodigester schemes

Following the EMW, a group who had discussed wind options at the workshop, got together to look at the possibility of constructing a community-owned wind cluster (i.e. mini wind farm). In 2009 Harbour Wind Ltd was formed, to look at the construction of between one to six medium sized turbines, providing electricity to between six hundred

and twelve hundred homes. The wind cluster would allow power to be generated close to where it is used (i.e. Lyttelton), minimises visual impact, and funnels profits back to the Banks Peninsula community. Construction costs of this community-owned wind cluster will be paid for by local people buying shares in the co-operative company.

The biodigester scheme also arose out of the EMW as a way of using organic waste material from restaurants and homes in Lyttelton. The process which produces methane uses the natural bacteria in rotting organic matter. The biodigester is designed to fit underneath the PL building, where although it will not create a large amount of energy, it could be used for projects requiring small amounts of electricity. It could also be used as an educational tool, and as an example of sustainability. PL currently has a funding application before the Waste Minimization Scheme for this project.

Discussion

The three community initiatives discussed in this chapter embody different aspects of the call for citizen participation in addressing climate change. All three initiatives reflect the assumption that climate change is not exclusively a scientific issue, but a wider social one; that local involvement will increase awareness and serves an education function; and that direct citizen participation in relation to climate change can reinvigorate democracy and counter the disempowering effect of imposed solutions.

The Transition Movement and Project Lyttelton both emphasise arguments that the effects of climate change will not only be felt locally but need to be addressed locally (the local versus global issue) and that local knowledge is a valuable resource for these addressing climate-change challenges (the local knowledge issue). Many of the activities undertaken by the Transition Movement appear to mirror those occurring within Project Lyttelton. However, Project Lyttelton differs from the Transition Movement in a number of ways: its approach to community participation appears to be less prescriptive and potentially more responsive to the needs and characteristics of its community than that of the Transition Movement. In addition, Project Lyttelton has worked to build linkages

with the policy community, while the Transition Movement has until now been generally disinclined to do this.

In relation to the question of linkage between deliberative outcomes and policy, the Transition Movement and WWViews can be seen as being at opposite ends of a continuum. At one end, the Transition Movement is unwilling to engage with formal policy processes and actors on the assumption that change will have to occur outside the policy realm. On the other, WWViews aimed to influence not only national-level policy-makers, but the international agreement those governments were meant to produce. WWViews' focus on a particular event (the Copenhagen COP15 meeting) and its ambitions to link the local to the international through simultaneous citizen involvement in multiple, globally distributed sites through a prescribed and internationally agreed upon process, created significant cost barriers that resulted in a number of partners (potentially national organizers) withdrawing from the project. This kind, or at least degree of entry barrier is not present for the ongoing, move-at-your-own-pace, locally focused activity, represented by Project Lyttelton and the Transition Movement.

Conclusion

Project Lyttelton's EMW fits the call for a deliberative approach through its use of the key institutional features of deliberative democratic processes, resulting in an increase in agency, social capital and collective interest. That is, the EMW fits the call for a local, societal response to climate change adaptation not only environmentally, but also economically and politically. The workshop and its outcomes highlight local knowledge, a bottom-up decentralized approach, mediated linkage with a range of stakeholders including the state, awareness raising, education, individual and collective empowerment, and community building. As Jenssen posits, "maybe actors are participating, not in order to maximize their preferences or utility, but rather in order to clarify collective identity and self-understanding" (2008:80). A number of substantive projects also arose out of the workshop that could directly impact on building resilience (adaptation and mitigation) to climate change at the local level in the future.

To conclude, the EMW is also an example of ways in which local participation does not fit the calls for, and expectations of, stakeholders in relation to climate change. This lack of engagement is noted particularly when an attempt is made to tie deliberation directly to public policy and decision-making and highlights as Johnson argues, the lack of “opportunities for citizens to engage in and with inclusive, equitable, transparent procedures and institutions that yield legitimate and just public policy” (2009:680). Although PL is engaged with a new research and evaluation project that may highlight and address some of the above issues, it is also noted that unless stakeholders with policy decision-making power are “motivated and committed to share it” (ibid:681) the current political framework (and context) will continue to act as a disincentive to those at the local level. This may mean that those groups at the community level, even when engaged with issues around climate change, may find it difficult to meet Few, Brown & Tompkins’s call for local deliberative participation in climate change related decision making. To address these concerns, the following chapter will provide an analysis of the empirical research undertaken with PL, the EMW, and local government, gathered through in-depth interviews and participant observation.

Chapter 4: Analysis of case-study and local government interviews and participant observation

Introduction

There remains a theoretical and empirical research imperative to examine and question what deliberation looks like across a plurality of interests and communities, because the literature on deliberation, particularly at the local level, remains largely abstract and academic. This imperative also extends to the relationship between local community groups and political elites, if as many theorists acknowledge, deliberative empowerment is a fundamental part of deliberative democracy (Johnson, 2009; Young, 2006; Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009; Button & Ryfe, 2005, Levine, Fung & Gastil, 2005). Although this thesis focuses primarily on how to “get ‘there’ from ‘here’” (Knight & Johnson, 1994:287) through the use of deliberation, deliberative democratic theory is also seen as “a critical standard from which to assess existing institutional arrangements” (ibid:287).

Project Lyttelton’s aim in relation to the workshop was to provide a public space for the community and interested others, to come together to ‘talk’ about energy issues in relation to climate change and place. PL provided the framework for this to happen, not only by using the Open Space Technology model of deliberation, but also through local facilitation and various infrastructural supports. To meet this aim, there was a focus on participant self-selection, inclusion, and unconstrained dialogue. At the end of the workshop PL provided resources that enabled groups to come together in an on-going manner (if they so choose).

Whether and how the EMW effectively addresses those deliberative conditions envisioned by deliberative democrats and noted in Chapter Two will be examined here. The research process revealed significant issues related to the connections between local deliberative initiatives and both local and central government. These issues are presented and discussed in the second half of this chapter.

The Energy Matters Workshop and Deliberation

As noted in Chapter Two, there appears to be a rough consensus among theorists of deliberative democracy that the key conditions of a deliberative process include inclusiveness, rationality, agreement and efficacy. Due to the structure of the workshop, and issues with participant observation and interview findings, it was difficult to provide conclusive empirical evidence that the EMW met all these conditions. However, by examining the ways in which the workshop did, and did not, conform to the theoretical consensus a clearer understanding of local deliberation, its processes and outcomes was possible.

Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness, in its most encompassing form, not only calls for “the inclusion of everyone affected by a decision” Jacobs and Cook (2009), but also stipulates that “the range and diversity of citizen voices” are “heard, respected, and incorporated” (ibid:10). In an attempt to be inclusive as possible, Project Lyttelton used various forms of notification (flyers, posters, emails, newspapers) to alert as many of the general public and other stakeholders about the Energy Matters Workshop as possible. I asked a PL member how they decided who was going to participate in their projects and initiatives:

Nobody decides, it's random. We don't know ... we use our website, which has information, the local paper, the PL newsletter, the email newsletter. So, it's just going through our established networks, personal contacts. So whenever we run anything we never know if anyone is going to come. We always believe that the right people turn up at the right time, whether it's one person, or a hundred (A1).

