Rescuing Democracy

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THE PEOPLE’S FORUM:
A DELIBERATIVE AID FOR LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES

Triple dysfunction theory views failure of liberal democratic governments as arising from their electoral systems. This suggests three different types of remedy: (a) countering the deleterious effects of electoral systems, (b) altering these systems so that they produce better effects, or (c) eliminating these systems, perhaps by replacing them with others. The last of these approaches may be to use a non-electoral method of selecting representatives, or to eliminate representation by attempting direct democracy, or to abandon democracy itself. A new institution designed to implement option (a) is now proposed because it appears more feasible to implement in current democratic contexts than either (b) or (c). If (a) works it should improve the political capacity to then implement either (b) or (c), as well as increase the competence of the polity to decide whether it is prudent to do so.

This new institutional design is called the People’s Forum (for short, PF or the Forum). In this chapter, PF is given a broad description and then evaluated in two ways. One evaluation is a comparison of this design with principles that have been theorized as being required for deliberative participation in democratic government (the categorization of PF as a deliberative institution is discussed below). The other evaluation is a com-
parison of PF with eight other institutional designs of similar scale of operation that have been suggested for improving democratic governance. Chapter 7 then provides more details of the Forum’s design and additional discussion on whether it should function as intended.

Triple dysfunction theory indicates that if the People’s Forum is to improve democratic government, it should do three things. It should remove the ambiguity of delegation by making it clear that it is the people who direct government policy; it should reduce either the excessiveness, or the destructive effect, of competition between politicians; and it should reduce the compromising of the political influence of relatively informed and considered public opinion by the political influence of less well-developed public opinion. The Forum is designed to achieve the first of these objectives by being a very visible public institution that encourages and helps the people to exercise responsible directorship. As the development of strategic policy is a crucial part of directorship (discussed mostly in §2.2.2, §2.2.4 and §2.5) the Forum must help citizens to focus on this. The second objective is to be pursued by the Forum helping the people to moderate the degree of competition between politicians and reduce the extent to which the remaining competition may damage policy. These effects might be achieved by the Forum replacing some of the political activity of politicians, and again the crucial area in which to do this is strategic policy, as noted in §2.3.5. The third objective, of reducing the compromising of the political influence of informed opinion by the influence of ill-informed opinion, is pursued by the Forum being designed to facilitate the development of mass public opinion and also to give more political influence to that section of this opinion that is more likely to be well developed. Again, such developed and influential opinion must cover strategic policy; otherwise much tactical and operational policy will, sooner or later, become ineffectual or damaging.

These three objectives for the Forum may be condensed into two by combining the second and third into the objective of improving the quality of public policy, especially strategic public
policy (as this is the central aim of those two objectives) and restating the first (which is to make it clear that it is the people who direct government policy, especially its strategic component) as developing public legitimacy for government policy, especially strategic policy. The Forum’s mission may therefore be expressed as (1) improving the quality of public policy, especially strategic public policy and (2) developing public legitimacy for this policy.

The three design objectives that are specified by triple dysfunction for the People’s Forum clearly require public deliberation. The first objective is for the people to direct public policy and to do this with special attention to strategic policy. This demands careful public deliberation. The second objective, of reducing damage to public policy from excessive competition between politicians, requires citizens to take over some of their policy work and/or devise ways of reducing their competition, which again demands public deliberation. The third objective, that the political influence of citizens’ informed and considered opinions is less compromised by the influence of their ill-considered ones, arguably also requires public deliberation. The meaning of ‘public deliberation’ that is applied here is broader than that defined by political scientist Michael X. Delli Carpini and colleagues (2004, 319) as discourse with other citizens that helps them to ‘reach judgements about matters of public concern’. Discourse includes talk, discussion and debate in formal or informal settings, via any medium including face-to-face exchanges, telephone conversations, email and internet forums, but it excludes ‘self-deliberation’ (Delli Carpini et al. 2004, 318–19), which is the thinking and learning of citizens that may be stimulated by their observations of the views of others and of information and events relevant to public issues. Delli Carpini and his colleagues exclude self-deliberation about public affairs from public deliberation because it does not involve personal reciprocal exchange, but it is included here as part of democratic public deliberation because people do this when they recognize and consider issues. As political theorist Robert Goodin (2003, 54–55) argues,
it remains significant how very much of the work of deliberation, even in external-collective settings, must inevitably be done within each individual’s head… The challenge facing deliberative democrats is thus to find some way of adapting their deliberative ideals to any remotely large-scale society, where it is simply infeasible to arrange face-to-face discussions across the entire community.

