

10-26-2006

Five Responses to Carson on Citizen Juries in Italy

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Recommended Citation

Bobbio, Luigi; Lewanski, Rudy; Romano, Iolanda; Giannetti, Daniela; and Crosby, Ned (2006) "Five Responses to Carson on Citizen Juries in Italy," *Journal of Public Deliberation*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol2/iss1/art11>

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Keywords

Citizen Juries, Deliberative Democracy

Five Responses to Lyn Carson’s “Improving Public Deliberative Practice: A Comparative Analysis of Two Italian Citizens’ Jury Projects in 2006”

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Daniela Giannetti, University of Bologna

I fully agree with Dr Carson about the necessity of improving research on deliberative processes. I also agree that, in order to describe the Italian experiences, a more general name such as “deliberative forum” rather than “Citizen Jury” would have been more appropriate because in both cases, Bologna and Turin, we did not literally follow the Ned Crosby format.

Carson discusses and evaluates several features of the Italian experiences such as length of time, scope of charge, selection procedures, steering committee and political influence of deliberative processes. In what follows I will reply only to some of her comments.

Regarding the duration of the jury, from Carson’s own research about Australia we learn that juries can range from ½-1 ½ days to 5 days. The standard format is five days (Crosby). I certainly agree that a longer duration—for example a two-day jury—would allow jurors more time for deliberation. At the same time I believe that a longer duration makes it more difficult to avoid attrition problems in the jury selection process (only people who have more time will participate) and to insulate the effects of deliberation itself from other—albeit interesting—communicative and interactive processes.

All that said, in Bologna we opted for a one- day jury mainly as a consequence of budget constraints. Personally I was not happy about the choice of our colleagues in Turin to split the process in two consecutive Saturdays. This is because I find difficult to understand how to study a supposed “treatment effect” (information exposure, deliberation) with such a time span in between.

To sum up, while the Bologna research team would have preferred a two-day length, we opted for a one-day jury as a reasonable trade off between quality and efficacy of deliberation. By efficacy of deliberation I mean the capacity of inducing preference changes or opinion shifts as a consequence of being exposed to information and

discussion. Indeed, one of the main purposes of our research was to determine whether or not significant opinion shifts occurred during the process.

Carson believes that the framing of the issue to be deliberated was too restrictive in both Italian experiments. In my opinion this criticism underestimates the general aim of our research. We were interested not only in providing an opportunity for citizens' participation but in examining potential opinion shifts induced by deliberation. In particular, we were perfectly aware that the dichotomy 'environment versus economy' was far too simplistic. However, a question based on such dichotomy was included in the survey administered to a random sample of a thousand Bologna citizens from which jurors were selected. Such a question was considered more informative about 'real' environmental attitudes than general questions about interest or concern for environmental issues. We included a number of questions about environment in order to evaluate selection biases, i.e. whether or not only people who had a special concern for environmental issues participated in the jury. I agree with Carson that other ways of avoiding selection biases, such as not to inform immediately the potential participants about the issue to be deliberated, might be used. For example, in the Dublin experiment potential jurors were contacted only months after they had answered a general survey.

A second reason which explains the particular framing of the issue that was adopted by the Bologna team has to do with the specific context of the city, where a long-lasting public debate about traffic pollution has mainly involved environmentalist groups and economic interest groups. Even though the jury "charge" reproduced such dichotomy, the jury process was designed with the purpose of unfolding the complexity of the issue to be deliberated upon and exploring common ground.

Given the time constraints, I now think a simpler issue to be deliberated (for instance, just one out of the three policy options aiming at reducing traffic pollution) would have been more appropriate.

In my opinion what was really missing in the Bologna jury was a balanced presentation of different arguments and positions about the issue at hand, which made it difficult to understand the nature of the consensus reached at the end of the deliberative process. As convenors, we put a lot of effort into providing jurors with balanced information beforehand. I agree with Carson, however, that briefing materials should be limited to logistics. At the same time, we allowed the stakeholders too great a discretion in choosing their ‘witnesses’. While the environmentalists were able to coordinate the choice of witnesses, the other ‘side’ lacked any coordination. This was mainly due to the fact that the two most important local associations of shop-keepers, whose representatives had taken part in the meetings of the steering committee, eventually declined to participate. How to avoid a boycott of the process by the self-perceived ‘losing side’ is in my opinion a general problem. I agree with Carson that in future experiments stronger efforts should be made by the convenors in order to involve more effectively all the relevant stakeholders in the process.