The selection scheme used for the workshop was, as noted above, participant self-selection. It appears that the public self-select for a variety of reasons, but information and triggers such as advertisements, or talking with friends, colleagues, or other community members about community concerns, can assist in a decision being made by

the individual about whether or not to participate. That is, self-selection involves “a more personal invitation from friend to friend, neighbour to neighbour, or community organizer to citizen” (Button & Ryfe, 2005:23). It is crucial to an analysis of inclusion and deliberation, to ascertain just who initiated a deliberative encounter, and once initiated who participated, because this may influence the talk that takes place, the outcomes, and challenges that may arise in deliberation.

A range of stakeholders participated in the workshop, including Lytteltonians, PL members, business people, university students working on geography projects, and local government members. Because these people self-selected into this particular workshop, it could be assumed that they had some interest in local energy matters, whether this was an interest in finding out more or clarifying existing knowledge. Although it was difficult to ascertain, it is important to an analysis of participation to consider how this ‘interested’ stakeholder group may have influenced what appeared to be an inclusive workshop. Some participants did come with a pre-existing interest in a particular energy initiative (e.g. wind power). As participant B1 noted:

It saved me potentially months of trying to identify who those people were [who were interested in wind power], I don’t know how – whether you would stick up notices around, or go through the Project Lyttelton mailer and two of the people were from Diamond Harbour anyway, would they have been involved I’m not sure. So, I can’t speak highly enough of that meeting because of how well it worked.

The motivation and existing knowledge base of participant B1 may have impacted the small group discussion on wind power in ways that were difficult to decipher in this research. In contrast, many participants appeared to have a more general interest in energy and climate change when they arrived.

Processes that rely on participant self-selection have been criticised in deliberative literature, not only for potentially biasing outcomes, but also for the ease in which

participants can self-select out of the process. What the EMW suggests is that the significance of this issue may depend on the focus or goal of the deliberation, and whether it is meant to generate recommendations that will guide decision-makers.

For those members of the community who did attend the workshop, it was clear that they found the process to be inclusive in the sense of allowing full participation. Interviewee responses clearly show that people in this public forum felt comfortable introducing questions and debating claims, expressing different viewpoints and alternative perspectives. Although this research can not definitively state that the “voices of minority, less educated, diffident, or culturally subordinate participants” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:11) were not overridden by others (due to socio-economic, gender, educational, and cultural inequalities), it does appear that the deliberative process facilitated by Project Lyttelton made this less likely. For example, B2 commented, “I felt totally free and inspired to speak ... the process was definitely open, people were given the room to communicate about a subject and try and make things happen from it.” B3 noted, “the forum was open enough for people just to jump in there and chat.” According to B1 “if you couldn’t speak there, then unfortunately you’re not cut out to speak to people in a group at all.” A PL member (A1) commented that it was a conscious aim of the organisers “to make sure that everybody that’s there is heard”, and participant B4 noted, “there were rules about everyone having an equal say, being respectful of other people talking”.

The comments noted above may have been influenced by the workshop’s theme, local focus or facilitation style. Or, the workshop may have been driven by the experience and nature of those who chose to participate, as some EMW participants were already active and engaged community-focused citizens. This may have resulted in “public deliberation that is generally motivated not by ideology or partisanship but by a conception of a new and more active medium of citizen engagement ...” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009: 159). How these citizens deliberate, acquire an understanding of the issues and of others, will be discussed next.

Rationality and agreement

In introducing this section on the reason-giving requirement of deliberation, it must be noted that interviewees did not tend to focus on the communicative style of the discussion undertaken at the workshop. No comment was made about non-deliberative talk, strategic behaviour, or the force of elite opinions. This was also noted during participant observation when I did not see or hear any behaviour that would have led me to believe that participants were being impacted upon by any form of discursive coercion or non-deliberative talk. Indications are that the discussions were marked by attributes associated by (some) deliberative theorists with rationality. For example, B1 noted that the small group processes “was an opportunity for people to suggest their ideas and for the other people also there to integrate and work out what was going to happen”. As Bohman notes when discussing rationality and deliberation, there is a need to “produce free and open exchanges of information and reasons sufficient to acquire an understanding of both the issue in question and the opinions of others” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:11).

From my observations, the process was facilitated by an existing interest in the subject, people participated in groups (topics) they were curious about, expanded their information and understanding, asked questions, were attentive to others, reasoned, and participated in ongoing conversations in various small groups. People came and went from the various groups (depending on their interest) throughout the morning, adopting a public-spirited perspective that saw common ground being achieved on many issues. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the agreement condition of deliberation, where engaged citizen debate should generate some form of agreement, was difficult to ascertain within the small group process.

Efficacy

As discussed in Chapter Two, we can view efficacy in terms of the impact of the deliberative process on the participants themselves (internal or intrinsic) or the impact of the process on the wider political world (external or instrumental). It would appear that

many EMW participants derived intrinsic value from the workshop, which was an empowering end in itself (raising awareness, education, and a social experience), as well as prompting further involvement in community projects. Participant B2 notes that she felt “totally empowered” and “learnt about sustainability”, as a result of which she “had an energy consultant come to my home and do an energy check”. The forum also appeared to build community, with participant B3 noting:

I think that kind of amalgamation of different people in the community is a very good thing, the coming together is a good thing ... there’s nothing lost, but what could be gained from that could be very good for Lyttelton.

In raising feelings of internal efficacy, the workshop appeared to make participants more confident and motivated to participate further, and potentially make a difference in their community. One participant noted “I think it was a great opportunity to make people think about stuff, and it really put the ball into people’s own court, about going, off you go and do the things you have talked about” (B4). For example, participant B3 noted that as a result of the workshop, he “ended up getting involved with the wind group ... [And] I project-manage the biodigester.” Participant B4 relates:

I have done on-line surveys, and written about transport options [since the workshop] ... next step would be to link to local government about a ‘hitching post’ and bike racks on buses ... I volunteer at the Grow Local Project Lyttelton, at street festivals, at the Farmers Market and the community garden ... amazing experience being part of a community.

Participant B1, reinforcing the suggestion that the Workshop was a community-building event, noted that:

[It was] a perfect thing to do, and just by the things that have sprung forth from that like the biodigester, and Harbour Wind itself, because it brought together the kernel group - eighty percent who are still in the group ... saved me potentially

months of trying to identify who those people were ... and I was impressed with the other things that I saw that day, because there was energy efficiency, and people talking about some extraordinary ideas and things, hitching posts and all kinds of wonderful ideas.

The initiatives referred to by the participants are substantive and significant, not only in relation to deliberative outputs, but also in regard to adaptation and mitigation as noted with the wind project and the biodigester scheme in Chapter Three. As participant B3 explains, the biodigester could potentially be used for a variety of purposes, including: heating of the community swimming pool; creating electricity (through a turbine or engine) and selling it to the grid or using it to provide power for the Portal (community building); as an educational tool for children; and for the dairy farmer who could have decentralized generation. The wind project could provide embedded renewable energy generation, and be used as a method of generation and transmission that will help New Zealand meet its electricity requirements and international environmental obligations.²⁹ Participant B1 also explains that “the turbines which will be strictly community-owned ... you get one vote no matter how big the shareholding is, so that’s the community owned aspect”.