Political philosopher James Bohman (1998, 401) has defined deliberative democracy as ‘any one of a family of views according to which the public deliberation of free and equal citizens is the core of legitimate political decision making and self-government’. Political scientist Michael Saward (2001, 365) offers a similar view. ‘That deliberative democracy comes in many shapes is an understatement… However, a simple dichotomy between circumscribed and uncircumscribed variants of deliberative sites and forums captures with reasonable accuracy the institutional aspirations of various strands of deliberative theory.’ Saward defines the circumscribed extreme as a consciously designed forum with a limited number of participants, who engage face-to-face with a limited agenda of issues and use tight procedures for discussion. The uncircumscribed extreme is a spontaneous group or network of an indeterminate number of people who may never meet but engage for an indefinite time with informal procedures on a self-generated, fluid set of issues. As will be seen from the following description, the People’s Forum is circumscribed in several ways as it has many specific features, such as a regular schedule for voting on a carefully composed set of questions: but it is also uncircumscribed in such ways as a degree of adaptability of the agenda, an indeterminate number of participants, no organisation of group discussions and an indefinite period of engagement with each question.

6.1 The mission, strategies and shape of the People’s Forum

As stated above, the mission of the People’s Forum is to improve the quality of public policy — especially in strategic areas — and
to produce strong legitimacy for this policy in the eyes of citizens. While the theory of triple dysfunction points to this as the necessary mission, its third dysfunction (that of excessive compromising of the political influence of informed public opinion with the political influence of ill-informed public opinion) suggests two strategies for executing that mission. These are the two actions that appear necessary to minimize that third dysfunction. The first is to raise the standard of mass public opinion (especially in strategic public policy); and the second is to produce greater political influence for the part of mass public opinion that is likely to be better developed. As well as minimizing the third dysfunction, these two strategies should execute the mission of PF because, acting in concert, they should improve the quality of public policy (especially strategic policy) while making it legitimate in the eyes of citizens (because in a democracy, political influence ultimately depends on public legitimacy). These two strategies also tackle the first two parts of triple dysfunction, which they must do if they are to execute the mission of PF. The first two dysfunctions are addressed as follows: first, by ambiguity in delegation being minimized by both strategies giving the director's role to the people; and second, by damage to policy from excessive competition between politicians being minimized by the people's directorship replacing some of the decision-making by politicians. This replacement is done not only with some policy being produced by citizens instead of by politicians, but also by citizens (potentially) devising policy or new rules that moderate competition between politicians. To summarize, then, for the People's Forum we have:

The mission:
- improving the quality of public policy, especially strategic policy
- developing public legitimacy for this policy.

The strategies for achieving the mission:
- accelerating the development of mass public opinion, especially on strategic issues
producing political influence for the part of mass public opinion that is likely to be relatively well developed.