Rudy Lewanski, University of Bologna

The citizen jury (CJ) is only one –albeit one of the most well known- ‘techniques’ of the broad deliberative democracy family. We chose this specific technique for several reasons, the first being comparability with other similar ‘experiences’ being carried out in other European countries (Ireland, Holland). The second reason was to test this participation technique in order to verify its effectiveness and ‘usability’ in our specific political-administrative cultural context. In this sense I don’t think we had an ‘ideal’; we were experimenting, quite pragmatically, learning through trial and error. The Bologna CJ was conceived of purely as a scientific research exercise and its ‘experimental’ nature is essential to understand and evaluate the Bologna CJ.

My personal overall evaluation was that the Bologna CJ proved to be positive for a number of reasons. For one, it provided me, as a researcher, with a number of insights that I would like to share. Some of these insights arose when re-listening to audio tapes, having let several months elapse, thus allowing the experience to ‘simmer down’ in my

perception. This combination of *testing* and *reflecting on* the theory of deliberative democracy enabled my reasoning to be developed in a very practical way.

Lesson 1: More time was needed. Though even in the Australian experience there have been a number of one day CJs, as Carson points out, for a topic having the ‘weight’ as the one we chose, 2 to 3 days now seem to be the very minimum you would need to allow for the dialogic and cognitive processes that CJs are aimed at fostering. Quite complex technical issues were at stake in the charge that the CJ was called to discuss (airborne pollutants and their effect on human health, transportation solutions, repercussions on the economy and so on). But DD processes in my view involve much more, namely interpersonal relations and emotional processes: building real and deep consensus among individuals requires that these aspects have adequate time to be expressed and dealt with (personally I feel that only *after* the emotional dimension has been tackled can a cognitive process take place, effectively).

Time still proved to be tight although we did try to compensate by resorting to such ‘devices’ as providing basic information and position papers beforehand and twice splitting up the jurors into sub-groups assisted by facilitators during that day. Lyn Carson also notes that the materials presented were technically intimidating. That’s probably true. But it should be considered that, whatever the efforts at keeping them as simple as possible, some subjects just can’t be ‘made easy’ if we don’t want to mis-represent the essence of the problem (e.g. the size of particulate matter of 10 micron is relevant since it penetrates deeply into one’s lungs, thus representing a health threat). Simplify as much as you can, the technicality is unavoidable if DD processes are to be applied to the relevant conflicts of contemporary society. Furthermore, personally I believe the capabilities of lay persons should not be underestimated: if adequately motivated and assisted they are able grasp complex topics (and in fact during the jury some jurors did refer to aspects discussed in the hand-outs). The point, once again, is that this requires time.

The lack of time forced us to strongly structure the issue, though in doing so we took every possible precaution by involving the advisory board made up of stakeholders.

Again, if we had more time, we could have formulated the charge in more open terms in order to allow the jurors to define it more precisely consensually at the outset of the process itself. I am quite willing to recognize that there is a very real risk of bias in this operation. Yet even in ‘real life’ CJs the charge is structured reflecting the issue that it is intended to tackle.

Also, as Carson, notes, it might not have been a ‘Ned Crosby CJ’. We did try to follow the ‘classical’ format as much as it seemed suitable in our specific case. Also, we went through considerable efforts to give it a ‘court jury’ format, and to give the 42 citizens sitting on the benches an opportunity to decide a case. We did our best to make it adversarial by having testimonies and having them cross-questioned. We purposely emphasized this trait in order to verify the outcome it would produce and specifically to see if a dialogic process could actually forge consensus in this way: it was in the design of our project. If I regret something in this respect it is that this trait did not come out strongly enough, since the initial positions of the two sides (environmentalists and economic actors) were not as distant as we thought.

Lesson 2: More resources (money, staff, equipment, logistics) are required. The first resource is funding: democratic deliberation is expensive (though I am convinced—from the abundant empirical evidence available worldwide—that the outcomes can be well worth the investment). In this case we were able to cope with financial shortage thanks to voluntary work of friends and colleagues; some resources were available for free (venues); still, it turned out to be expensive for academic pockets (some 20.000 euro).