In looking at the criterion of external efficacy and whether and how it potentially impacts upon decision makers, Johnson argues that external efficacy or “deliberative empowerment is ultimately attained when policy derives from or is influenced by democratic decision-making” (2009:699). Although ‘deliberative empowerment’ did not appear to be an outcome of Project Lyttelton’s EMW, neither did it seem that this was aimed for. Nevertheless, it is still argued that an influence on decision-making is desirable both in the deliberative, and climate change arenas, as noted by Few, Brown & Tompkins. The workshop participants who went on to be involved with the wind project and biodigester certainly faced a number of issues when they tried to engage with local and regional government, which will be elaborated in a later section.

²⁹ Harbour Wind. See (www.harbourwind.co.nz).

Project Lyttelton's Energy Matters Workshop is an example of deliberation "serv[ing] as a pathway to other forms of civic and political engagement" (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:103). This deliberative talk is an important part of democratic citizenship, because it facilitates citizens increasing their internal and external efficacy, whether that was raising awareness about an issue of community concern, participating further in their communities, or engaging with the state in diverse ways. While these outcomes may not have had, as stressed by some theorists "sufficient effects on politics and government policy" (ibid:14), neither were they lacking in their ability to "... invigorate and educate citizens" while promoting "a healthy evolution in what they demand and expect of their elected representatives" (ibid:13).

In analyzing the EMW and the impact of its deliberation on civic and political behaviour, it may be valuable to plot the possible impacts on a continuum. On one end of the continuum, deliberation "directly influence[s] legislative and executive processes and outcomes"; at the other end, it "exerts a more indirect civil and political influence through the formation of new socially constructed and shared meanings, understandings and discourses" (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:85). Project Lyttelton and its initiatives do not have to sit permanently in any one spot on the continuum; rather they may sit at different points on the continuum at different times depending on the project involved, those participating, and the political context in which these occur.

Preference formation and transformation

The theoretical discussion in regard to deliberative democracy rests in large part on the process of preference and opinion formation and transformation. Deliberative theory argues that participants may (or may not) form or transform their opinions or preferences through reflective deliberation as part of inclusion and unconstrained dialogue. In asking why the transformation of preferences is important through deliberation, Chambers reminds us that "talk-centric democratic theory focuses on the communicative processes of opinion and will-formation that precede voting" (in Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:90). It is not enough that government institutions aggregate the fixed preferences of its

citizens through electoral mechanisms, rather it is vital that these preferences and opinions are formed, transformed, and examined through discussion, and that reasoning about a course of action that ultimately leads to a citizen being able to hold a defensible position.

Participants at the EMW, through a variety of deliberative processes were encouraged to discuss and examine the issue of energy and climate change and any possible solutions, in an open and inclusive setting. As Jenssen argues, actors participate in processes like the EMW not to “maximize their preference or utility, but rather in order to clarify collective identity and self-understanding” (2009:80). The workshop through its deliberative processes appeared to invigorate participating citizens, and showed that people can expand their perspectives by drawing on each other’s knowledge, and that this was efficacious. For example participant B2 noted that “I learnt things about sustainability ... I talked to a lot of people and was inspired by it” (2008).

This research, although not specifically aimed at measuring shifts in preferences, has highlighted a number of difficulties in assessing this fundamental aspect of deliberative theory when analysing small fluid groups, particularly if the focus is not related to achieving consensus or generating recommendations.

De-centered deliberation

The EMW was a one-off, face-to-face initiative, delimited in time; characteristics that Iris Marion Young associates critically with a centred deliberative approach. However, it does appear that Project Lyttelton, through its range of projects and diverse networks, answers some of Young’s concerns over the centred approach and associated risks of irrelevance, isolation and exclusion. PL’s networking approach, and its formal and informal conversations with others, also goes some way to addressing Habermas and Young’s concern over a single collective will, such as takes place when a single body talks together in a single encounter (see Hayward, 2008).

It appears that grass roots groups such as PL, through a range of innovative projects, and their engagement with a diversity of other groups, may eventually gain enough traction with powerful actors to encourage them to decentralize and democratize decision-making, allowing the local voice to be heard in policy decisions. It seems unlikely that individual community groups (deliberative or not) acting on their own, will have enough of an impact on political authority to meet the calls for local participation in decision-making called for by Few, Brown & Tompkins.

Legitimacy

For community groups like PL, operating in the informal public sphere, legitimacy gained through deliberative processes is vital. Although legitimacy in relation to deliberative democracy remains a contested point, it is agreed by most theorists that deliberative processes which are inclusive, voluntary, and reasoned confer legitimacy on deliberation. Although the processes of deliberation are indicative of legitimacy and crucial, many theorists also argue that in responding to complex issues such as climate change, the content and impact of outcomes are critical. Knight and Johnson remind us that “a political outcome is legitimate, if at all, because it survives the deliberative process, because it is produced by the sort of reasoned argumentation under fair procedures that defines deliberation as a critical test” (1994:284).

When considering legitimacy in relation to the aggregative and deliberative models of democracy, it is argued by some democratic theorists that a small group (even when it is deliberative), may not be as legitimate as the usual submission process which is available to all citizens. But, in analyzing the interview responses from Project Lyttelton, it appears that the submission process itself can be less than inclusive and democratic. In considering Project Lyttelton and the Christchurch City Council (CCC) for example, it may also be argued that the councillors themselves are more representative (and legitimate) because they are elected to the position by the voting public. This last point may be difficult to counter, and deliberative theory generally does not try to; rather, it calls for deliberative democracy to work alongside representative democracy (while

calling for more institutional deliberation). Of course, deliberative theorists also argue that democracy is more than a process of representation and the aggregation of preferences; rather, citizens need to have a voice in issues that concern them, at any time.

Outcomes

The impact of deliberation is highly context dependent as has been seen with the Energy Matters Workshop and the WWViews initiative. The context deliberation occurs in, and the success of its outcomes, appears to depend on: the purpose of deliberation; the subject under discussion; who participates and why; the connection to authoritative decision-makers (if any); the model governing interaction and deliberation (Open Space Technology), existing beliefs, and real-world conditions (changes of government) (Carpini, Cook & Jacobs, 2004).

Many theorists highlight deliberative outcomes as a central tenet of deliberation and legitimacy, particularly as they relate to authoritative decision-making. Nevertheless, at this stage, most deliberative outcomes do not appear to impact decision-making or public policy at an authoritative level, as can be seen by the EMW. Rather the EMW can be seen as not having a particular focus on instrumental outcomes, although it can be used as a vehicle to examine what might happen when trying to link deliberative outcomes to the state, and provide questions when this does not happen.

Deliberation, Efficacy and Government

The following section will elaborate on how feelings of efficacy and actual initiatives were hindered (or facilitated) by government responses and ask why this matters in relation to deliberation. Ultimately, as Jacob and Cook note “separating deliberation’s civic mission from its government policymaking role is unnecessary and indeed harmful to democratic revival” (2009:164). The reference to democratic revival is a reminder that proponents of the ‘deliberative turn’ noted an increasing level of alienation from the democratic process and hoped for a renewal of democracy through active citizen

engagement. It would appear that active citizen engagement, possibly through deliberative processes, in the public sphere, could be having an “important and increasingly valuable roles in putting issues on the government agenda, developing broad proposals for lawmakers to consider, and creating incentives for policymakers to respond to the broad public” (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:166).

EMW projects and local government

As noted above, participants involved in the wind farm and biodigester projects voiced concerns about issues that emerged in their interaction with local and regional government. For example, participant B1, involved in the wind energy project, notes:

In Germany, the UK and Denmark for example there are government incentives; there is nothing in New Zealand ... There is not one mention in all the literature which DOC and ECan go through to determine the consenting process of wind farms. Basically, it might as well be a piece of modern art that someone is trying to stick in the landscape. My impression was: this is the document, and they held it up [ECan], and so it's what's in there that matters. There's a draft energy strategy, there's statutory and non-statutory documents, and the statutory one[s] obviously carry weight. Then there's the draft ones which don't count, and there's a draft energy strategy which might hopefully include wind turbines, but at the moment that's given no weight in decisions that are made.

An EMW participant involved with the biodigester project also saw local government processes as a potential obstacle:

I should probably go and look for resource and building consent, but I'm reluctant to. The reason for that is that I think I'll hit a brick wall very quickly as far as getting consents through (B3).

Interviewee A3 (second interview in 2010), noted that the biodigester scheme was still awaiting government approval and funding. The “biodigester is ready to go it just needs the funding” (2010).

The above comments are concerning, not only for deliberation, but also for community resilience. For example, as Church argues in relation to climate change and sustainability, “national and local government should seek to engage with those organizations active at a local level, recognize the value of their work, and provide support frameworks to ensure that such work is not hindered and is as effective as possible” (2005:3), and “good local action needs a supportive policy framework if it is to flourish and deliver” (ibid:9). If such engagement and support are not happening, it could be of concern not only for communities working on innovative adaptation and mitigation projects, but also for fostering public support for climate change legislation at the national level. Further, local input supported by the state into complex climate change issues may enable national and international greenhouse gas emission targets to be met, while also meeting local needs such as energy, transport and food production. While the workshop appears to have increased participants’ motivation, and provided opportunities to take on various projects, these initiatives appears to have been frustrated rather than facilitated by interactions with government.

Project Lyttelton and local government

Project Lyttelton members highlighted a range of issues that indicated considerable frustration (and some positive feedback) with local government. For example interviewee A3 notes:

Coming back to local government, I feel that constraint thing ... incredibly slow processes [discussing submission processes and face-to-face meetings]... and yet we’ve had the meetings, we’ve had a whole lot of stuff around these, so all of that is basically a waste of time, a huge amount of eating up of time that goes nowhere (2008).

Another PL member (A1) notes in relation to making submissions to the city council:

I'm almost at the point where I don't want to do another submission again ... generally they have already figured out what their options are, and they're asking you to comment on what they've decided. Yet generally we think you need an option three and they've only got one and two – you display option three and it's tossed out because it's not what they were asking you ...

Another issue highlighted by PL member (A1) relates to how they see the council (CCC) as “basically a company looking after its own interests”. This comment was made in respect of the PL building being used as an example for the wider community of a carbon neutral building. Interviewee A1 notes that nothing came of their formal proposal, because “I feel with our council, they want to be the ones who initiate, create those things, they don't want to be supporting others who do”.

This interviewee, however, noted somewhat more positive experiences with the regional council:

[ECan staff member] has certainly given us lots of contacts and support with the biodigester project – he's put PL in touch with other people who might be able to help ... so, they're good at passing on information and giving us contacts. They provide linkages – they're good at linkage ... whereas the [city] council isn't really into that (A1).

Iris Marion Young mirrors the difficulties experienced by PL generally, when noting that “there are only small and poorly working mechanisms through which citizens can ... send reasoned messages to government officials about what [their] priorities are, and hold government accountable” (Fung, 2004:52). But, it would appear that engagement with the state is vital if the full potential of citizen deliberation, and community participation in

addressing climate change, is to be realised, not only in relation to deliberative empowerment issues, but also because of regulatory, funding and resource issues.

In response to comments from workshop participants and PL members, and while taking note of Few, Brown & Tompkins's call for local participation in decision-making, I decided to interview various local government bodies to ascertain their views and experience with community groups active in the public sphere.

Local government

The following section will consider not only the structure of local government, but also its relationships with community groups in the public sphere. Local government in New Zealand is described as “that level of government that exists below parliament and central government” (Cheyne, 2006:285), and includes city, district (territorial authorities) and regional councils and district health boards. It is worth noting that the 2002 Local Government Act's overall aim, as set out in section 3, provides for local authorities:

to play a broad role in promoting the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of their communities, taking a sustainable development approach (Cheyne, 2008:7).

The Local Government Act 2002 has been “hailed as an empowering framework within which local authorities could work, and an endorsement of representative democracy” (Drage, 2008:21), and “a wholesale move away from the prescriptive approach to local government of the past, instead providing for what has been called a more enabling environment that recognizes local needs alongside increased accountability to communities” (ibid:68). Jean Drage notes that arguments in support of local government as a democratic force generally have three components: “that local government spreads power, brings democracy closer to the community, and ensures decision-making reflects community needs, so is more efficient” (2008:28). Whether these arguments reflect what is happening between local government and community groups, particularly in relation to

addressing issues such as climate change and sustainable development is considered below.

Interviews

Interviews were held with staff of the Canterbury Regional Council (known as Environment Canterbury [ECan]), including their Community Resilience Unit (CRU), and the Christchurch City Council (CCC). The focus of these interviews was broad, but included discussions on local government processes, decision-making with regard to community groups, relationships with community groups, and internal/external issues within local government bodies.

Environment Canterbury [ECan], the regional authority for the Canterbury region, set up the CRU as a two year project to look at how they can encourage sustainability at a household, school and business level. Regional councils such as ECan are “responsible for preparing regional policy statements and regional plans, issuing resource consents, taking enforcement action, and monitoring the state of the environment and the effect of their own decisions, all within the context of their functions under the Resource Management Act (RMA)” (Ministry for the Environment, 2006:17). The RMA, which came into force on 1 October 1991 describes a more sustainable future and “sets out to create a more streamlined, integrated and comprehensive approach to environmental management” (ibid:5). The stated purpose of the RMA as contained in section 5 of the Act is to “promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources” (ibid:6). Community involvement under the umbrella of council authority is also directly addressed in the Act, which states that “decisions on environmental matters are most appropriately made by the communities directly affected by those decisions”, and that “community participation is vital to effective resource management” (ibid:12).

ECan is an elected body of fourteen councillors which works through the Local Government Act 2002, Local Electoral Act 2001, Local Government Official Information & Meetings Act 1987, and the Resource Management Act 1991, and is the lead agency

for regional planning under the Resource Management Act in Canterbury. ECan currently has a report (The Climate Change Report) out for public submission. The report's purpose is to consider the effects of climate change and how the review of the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement can respond to them.³⁰ Christchurch City Council is also looking at ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to respond to the various social, environmental and economic challenges and opportunities presented by climate change: they currently have a draft strategy, 'The Climate Smart Strategy 2012-2025' out for consultation.³¹

Following a critical report, and ongoing issues within and around ECan over water resources, its councillors (elected representatives) have recently been replaced by government appointed commissioners. This move has seen regional council elections being suspended until 2013 at the latest, and was made possible by special legislation passed by central government under urgency. As noted above, this highly unusual move by central government was in response to ongoing and competing water management issues, with commissioners being granted powers to make decisions on water conservation orders and on water-take consents. Although this decision may not have a direct impact on grass roots groups such as PL, any centralization of decision-making, or loss of democratic representation is of concern to community level organizations.

Interviews with staff from these local authorities indicated that PL was known and valued:

They [PL] have done some wonderful visioning projects. We've been invited to come along to those ... In terms of our involvement with them, I also get their email newsletter every month which I circulate to staff here (E1, CCC).