The second type of resource that is needed is more social capital, which in this case takes the specific form of the credibility of such processes in the eyes of organized actors and individual citizens. The point is not only whether DD processes produce ‘superior’ outcomes, but also whether real world actors actually prefer—or at least are willing to accept—them as processes substituting for, or even complementing or augmenting, ‘traditional’ ones based on representative democracy, pressure politics and so on. Not very surprisingly, I learned that some actors simply don’t: they prefer to pursue their

interests through traditional ‘channels’, because they receive more attention from decision makers and because they keep other (from their view, “undesirable”) actors and citizens out of the game. In my view that’s short sighted and doesn’t pay off in the long run; but that’s my view, not theirs. Actually, some actors can even behave quite maliciously, I suspect in an attempt to sabotage innovative processes such as our CJ. Shopkeeper representatives, after being involved in the advisory board and having agreed on all aspects, decided to leave the process just days before the event. The Traffic Commissioner of the Municipality, also involved from the outset, declared himself sick on the day of the Jury and sent a collaborator (who however was not in a position to speak for the Administration on politically sensitive matters).

Lesson 3: The consensus that is reached in the end might in fact prove to be rather shallow (or a ‘premature conclusion’ in Carson’s words). Listening to the audio recordings, it has become clear to me that there was a broad agreement among many jurors on the general principle that the city center should be closed to private vehicle traffic; but also that not all agreed and some seem to have gone along with the majority without deep conviction. Also, jurors were quick to concede flexibility in vehicle access to the city center, thus *de facto* undermining the general principle that they were upholding of closing it. Why? For the sake of avoiding conflict? Because the schedule was tight? Because there was no practical outcome since this was not the actual decision making locus? Probably a mix of all three reasons.

Lesson 4: To make a Jury work, participants need to feel that they are part of a real world process, and that their opinions will be, at least to some extent, influential. We made it clear that ours was only a scientific research exercise. We nurtured no expectation that it would have a direct impact on local decision making. Being adamant about this aspect was a response to professional ethics on our side, and was required in order to avoid subsequent misunderstandings with both participants and stakeholder groups. It was quite evident—during both the telephone contacts and on the day of the Jury itself—that chosen citizens felt ‘honored’ to be involved in a research project carried out by the local university on a relevant topic and of being hosted in the seat of the Provincial Council.

Yet the fact that they knew that their opinion would not be taken into account might well have de-motivated jurors to some extent, since they knew their opinions were not going to influence policies (and, in fact, the Municipality only a week later decided to introduce a form of congestion charge, just the policy instrument the Jury members opposed). This might also explain why consensus, albeit shallow, emerged quite easily.

One way to avoid shallowness and excessively ‘easy’ choices might be to compel the jurors—in a simulated way—to face the tough choices of real-life (as elected authorities must do daily), namely limited resources, reactions of those negatively affected by decisions and so on, if credible indications are to emerge. It’s just too easy to say that everything should be done to reduce air pollution—more bicycle lanes, more buses, low emission vehicles—without considering that space, for one, is a scarce resource in urban areas (e.g. creating a bike lane might imply reducing parking space, that in turn creates conflict with car owners).

Lesson 5: Motivating citizens to dedicate their time and energy to public involvement is problematic and has considerable potential for bias. Money, as mentioned above, is one tool we used (each juror received 100 euro at the end of the day). But, besides the funding issue mentioned above, there are deeper aspects involved, connected with representativeness and motivation. Clearly, a citizen accepting to take part in such an experience only for the economic gain is hardly motivated and is unlikely to contribute substantially to it. Furthermore, money obviously has a different value for citizens of different social conditions. We learned that individuals belonging to categories such as students and retired persons were more willing to dedicate a day to the CJ both because the sum we offered was interesting for them, and because time had less value. So how can high income individuals be motivated to participate? Higher education and social status culturally might work in favour of participation, but it also might work in the opposite direction. And the longer the involvement required, the tougher the problem gets (can a successful lawyer afford to lose 3 or 4 days of his/her precious working time?), hence a strong risk of social bias in the composition of the Jury. On the other hand, the problem would not pose concerns if citizens would be willing to take part in such

practices as part of their civic duty; my impression however is that civic-mindedness is not on the rise nowadays (on the other hand just such experiences could contribute to enhancing civic culture).