³⁰ ECan's 'Climate Change Report'. See (ecan.govt.nz/publications/Plans/ClimateChangeReport.pdf).

³¹ Christchurch City Council's 'Climate Smart Strategy 2012-2025'. See (www.climatesmart.co.nz). Their 'Vision Statement': People and communities actively working towards a climate smart Christchurch that reduces its greenhouse gas emissions and is resilient to the social, cultural, economic and environmental effects of climate change.

A number of interviewees from ECan commented on their interaction with PL, including:

It's where a champion like (A3) is so valuable, she gets heard, gets in the papers, and speaks to people. But, there are a lot of enthusiastic people within Lyttelton too. I've attended their meetings and seen where I think ECan might be able to help out, we've given a bit of funding ... it's all about this resilience stuff.

Finding out what's going on with the projects they're doing [PL] and seeing where we might be able to help ... so, I'm thinking with that sort of skill and experience, is there a role for council then to help that happen somehow (B1).

But comments from staff in ECan's Community Resilience Unit, the body specifically concerned with encouraging community sustainability initiatives, also suggest that no strategies have been developed to realize the potential of initiatives such as EMW and groups such as PL.

If we are supporting that grass-roots movement is there something we can do to help that happen, make it easier? So far, I haven't got any answers to be honest ... I think the major constraint to me would be that if it's a true grass-roots movement [referring to PL], then any involvement of a bureaucratic, of an organization such as ours can threaten that at any time in the sense that people would feel that this is not a grass-roots thing, rather an Environment Canterbury thing or something like that. Whereas, if you ask people, okay what are the issues and what are the challenges that they face, you get a completely different response and those issues are usually quite different in nature. But, it's even better than that because when people are actually articulating those issues, they're also coming to their own conclusions about solutions and what they can do ... I don't think we have come to grips with how we can support communities (C1).

While this staff member appears to appreciate the potential of community-based initiatives, and to have given enough thought to the issue to have considered the potential

negative impacts that ECan involvement might have, strategies for constructive engagement with community initiatives appear to be limited at this time.

Part of the problem for PL and the EMW appears to be an absence of will among councillors to tackle sustainability issues in general and climate change in particular. According to a CCC staff member, “the level of understanding [in the council] on climate change is dreadful” (E1). According to an ECan staff member, the recalcitrance of “one or two” elected councillors has effectively prevented action on climate change:

Sustainability is almost becoming a dirty word ... It might change if we eventually get a formal portfolio around climate. We can't be held to ransom by one or two independent councillors' thoughts that this isn't happening, it's not affecting us [climate change]. It is, and I think it was actually the consensus coming through [among CCC staff] that we need to do something (D1).

The submission process is the primary vehicle (apart from elections) for citizen influence on city council policy. A CCC staff member was quite eloquent in describing how this process mitigates against the possibility of community input into council policies:

If you just do a written submission, the councillors almost never see it: if it's a verbal submission then you've got to have the confidence to stand up in a council chamber, with the councillors and everyone else listening to the conversation in a very formal setting, very controlled, and actually authoritative situation where you are placed at the head of a table and everyone is staring at you, and the mayor and the CEO, and that's when they listen to you ... but what a dreadful process, again challenging, and not many people would do that, and yet that's what actually gets listened to ... So, I can understand totally the discussion that, I'll never make another submission again [talking about PL] because if it was verbal then they would feel incredibly intimidated. If it was written then they'd feel incredibly let down. (E1)

The above interviews highlight concerns over the lack of deliberative processes in local government institutions, and also that those in positions of power may not be prepared to share it. That is, as Johnson makes clear, there needs to be “opportunities for citizens to engage in and with inclusive, equitable, transparent procedures and institutions that yield legitimate and just public policy” (2009:680). How community groups might respond to the absence of such opportunities is a difficult issue, but one that is currently being considered through PL’s latest research and evaluation project, and is discussed further in Chapter Five.

The interviews have highlighted the following problems associated with local government bodies that may impact negatively on the external efficacy of community deliberations include:

- Lack of knowledge and skills needed to work with community groups;
- Conflicts between council staff and elected councillors on working with community groups;
- Submission processes that are either intimidating to community submitters, or acknowledged as being a waste of time;
- Lack of alternative deliberative processes in which community groups like PL might participate;
- Lack of motivation to address issues of concern to communities (such as climate change).

The influence of central government

An additional, and not insubstantial, issue raised by local government staff is the influence of central government. Interviewees from CCC and ECan noted that they were influenced and constrained by central government (through policy, regulation and ideology). Christine Cheyne writing in 2008, notes that “since 2000 intergovernmental relations in New Zealand have been evolving rapidly as a result of a significant shift in government policy discourse towards a strong central-local government partnership”

(2008:1). Cheyne's comments in regard to an evolving local-central government partnership may have lost some relevance under the present National-led government with its shift towards centralization of political management. What impact the agenda of centralization may have on the community and the central-local government relationship remains to be seen, but it would certainly include funding and resource issues.³²

The following comments highlight ways in which central governments may constrain local authority action in relation to climate change and sustainable development, and facilitation of local initiatives in these areas:

Well, there was this thing, Communities for Climate Protection that unfortunately fell over ... Basically, the Ministry for the Environment, all the ructions with the change of government, etc., and so on, and their funding got pulled and that's been pulled from a number of other community-based programmes (D1, 2008).

It's been extraordinary: there's been a systematic reduction, in fact an elimination of the word sustainability from policy documents. There's been a mandate go out to the Ministry for the Environment to go through their documents and remove the word sustainability. So that literally, I mean that's extraordinary ... John Key is different [from the previous Prime Minister]: we're not going to tell you what shower roses to have in your home; we're not going to specify light bulbs; we're going to throw all that out. In fact, we're going further than that: we're not going to have enviro-schools; we're not going to have sustainable business networks; we're not going to have a whole range of sustainability programmes. They have been absolutely slashed ... Now I realize there's a budget constraint, but there's also an ideology constraint here as well ... They're saying, well we're cutting back for budget reasons, but also because we're moving away from sustainability activities (E1, 2008).

³² Auckland's Super-City. Auckland's eight regional and territorial authorities are moving towards a single, unitary council for the Auckland Region. See also Rod Oram (<http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/opinion/4072249/Time-to-think-work-smarter-in-Auckland>).

Just what substantive impacts central government policy and ideology might have on community groups endeavouring to generate resilience in the face of climate change is unclear. However, it does seem clear that the ability of local government to foster community action in this area may be further constrained (e.g., in terms of availability of resources) by central government opposition.

In highlighting the above issues and concerns, questions remain about how citizen participation and public deliberation can influence decision-making at various levels of government. Although, Jacobs and Cook highlight the possibility of a direct path for influencing government, they also discuss the indirect path at the opposite end of the continuum which exerts a more indirect civic and political influence. It appears unlikely at this time, that deliberation's influence is widespread, rather the direct impacts the indirect and vice versa. Maybe, with a range of formal organized deliberative processes engaged together, talk reaches a 'threshold point', or what Fishkin calls 'a recommending effect', when it can influence public officials, pressuring them to respond to deliberative public opinion, as well as increasing a citizen's general or civic participation (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009:87).

It would appear that the workshop has met some goals of participation as outlined by Jacobs and Cook, particularly through the 'indirect path' approach, but when it comes to substantive policy outcomes as noted above, a number of stumbling blocks appeared for workshop participants.

The difficulties experienced by EMW participants and PL members raise the question of how can "elites wielding ultimate policy decision-making power be motivated and committed to share it" (Johnson 2009:681). That is, if community groups are to have a voice in the climate change debate, if their deliberative processes are to count, then "powerful actors must be encouraged, persuaded, or obliged to heed them" (Levine, Fung & Gastil, 2005:276). The interviews have highlighted the very real obstacles faced by EMW participants and PL members in attempting to make a difference with their sustainability initiatives, ranging from intra-organizational tensions, to political-

ideological refusals to acknowledge that a problem exists or to support attempts to address it. Research also draws attention to, and Jacobs and Cook (2009:154) highlight, the difficulties that arise when citizens are capable, innovative and resourceful, but still get treated by government as “targets rather than coproducers of common goods”. Nonetheless, in highlighting these issues, the possibility also exists for local communities to take this information and what they have learned, and use it to proactively work for further input into decision-making and public-policy.

Back to the Local: Efficacy Despite Government

Exploration of the problems raised by lack of government support should not blind us to the possibilities of autonomous community action and an invigorated citizenry. While PL would be more effective in some ways with government cooperation, PL (and groups such as the Transition Movement) is also seen by some of its members as an alternative to government action.

Why I like PL so much is, I can't wait for them [government bodies] to make the change – I'll be waiting my whole life. Not that I've achieved heaps, but by us chipping away here, we have pushed things in a better direction (I think). Making things more climate change focused, more resilient. If something does happen, I think we are at least a little more prepared than the community that's never thought about it, and I'd like to believe that if something terrible does happen we are just stronger as a result of all the work that we've done now (A1).

It's empowering people, and hence communities, to be creative about their own life, and I think when we look at systems, if you want an organism to survive or to think, they have to have information, this feedback, so they can know how to move (A3).

From that informal meeting with [Project Lyttelton member] we find out she is a horticulturalist and an historian and she's really excited about the community and

then the organic garden comes up at CPIT and [PL member] says how would you like to be like the head horticulturalist for that project ... it's all those informal linkages. People move into Lyttelton who are passionate about things, who end up meeting someone in PL and they're given the power to run with what they like, because once they've seen how PL works they see there are multitudes of people who are putting up their hands up for things they like, and they've seen that they can get the results they're wanting, so they're empowered to do the same things (A1).

In discussing street-level deliberation, Jacobs and Cook (2009:153) argue that "deliberation in America is not only extensive today, but it also presents opportunities for the future expansion and rejuvenation of democracy" (2009:153). In response to Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, this thesis through its empirical research, argues that participation and deliberation also matter in local communities such as Lyttelton.

Conclusion

By analysing Project Lyttelton and the Energy Matters Workshop as examples of local deliberation, this chapter has addressed concerns that see deliberation particularly at the local level as being largely abstract and academic. That is, this analysis has shown how a local initiative can use the deliberative processes of inclusiveness, rationality, agreement, and efficacy for outcomes that were both intrinsic and instrumental, while questioning the core issues of preference transformation and legitimacy. This chapter has highlighted the need for further empirical research to address the uniquely local issues that were highlighted by Project Lyttelton and the EMW's engagement with local government. By examining the issues that arose between the case-study and local government, this chapter has illuminated not only a number of concerns for local deliberation, but also highlighted how deliberation can be an effective critical tool to assess local government arrangements.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

The topic of this thesis stemmed in part from informal ‘talk’ with Project Lyttelton members over the need for community engagement in the areas of energy and climate change. This research was undertaken against a backdrop of increasingly clamorous calls not only for citizen participation in the climate change arena, but also for greater deliberation within public participation in all areas of the public sphere. Although public deliberation may not yet have reached the heights hoped for by some deliberative theorists, this thesis notes that the public are participating and deliberating together across a raft of diverse local communities using a variety of innovative deliberative models.

The aim of this thesis has been to gain a better understanding not only of what deliberation looks like at the local level, but also of deliberative theory itself. The empirical research undertaken increased knowledge of local deliberation and deliberative democratic theory from a practical perspective. The driver for this exploration has been calls such as those by Few, Brown & Tompkins and the IPCC for citizen participation in the areas of energy and climate change. To address these issues this thesis has examined the case-study Project Lyttelton and the Energy Matters Workshop through the qualitative approach of semi-structured interviews and participant observation. This approach also required engagement with local and regional government, once again through semi-structured interviews. Ultimately, the analysis undertaken of PL and EMW gave empirical substance to, and shed light on various aspects of deliberation and deliberative theory while highlighting a community’s response to energy issues and climate change.

The research findings noted in this thesis also point to some very real obstacles standing in the way of local deliberation engaging with the state. This situation is concerning if, as deliberative democrats and climate-change researchers argue, an influence on decision-making is desirable for democratic renewal and for adaptation and resilience in the face of climate change. As Johnson notes in Chapter Three, just how stakeholders with policy

decision-making power can be encouraged to share it is uncertain at this time. It would appear that there are few mechanisms or frameworks other than elections through which public opinion can be transmitted effectively to the state. The current political framework would appear to act as a disincentive to those at the local level.

This thesis suggests that it would be advantageous for community groups like Project Lyttelton to network with a range of other local groups and organizations because the outcomes of workshops, particularly as one-off events, do not appear to have a significant effect on decision-making at the local government level. By networking with others, there may be enough traction, or a threshold point might be reached, where it is possible to influence public officials and encourage them to respond to public opinion, possibly decentralizing and democratizing decision-making. In assessing local deliberation, it was noted that although deliberative empowerment, in the sense of the deliberative process shaping government policy, did not appear to be an outcome of Project Lyttelton's EMW, neither did it seem that this was aimed for. The EMW could nonetheless be seen as empowering in a number of other ways.

The Energy Matters Workshop as a Deliberative Democratic Event

On the question of whether the Energy Matters Workshop can be considered a deliberative democratic event, this thesis has argued that it should indeed be considered an example of local deliberation in action. The Open Space Technology model, the aim of the workshop, the inclusive approach, the use of unconstrained dialogue, and the type of facilitation used certainly encouraged deliberation by local participants.

The EMW incorporated key features of deliberation, as noted in Chapter Two, to raise awareness, build community resilience and mobilize local knowledge and expertise. Chapters Three and Four, showed that the EMW fits the calls for a local, societal response to climate change adaptation. The EMW can be seen to have addressed many of the issues raised by those arguing for local participation in relation to climate change (delineated in Chapter Three): addressing climate change at the local level; addressing

climate change as a social as well as scientific issue; applying local knowledge to climate-change problems; creating a 'bottom-up' approach; raising awareness and encouraging behavioural change; and enhancing feelings of efficacy as well as opportunities to act. Efficacy was increased, resulting in not only locally focused action, but also community understanding that change is possible, that communities can be proactive and attempt new projects, while having some influence on decisions that affect them (although this is limited). Also, as noted in Chapter Three, and of particular importance to communities addressing climate change, participants were willing and able to have serious in-depth conversations about reasonably technical and highly divisive matters such as energy and climate change.