Summing up, I would not personally carry out another CJ with the characteristics of the one discussed here. However, I do not regret it: it was an experiment, an absolute first time in Italy. And it was useful in many ways: (a) the experiment produced some scientifically relevant results; (b) a group of citizens had a unique opportunity to get a taste for direct involvement; (c) the jurors found the experience stimulating and involving (this emerges both from their answers to our questionnaires and from the discursive process—as taped—that occurred during the Jury itself); (d) some local policy makers and stakeholders saw that there exists an array of innovative methods for complex and conflictual decision making; (e) the seed is sown, now it needs watering and care.

Just recently one of the major national papers (La Repubblica) dedicated a whole page (p.17 on June 10, 2006) to Deliberative Polls connecting it with the direct democracy of ancient Athens: it might be a sign of a growing potential. One big question remains open: how can we get public authorities to give such processes a serious try? Attitudes between Italian local authorities are worth noting. Lyn Carson—as mentioned in her article—was invited to speak at a conference organized by the Tuscany Region. Our CJ was carried out in Bologna, capital of the Emilia-Romagna Region. Interestingly, these two bordering Regions share a similar political culture since the same party—the previous Communist Party (now *Democratici di Sinistra*)—has been in power since the post-war period.

Yet there is a considerable difference between the two Regions in their attitude towards citizen involvement. The Tuscany region organized the conference as a part of a process that is aimed at formulating a specific law on citizen participation, a process which will also involve a 21st Century Town meeting (an interesting case of meta-participation, i.e. of citizens deciding how citizens should participate). The President of the Region attended the conference, rare behaviour in the Italian polity, clearly indicating a strong political interest in the topic. On the other hand, in Emilia-Romagna (and Bologna more

specifically) authorities, though often paying lip-service to ‘participation’, in fact seem to be wary of empowering people in specific decision-making processes. Referring to the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, Tuscany seems to be heading in the direction of involvement and collaboration, whereas in Emilia ‘participation’ still means to inform, or at the most to appear to involve. For the moment this is just an impression, though shared among observers; time will tell.

Luigi Bobbio, University of Turin

Carson’s reflections offer a very useful and insightful answer to the doubts we expressed to her (and to ourselves too) after the conclusion of our first CJ. Thanks to them, we are planning to introduce some changes in the design of the CJs we are about to convene in two middle-sized Italian cities. The topic will be the same (i.e. policy against traffic pollution), but we hope we shall be able to do better on most of Carson’s items: length, scope of the charge, facilitation, and expert speakers.

Still it seems to me that such experiences tend to face a more general problem. The problem concerns the nature of the deliberative process, when randomly selected citizens are involved. In the case of the Turin CJ, it was apparent that most of them had only weak preferences on the matter. Of course, every citizen deals daily with traffic problems and with the policy measures that are enacted to cope with it. So each of them has considerable practical knowledge and possesses clear personal opinions. But their views are strictly dependent upon their personal experience. If one is not used to riding a bicycle, he or she will display little concern about cycling paths. If a juror has no children, he or she will be less prone to acknowledge the mobility needs of households-with-kids. Jurors may have strong preferences about issues in which they are personally involved, but their opinions on the overall traffic problem are likely to be ill-focused, uncertain, and weak. In these circumstances, the deliberation is mostly a learning process, through which jurors discover points of view different from theirs and are induced to shape a more general view that takes simultaneously into account different needs, opinions, and arguments.

Most accounts of deliberation describe it as a process through which free and reasonable persons genuinely assess and then some *change* their preferences when faced by the arguments offered by the other participants and thus they are able to reach a common ground. This account does not fit completely with what happens in a CJ. In the latter case, the stress is more on *shaping* preferences than on *changing* or *building* them. Jurors are not so much modifying their positions (as they do not possess any well-defined view on the matter), rather they have to use information and arguments to build up a general view of their own. Does it make a difference? I think it does. Shaping general and conscious preferences out of individual and ill-structured ones is a very delicate process that may not lead to any stable common ground. People react differently when exposed to new information and news points of view. Some of them grasp the problem faster than others. Some feel displaced. Some get confused, but do not want to admit it and then they end up adhering to a conclusion with which they do not actually agree. In the Turin CJ we realized that some jurors (the oldest and the less educated ones) felt very uneasy when – at the beginning of the final discussion - they were asked to express their first and their second policy preference. At last they did, but it was quite clear that they were not very convinced of their own choice.

I acknowledge that, in our case, we devoted too short time to the discussion among jurors, as Carson points out. Still I wonder whether there can be a period of time long enough (and an interaction practice rich enough) to prevent raw (and thus unstable) conclusions. Carson writes that “it is possible to know when a conclusion is mature and consequently when there is reason to have confidence in the stability of the jury’s recommendations...In these circumstances, the jury has a genuine sense of satisfaction that it has wrestled with the complexity of the issue for long enough “. I believe this final point can be reached, but I am not sure how often it is actually reached. Accounts of CJ (and other similar experiences) do not offer – usually – sufficient hints on this crucial point. I think we need more critical micro analysis on the very process of deliberation, in order to learn to distinguish between uncertain conclusions and mature ones and to understand which process leads to which outcome.

After many years of theoretical inquiry and practical experiences, we understand that deliberation is an ambiguous concept that covers quite different practices. When deliberation occurs among people that have strong preferences it is likely to end up with positional confrontation (or with a “debate” in Carson’s words), rather than with dialogue. When it is run among people that have vague preferences – as it happens in CJs – it risks leading to a poor and short-lasting consensus. How can we overcome these two unpleasant alternatives?

The solidity of the jury conclusions is not only a theoretical matter. It has also practical consequences as it affects the credibility of the CJ in face of the political power. In our case, we did not have great expectations about the political influence of the jury – it was just a first experiment and we knew we had to face a lack of confidence among politicians. But still we were quite disappointed by the reaction of the policy makers. We did not dare to ask them to sign a contract, as we feared that, in this case, they would have withdrawn from the CJ – maybe we shall be bolder next time.

Nevertheless we succeeded in involving them deeply in the process. The three members of the executives of the Municipal, Provincial and Regional governments participated (through their delegates), in the steering committee (together with other stakeholders); they attended personally the first morning of the CJ and welcomed the jurors with warm speeches. One of them was present when the jury recommendations were spelt out.

However, the day after, none of them took seriously the content of the jury statement. Rather they used it to show – through press releases – that the “voice of people” had supported the contrasting policy options of each of them. The jury outcome was channeled into a longstanding policy dispute among policy makers, and thus misinterpreted. The “voice of people” had no way of being heard by itself. After a couple of days the issue disappeared from the press and the jury recommendations were no longer recalled, even if the public debate on traffic policy remained very hot in the

following months. I wonder if this type of political expediency is exclusive to the Italian polity or whether it has been experienced elsewhere.

I want to add that despite our errors in the CJ design and the unfortunate impact on political world, the overall experiment was far from disappointing. In particular, we were really struck by the attitude of the jurors. They appreciated being involved in such an unusual situation. They took their role very seriously. They had fun. This is not – by any means – a novelty. All accounts of CJs report similar features. But we were glad to see – this time with our own eyes – that ordinary people are ready to listen, to discuss and to give their advice to policy makers. So even if our overall evaluation of the experiment is rather critical, this does not mean we are not going to try again.

Iolanda Romano, Avventura Urbana²

Dr Carson's article touches upon a series of critical themes in deliberative democracy, but I intend to limit myself to commenting on certain aspects very relevant to my own experiences. The reason for this specificity arises from my own role as a facilitator in Turin's CJ's and from my own conviction that these aspects of the process, aside from being central to the quality and success of the process, are also the few elements which the organizers can directly influence (in contrast to the even more significant question of political influence which is beyond organizers' power).

I will address the following two elements: the methodology of the CJ process and the facilitation of Turin's CJ's. I believe these two aspects of the CJ's are inextricably intertwined and that together they can inform the question of how to manage the process, as much as any consideration of the content of the problem.

² Iolanda Romano, architect, PhD in urban public policies and expert in inclusive decision making processes. She founded Avventura Urbana, a company active from 1992 in Italy that deals with participative processes in public policies (www.avventuraurbana.it). In the Turin CJ she covered the role of facilitator.