This thesis has highlighted a number of concerns made explicit by the EMW. Nelson and Adger, as noted in Chapter One, claim for deliberation the instrumental benefits of increased trust in government, increased capacity at the local scale and enhanced efficiency of decision-making. The empirical research gathered from the workshop, Project Lyttelton, and local government and analysed in Chapter Four, does not fit well with Nelson and Adger's claims, particularly in relation to increased capacity at the local scale and enhanced efficiency of decision-making. Other concerns illuminated by the research findings relate to issues around inclusion. While eighty people at the EMW can be considered a good turnout from a community of just over three thousand people, it obviously does not include all affected by climate change in Lyttelton nor can it be assumed to be representative of that community. However, as noted in Chapter Two, the problem of representativeness is characteristic of deliberative initiatives.

Although a number of EMW projects can be seen as intrinsically and instrumentally efficacious, questions remain about what conditions are needed for deliberation to affect public policy. That is, how will the expectations of some (e.g. Few, Brown & Tompkins, 2006) that local participation on climate change will feed into or influence government decision-making, be met.

Thus, the EMW shows that local initiatives can meet some expectations of those calling for local deliberative participation in addressing climate change, while not addressing others. Intrinsic and instrumental outcomes did arise from the workshop, including the wind project and biodigester. However, data gathered from the workshop would point to the forum being focused on building up a network of citizens with a goal of discussing new ideas, and highlighting new initiatives, rather than being consensus, or decision-making focused. This focus on ‘talk’ is not necessarily problematic as shown by Project Lyttelton, as it may lead to further community action in the future, particularly if local groups are able to work together and gain some traction with the state. Nevertheless, these points may be of concern for Few, Brown & Tompkins and the IPCC as they point to a lack of input by the local sector in climate change decision-making by governments.

The Role of Government

As discussed in Chapter Four, issues at the interface of local deliberation and the state highlighted a number of concerns for the community, for deliberation and for civic empowerment. Local government, and embedded regulation and legislation, was experienced by participants in the EMW as impeding their ongoing participation in EMW-facilitated initiatives. Some non-deliberative processes at the local government level were also seen as disempowering by Project Lyttelton members, such as the submission process. Project Lyttelton and EMW also voiced concerns about government bodies not wanting to hand power to community groups such as themselves, and community groups not being adequately supported and resourced by political authorities in relation to climate change and energy issues. As highlighted in Chapter Four, the support and engagement of local and regional government is necessary, not only to deliberative outcomes and democratic renewal, but to resilient communities.

Direct impacts of local government on Project Lyttelton and the EMW included funding constraints and a lack of support and recognition. As noted above, a lack of institutional deliberation, and the impact of ideological constraints such as beliefs around climate change continue to impact upon local community groups. The effects of a new

managerial focus in local government, and an executive team that can act as a gate-keeper to community groups being heard, supported and resourced was also noted in this research. Research findings did note that Project Lyttelton felt local government were helpful when it came to providing linkage and contact to others, as well as providing some funding for salaries and projects.

The impacts of central government on local government and community organizations were also highlighted, and included ideological constraints, funding and resourcing issues, legislation and policy, plus the centralization of local government services. All of the issues noted in this section are of concern, not only to community initiatives, but also to international organizations calling for local participation. As has been noted earlier, although community action may be more effective with government co-operation, nonetheless through autonomous community action and an invigorated citizenry, much is being achieved at the local level.

From these research findings, it would appear that further consideration is needed on ways to effectively link deliberation to government (it seems that few mechanisms exist for this to happen), and on how deliberative practices could be integrated within government structures themselves.

Addressing these Challenges: New Project Lyttelton Initiatives

It remains unclear, theoretically and empirically, as to how community groups are to address some of the issues that arise with local and regional government, and with participation at the local level. Project Lyttelton itself is investigating some of these questions through a new research and evaluation project.

Project Lyttelton's research project

In 2010, Project Lyttelton launched a new research and evaluation project to assess how to engage effectively with sites of authoritative decision-making, as well as with other

community groups and organizations. In an inclusive manner, this research encourages the wider Lyttelton community to see what is being done at Project Lyttelton, whether Project Lyttelton is delivering what they hoped for, and what the wider community might want. Project Lyttelton has contracted a research firm to carry out the project, with the proviso that the contracted group teaches PL members how to use the project's research tools so that PL can carry out self-evaluation in the future. Project Lyttelton is looking at six established projects at the moment (including the Farmer's Market, Lyttelton's Summer and Winter Festivals, Time Banking, and Community Garden Projects). Highlighting the above, a PL member notes:

We will as a group have the tools ... [and] one of the outcomes of the whole thing is that we will be able to educate other [community] groups. So at the end, we budgeted into the thing that we will be speaking in Auckland, and we will be speaking in Christchurch, sharing how community groups can do this sort of stuff (A3, 2010).

A key aim of the research is to improve PL's understanding of how to work strategically with local government. As noted by a PL member:

Now, part of the stuff [the researcher] is doing is [looking at] Christchurch City Council and what are their stated priorities are, of where they want to move ... So we are looking at those, and looking at what we're doing, and marrying the two. So that at the end of the whole thing we can go to funders such as city council, or any other group that we happen to do this with, and say look we can tick off all of these things, we are doing this by doing this. So we are trying to build up links for potential funding, but also building credibility. [The researcher] maintains that this is the way you influence policy direction. So, we can work in with that, not change or modify who we are, but be more intelligent about how we approach them (A3, 2010).

Whether and how Project Lyttelton's research and evaluation project meets its aims will require further analysis in the future. Project Lyttelton in assessing how to engage most effectively with government, nevertheless highlights a desire to keep their unique local identity.

Further Research

There appears to be plenty of scope for further research in the area of deliberative democratic theory and local deliberation. This research has noted that deliberative democratic theory needs to engage with those at the local level to address a range of issues, including deliberative processes, inclusion, deliberative outcomes, exclusion, irrelevance, efficacy, deliberative empowerment, and engagement with political elites. This examination of the local will require further empirical research and grounded data gathered in diverse locales if it is to be useful to both deliberative theory itself and local spaces in the public sphere.

As noted in different points throughout this thesis, the issue of inclusion, particularly in large complex societies, is of ongoing concern for deliberative democracy. Although it appears that deliberative democratic theory and practice is actively engaged with the issue of inclusion through a raft of new and ongoing deliberative projects, further analysis that focuses specifically on local concerns over inclusion is also needed: this research may be vital for the future growth of deliberation at all levels.

One way of highlighting and addressing deliberative issues and their future path particularly at the local level, is to consider them under the theoretical umbrella of de-centred deliberation (see Chapter Two). As has been noted, de-centered deliberative theory can be used as a tool to critically examine the processes of deliberative democracy (see Young, 2006). In a practical sense, by attaching the theoretical concepts of de-centred democracy (particularly linkage) to a local initiative or community group it may be possible to highlight and address the (possible) isolating or exclusionary effects of a centred deliberative approach. If civil society is to have a voice in the complex and

divisive climate change debate, it is vital that deliberation expands its focus to include linkages that connect the public sphere with sites of authoritative decision making, as well as linkages that connect local groups and organizations together.

Democratic theorists are continuing to look at the relationship between representative democracy and deliberation. There appears to be a “new appreciation that participation and representation are complementary forms of citizenship” (Urbinati & Warren, 2008:37). This thesis has noted the importance of expanding deliberation into representative government if local deliberation is to be heard and acted upon. This institutionalization of deliberation will require not only a change in government structures and processes, but also “that elites wielding ultimate policy decision-making power be motivated and committed to share it by specifically incorporating into their substantive and procedural decisions deliberative democratic outputs” (Johnson, 2009:681). Although deliberative democratic theory appears to be moving to address these issues, at this stage it is still uncertain whether and how the deliberative model can be incorporated into local government procedures and infrastructure.