What task did we face

When Luigi Bobbio asked me if I would be willing to facilitate the CJ, the first of its kind in Italy, I accepted immediately and enthusiastically. I was curious to see from the inside how to apply what I had learned from reading about CJ's elsewhere: a random group of citizens is able to work collectively on a complex problem for a rather limited time and come to agreement on a resolution on how to solve the problem. My principle questions were:

1. (The learning process): How can you place the jurors in a position to learn sufficiently about an issue to express themselves individually and discuss together knowledgably?
2. (Discussion and changing minds): Is it true that, if people are well informed, they can discuss more productively and are able to change their opinions?
3. (Space for agreement): Is it possible, even in a limited and predetermined period of time, to create an interactive environment in which shared hypotheses can emerge?
4. (Sustainable outcomes): Are the results of such a process sustainable in that proposals are stable and long-lasting?

When I entered the process all the fundamental elements of the CJ process had already been defined: composition of the jury, experts, scope of charge, timeframe and work method. I was asked to facilitate the interactive process for the entire duration of the CJ: first in the discussion with the experts (learning), and then in the deliberative phase (discussion, agreement, and any potential conflict resolution). I had at my disposal 2 Saturdays, 21 jurors, 15 experts and approximately three hours of discussion time (the other 13 hours were slated for the experts) at the end of which a press conference was scheduled: a framework that appeared then, and later proved to be, very rigid.

What have we done

The initial situation

The first thing we did was present a series of rules or guidelines for discussion. The rules aimed at facilitating the individual voicing of questions and doubts on the part of the jurors, and therefore stipulated that the experts would agree to accept interruptions in their presentations at any given moment when these arose. At the same time the jurors were asked to keep their comments concise and relevant to the topic at hand considering that only ten minutes were available at the end of each presentation and the goal was for everyone to be heard.

Shortly into the working process it became evident that this framework would not work. To keep the process going within these rules I had to continually intercede and focus the exchanges, which significantly limited both the spontaneity and the comfort level of the jurors. I, too, felt uncomfortable with the process as it required me to be excessively demanding in conducting our work: there was something fundamentally wrong that I felt would hamper the entire working process.

I had asked some members of the process team—who were acting as observers—to be prepared for short briefings during the pauses to evaluate any eventual changes or adjustments to the CJ system we had constructed. Fortunately the first coffee break quickly arrived and from then on we worked exclusively using a method Carson calls “co-facilitation”. The adjustments we defined together allowed us to proceed through the rest of the CJ without major bottlenecks.

The situation after having modified the process

The first day the situation was very rigid: the experts had all already been invited and their presentations were already defined, while the time available was very limited. We therefore opted to make minor adjustments that aimed at softening the working environment and making their contributions more productive.

First, we were able to create a space, several times throughout the day, to go around the table and allow the jurors to express themselves freely on the topic at hand.

Secondly, we reduced by one third the time available to the experts (causing some discontent among them), leaving about half the remaining time for the jurors' questions. Unfortunately the same fundamental problem persisted: the experts' contributions were too many and they were often redundant; the jurors appeared tired and overwhelmed by an excessive amount of data that was difficult to assimilate in such short a time. Most importantly, it seemed to us extremely difficult for the jurors, people not generally accustomed to deliberating issues so complex, to connect all this information with the scenarios they were asked to consider. We feared that there would be a disconnect between the information and deliberation phases that would place at risk the value of the entire experience.

The second working day was scheduled for the following weekend, which was fortunate as it gave us time to reconsider the process design and the day's agenda. We decided to make significant changes. One: We reduced the number of experts, thereby increasing the time available for the deliberative phase. Two: We then asked the experts to forgo their formal presentations and to present instead only their arguments in favour or against the six scenarios previously identified. Three: The remaining time would be dedicated to responding to the jurors' questions. These minor changes allowed us to craft a working process that was less confrontational and more oriented towards problem solving—as Carson herself suggests—and it facilitated the comprehension of the specific topics at hand.

Simultaneously we decided to position dry-erase boards on the wall on which we recorded the principle pros and cons for each scenario as they emerged from the dialogue between the jurors and the experts. This exercise allowed us to create a consensual process even in this early informative phase. This development of a collective evaluation of the scenarios allowed the jurors to process more effectively the data presented and to associate them more clearly with their own or the others' conception of the problem. In some cases the jurors even observed that some principles were at least partly shared.

Lastly, we decided to structure the discussion in the actual deliberative phase in such a way as to reduce the complexity of the variables, accelerate individual expression, and identify common ground reached to that point.

The two working days revealed clearly the desire, on the part of the jurors, to develop a new scenario composed of various elements of the six predefined scenarios. On the other hand, there was not enough time to let the discussion develop spontaneously. What we did was ask the jurors to use post-it notes to rank their first and second most preferred policy or action. With the notes posted on a large board it was possible to identify groups of shared or related interests and also to exclude other options or scenarios that were given less significance.

Starting from the common or shared priorities the group worked to develop the “seventh” scenario, which it largely did in a brief amount of time yet without submerging significant differences of opinion. As the end of the allotted time drew near, the discussion became progressively more animated. At a certain point we took a break and asked the participants if they intended to arrive at a shared solution, underlining that it was neither obligatory nor given that they would, but rather a choice they would have to make. This transition, in my opinion, in some way forced the situation. My perception of the group dynamics at that point was that the jurors accepted ownership of the process and concluded that a solution based on consensus was preferable to one that merely reflected the partly divergent opinions expressed to that point.

Everyone’s attitude appeared to change at that moment and, instead of defending differences of opinion sustained thus far, it seemed to me the mood shifted towards acceptance of a unanimous agreement.

In the last hour available for discussion the group arrived, very quickly, at a shared final version of the scenario initially expressed point-for-point and then elaborated more thoroughly in a descriptive text containing the “final recommendations”.

What we learned

From my experience with Turin's CJ I am able to say a little more about the questions I had posed at the beginning of the process, even if the responses require additional evidence and support from further experiences.

1. (The learning process). The role of the experts is fundamental to the learning process, yet the modality of their participation and contribution should be defined based on the specific issues at hand and the type of decision being considered. Lecture-style presentations should be limited to a minimum, that is, to the framing of the greater issue. Instead, informal exchange should be facilitated following an analysis of a problem that is framed and defined along with the jurors themselves. The ideal would be for the experts to be chosen and for their intervention to occur only after some discussion among the jurors, in such a way as to alternate between moments of reflection and comprehension.
2. (Discussion and changing minds). Some jurors, once in a position to understand a particular problem, changed their attitudes somewhat: this occurred specifically when data was presented that correlated pollution with health problems. It appeared to me that the shift occurred specifically following discussion with the other jurors and the exchange of different but equally valid perspectives. The time available for this kind of phenomenon to fully develop was clearly insufficient and I therefore feel inclined to say that the *duration* of the CJ is extremely important and determinant of the quality of the product obtained.
3. (Space for agreement). The possibility of finding shared solutions depends on many factors. From this experience it seems I can affirm that the preconditions for a successful process are those noted in the previous two points. Yet to arrive at a true common ground two factors are fundamental: a group that works well together (and for this I believe a preparatory phase, which we lacked, is essential), and very structured facilitation that draws both from techniques in managing group dynamics and in creative conflict resolution. This second factor is extremely important specifically when there are interests that appear to diverge significantly but in reality mask significant agreement that can be brought to light.

4. (Sustainable outcomes). In the case of Turin's CJ the jurors proposed a unanimous solution towards which everyone expressed strong satisfaction. However, differently from Carson's own suggestion, I fear that this indicator is not sufficient to consider the result stable or sustainable in as much as it was strongly influenced, in my opinion, by the jurors propensity for efficiency in reaching a unanimous solution. With regards to the "stability of the result" it may be important to identify two types of acceptance: one being the jurors own long-term acceptance of their own work (in which they can feel represented), while the other the potential for the result to be accepted by a broad collective (the population of which the jurors are a sample). This second level of sustainability is, in my opinion, much more difficult to obtain and requires true commitment to the development of a comprehensive result which reflects a consensus actually present in the jury.

Ned Crosby

It was exciting for me to learn about the Italian experiments with Citizens Juries and the consideration being given to other democratic methods for engaging Italians in an informed way in the public policy arena. The growing use of Citizens Juries, Deliberative Polls, 21st Century Town Meetings and other methods in a number of countries around the world is an encouraging sign for those who care about the future of democracy.