Although a number of significant issues appear to stand in the way of deliberation reaching its full potential as “a powerful, transformational experience for everyone involved ... which can result in attitudinal shifts toward the institutions and practice of democracy overall” (DDC, 2005:26), there is a wide range of new and innovative deliberative models evolving, not only through the work of deliberative theorists, but also by community groups such as Project Lyttelton.

Conclusion

Viewing climate change and energy issues from a local perspective, and through the lens of inclusive deliberative processes, has shone a light not only on local-level deliberation and deliberative theory, but also on local communities endeavouring to gain resilience in the face of these threats. This research in examining what deliberation looks like at the local level has provided further empirical research for deliberative theory, while

providing grounded data for the IPCC and Tyndall Centre's call for citizen participation in the climate change arena.

Project Lyttelton has shown what is possible at the local level through a range of 'deliberative' projects including the EMW. It would appear that out there in the 'local arena' many community groups and organizations are getting together to participate, to talk, and to act on significant issues. That is, although this thesis has explored a range of issues in the interface between deliberation and the state, it has not negated the very real possibilities for autonomous community action and an invigorated citizenry. As this research project has been focused on local voices, it would seem appropriate to give the final comment to one such voice. As a Project Lyttelton member notes:

Climate change is impacting upon us and we can't give it off to someone else to do, or some organization with some name. The conversation has to be over a cup of coffee in the coffee shop, everywhere people feel they can buy in, not buy in, be part of that process. And again it comes back to those values, it's about acknowledging each of those people, its empowering people and hence communities to be creative about their own life (A3).

APPENDIX TWO: CONSENT FORM

Claire Buttigieg
School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch

crb39@student.canterbury.ac.nz

Phone: (021) 0576475

Date:

Consent Form

Masters Thesis Research Project

‘A grass-roots response to climate change through various deliberative democratic initiatives, and the concomitant role of political authorities’

I have read and understand the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that confidentiality will be preserved. I understand that the transcript of the interview will be made available to me for checking and comment, if so requested.

I understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time, including withdrawal of any information I have provided. I am aware that I am at liberty to discuss any concerns about the project with Claire Buttigieg or the research supervisor, Dr. Joanna Goven. I note that the project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX THREE: INFORMATION SHEET

School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Canterbury

INFORMATION

You are invited to participate as a subject in the Masters of Arts (MA) research project of Claire Buttigieg. This project is entitled, “A grass-roots response to climate change through various deliberative democratic initiatives, and the concomitant role of political authorities”.

The aim of this project is to study how a grass-roots community group, through the use of deliberative democratic processes, attempts to respond to the threats of climate change and other sustainability issues. The study will also examine the factors shaping the effectiveness of the group’s response, in particular: the quality and impact of deliberation, and the ability of the group to influence decisions taken by political authorities.

Your involvement in this project will involve an interview of approximately 60 minutes’ duration which will be audio taped. You are not obliged to answer questions, which will be based on the ‘points for discussion’ attached, and you have the right to terminate the interview at any time. There are no risks involved with your participation in this research and you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, including withdrawal of any information provided. I am happy to give you the opportunity to read the transcript of the interview and to receive your comments on it if you wish. There will be no research assistant involved as I will be transcribing the interviews myself.

I will be interviewing the community group Project Lyttelton and those involved with its projects and initiatives, Transition Oamaru, and Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury staff involved with transitioning projects and community groups. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. The results of the research project may be published but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made public without their consent. To ensure confidentiality participants’ names will not be used.

This research project is being carried out by Claire Buttigieg in fulfillment of a Masters degree in Political Science under the supervision of Dr. Joanna Goven. Dr. Goven can be contacted at the University of Canterbury at email joanna.goven@canterbury.ac.nz. She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have regarding participation in the project.

APPENDIX THREE: INFORMATION SHEET (CONTINUED)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

Contact Details

Researcher

Claire Buttigieg
School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Canterbury

Email: crb39@student.canterbury.ac.nz
Mobile: (021) 0576475

Academic Supervisor

Dr. Joanna Goven
School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Canterbury

Email: Joanna.goven@canterbury.ac.nz

APPENDIX FOUR: POINTS FOR DISCUSSION IN INTERVIEWS

Claire Buttigieg
Masters Research Student
School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Canterbury

Project Lyttelton/Stakeholder/Local Government

Introductory Overview:

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change argue that ‘citizens at the local level need to be engaged and involved in formulating climate change policy’. This advice highlights questions in regard to deliberative democracy, participation, and citizens as problem-solvers.
- Climate change is an issue whose impacts will be felt globally: but first and foremost they will be felt at the local community level.

My research is exploring:

- Whether local communities can respond in a sustainable and resilient way to the threats of climate change and related issues, through getting together to talk on these issues.
- How do local communities engage with political authorities? What issues arise, what involvement is there in decision-making or public policy, what resources and support, what outcomes are there?
- Do citizens experience increased levels of personal and political efficacy through deliberating together: do they remain politically and socially involved in their communities?

This thesis addresses the deliberative democratic processes (deliberation) at work in the projects and initiatives of Project Lyttelton. This thesis will also assess how Project Lyttelton engages with various state authorities through its deliberative initiatives, as part of answering the IPCC/UN concerns about citizen participation in the climate change and related policy process.

Points for Discussion: Project Lyttelton

1. Discussion on Project Lyttelton’s projects and initiatives (for example, the Energy Matters Workshop and what arose out of that process): as well as other projects related to the environment, transport, food production, Grow Local, and energy (wind technology, warm walls, waste management).
2. Who initiates these projects, and who participates?
3. Are you concerned with the outcomes of these deliberation (such as the Energy Matters Workshop) – or is the process enough? How do you evaluate the process?

4. What relationship do you have with local and central government (level of support, resources, funding, and policy implementation)? How do you get to influence state authorities, is this important?
5. How important are new ways of (democratically) engaging through the internet, such as Timebanking?
6. The Sustainable Energy Strategy for Christchurch 2008-2018: have you had any feedback, resources, or support from Christchurch City Council into ideas put forward by Project Lyttelton in 2007?

APPENDIX FOUR: POINTS FOR DISCUSSION IN INTERVIEWS (CONTINUED)

Points for Discussion: Local Government

1. What has been your experience of the grass-roots community group, Project Lyttelton?
2. How has CCC/ECAN engaged with this community group and its initiatives?
3. Has Project Lyttelton been involved in the formulation/implementation of any of your climate change/sustainability related decision-making?
4. The Sustainable Energy Strategy for Christchurch 2008-2018 in relation to Project Lyttelton (who responded formally to the Strategy). How have you responded to the ideas put forward by Project Lyttelton in relation to various energy proposals: support, resources?

APPENDIX FOUR: POINTS FOR DISCUSSION IN INTERVIEWS (CONTINUED)

Points for Discussion: Stakeholders

1. What is your experience/relationship with the community group Project Lyttelton?
2. What initiatives have you been involved with in relation to Project Lyttelton (if any): who initiated these, who participated, and what were the outcomes?
3. How do you think that grass-roots community groups can adapt to the potential threats of climate change in a sustainable way?
4. Can grass-roots initiatives work successfully with business?
5. Can grass-roots initiatives, business, and other stakeholders work together in new and sustainable ways with local and central government?

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