My view is that the future of effective citizen engagement lies not with a specific method, such as Citizens Juries or Deliberative Polls, but with new methods and new practices that remain to be built. As the inventor of the Citizens Jury process, I say this not because the method is no longer useful, but because the things we have learned can be placed in a more solid format when governments (local, regional or national) become serious about using deliberative methods as they deserve to be used.

In this paper Carson and the other contributing authors have raised a number of questions about the two Citizens Jury projects that were conducted. Are the results stable? Granted, one or two days may not be enough, but how many days really are needed? How willing are people to change their minds by seeing beyond the attitudes with which they arrived? What should be done when members of the advisory board drop out? What can be done to get officials to take the recommendations of a Citizens Jury seriously?

A number of these questions can be answered on the basis of Jefferson Center practice. A five-day Citizens Jury leads to considerably more stability than a one or two day event. In several of the more complex projects conducted by the Center, it was clear that the jurors were not ready to make the important decisions until they had learned enough to be sure of what they were doing. In the 1993 Citizens Jury project on the federal budget, it was not until the end of the fourth day that the jurors felt they had a grasp of the topic under discussion and could move ahead to the important decisions of the last day.

But even a single five-day Citizens Jury may not yield the stability desired. In the 1986 Citizens Jury on School-Based Clinics (Should there be clinics in high schools to help prevent teen-pregnancy and AIDS?) there were eight regional Citizens Juries, each lasting four days. At the end of these, opposition to the proposal had risen from 16% at the start of the project to 29%. When representatives of these eight juries met in a statewide Citizens Jury, the opposition rose to 50% by the end of the project (see the project report, p94 on www.jefferson-center.org). This shift occurred as the jurors became increasingly aware that the data showing the effectiveness of the projects was weak and increasingly aware of the costs of establishing the clinics.

My comments could be extended at length, dealing with various details of Citizens Juries and other methods. But let me skip to the major points I want to make:

1. It is important for Italians to continue to experiment with various deliberative methods, even if they cannot be run perfectly, so as to gain some familiarity with what can be done and the challenges faced in doing so properly.

2. It is important to let officials know that the problems that arise in these experiments can be overcome if sufficient money is invested to run them properly, with skilled staff and appropriate controls to minimize staff bias and any biases in the selection of the witnesses or the framing of the agenda. There is a wealth of experience from many nations that indicates what is possible.

3. A wonderful opportunity exists to craft deliberative participatory methods that will suit the Italian culture and be equal to the problems they are asked to examine. Aspects of Citizens Jury practice, 21st Century Town Meetings, Citizens' Assemblies and other methods can be put together to provide a stable and wise body that can support responsible solutions to significant problems. What is required is responsible elected officials who can see the importance of quality participatory methods to provide the political will for actions that they are prepared to consider and implement. These methods should not be seen as supplanting the authority of representative government, but as working with government to find sound solutions to the problems and then lending the political will to do what needs to be done.

The problems of traffic and transportation in Italian cities are of huge importance, not only to those who live there, but to those around the world, like me, who marvel at the beauty the Italians have created. The Parliament of British Columbia, Canada spent 1/20th of 1% of their yearly budget on the Citizens' Assembly to come up with a significant reform of their electoral system. Why should Italians spend any less to preserve and enhance the beauty of their national treasures? If the Ponte Vecchio suffered severe structural damage, would Florentine officials hire cut-rate architects and engineers to fix it on the grounds it was important to save money on consultants?

If a government is stuck in partisan disputes and power struggles to the degree that it cannot take effective action to sustain the long term well-being of its community, then no deliberative or participatory method is likely to improve matters. But if government

officials are able to plan for the future and are prepared to act, if only there were an informed public that is willing to support their efforts, then deliberative options can be created that will enable the public and elected officials to work effectively together.

There is not space here to lay out the possibilities and how they might fit together. Suffice it to say that the government of British Columbia in 2004-5 managed to create a very interesting method in the Citizens' Assembly, with very little consultation with other deliberative experts. The Italians can certainly design interesting methods that overcome the problems encountered in the brief experiments described in this paper. They can construct a set of procedures that can work effectively with local and regional governments to provide the informed political will that is needed to solve some very important problems.