To execute its two strategies, the People’s Forum employs a repetitive, nonbinding referendum or poll with an agenda that is largely supervised by the public. These features, together with many others described below, are intended to stimulate and facilitate an unhurried and, in some respects, organized and careful consideration of strategic issues by citizens. As currently practiced, referendums cannot do this well, if at all, because they usually combine most or all of the following four features: a proposition is put to the vote only as a binary choice; it is voted on just once; the result binds the legislature to enact that choice; and propositions are chosen by elites. This gives referendums the image of all-or-nothing contests that cannot afford the reflection of deliberation. Political theorist Simone Chambers (2001, 231–32, 236, 240–42) describes this as happening in three ways: the framing of the question is not negotiable; the vote is irreversible; and a majoritarian situation is presented in which citizens’ willingness to deliberate is displaced by their need to win. This discouragement of deliberation is also abetted by the news media ‘adopting election coverage rules as the standard of news presentation for referendums’ (Jenkins and Mendelsohn 2001, 229).

The question of whether heuristics can substitute for deliberation to assist citizens to vote on issues according to their existing interests is of limited significance for the People’s Forum because its major strategy is to accelerate the development of public opinion. Deliberation is necessary not only for this, but for constructive popular control of the agenda and also to stimulate demands for new information that may be needed for both the elites who provide heuristic cues for citizens and for citizens themselves if either group is to be knowledgeable and competent on the strategic issues presented by the Forum. As the purpose and design of the People’s Forum’s poll or referendum are quite distinctive, it may be useful to recognize it as a new type by
giving it the technical name of opinion development poll, which offers the attraction to sceptics of abbreviating it to ‘odpoll’.

To establish itself as a part of the system of government, the Forum’s poll (odpoll) must become a widely recognized event that attracts significant levels of public interest, public involvement and public status. Development of public status would indicate that the Forum was starting to execute its second strategy. For the execution of both strategies, the technology that is employed is important (e.g. Lupia and Sin 2003), but the essential feature is the way the poll is organized (Flanagin et al. 2006, 32–33). The emphasis of the Forum’s design on effective organization should allow it to work to a useful degree with technology no more advanced than postal mail for voting, together with print media to introduce the ballot paper, to facilitate much of the public discourse on the issues presented and to publish the voting results. However, modern communication technology makes it much easier to introduce and run this institution.

6.1.1 The focus of the Forum

The People’s Forum is not intended to do work that is suitable for panels of citizens that come together to deliberate issues. Such groups may convene as one group or they may operate as several that meet in plenary sessions and thereby involve hundreds of members. They may meet face-to-face or online. A citizen panel or a coordinated set of these can only be a very small sample of the population of a state or nation, because the participants must be able listen to each other. Where the legitimacy (to all members of a polity) of the decisions of such panels arises from the opportunities for participation that they offer to all members of the polity, then these panels will restrict themselves to issues that can be managed by small communities, for it is only the members of these that will have significant opportunities to participate.

As the Forum is primarily designed to address issues that only very large communities have a prospect of managing, it offers participation to unlimited numbers of citizens. To create the prospect that their participation may be powerful it concen-
trates on issues of strategic significance (which, as discussed in the introductory part of §2.2, would help reduce the ambiguity of delegation), so that the collective development of citizens’ ideas is focused on long-term, fundamental public policy of regional, national or wider concern. The Forum is thereby designed to help citizens direct government to prevent and rectify causes of problems, rather than to treat symptoms. To help with this systemic, strategic approach it must assist citizens to question their basic assumptions and attitudes, as these may underlie the problems. But this approach can influence government policy only if the resultant changes in attitudes are widespread through the polity. For this to happen, any advocacy by the Forum must be seen by all or most citizens as legitimate, so it should occur in full view of all who care to take an interest and any citizen must be able, if they wish, to contribute to the maintenance or reform of the attitudes being debated and voted on.

The type of issue the Forum is designed to deal with can thus be described as fundamental and long-running. As an example, the issue of whether to have a presidential political system would be suitable for the Forum, but the issue of who is to be the next president would not. ‘Long-running’ is specified for the Forum not only because fundamental issues have long-lasting as well as systemic effects, but also because, as noted below, the institution would function by addressing the same issues for many years, so the issues themselves must be those that remain relevant for such periods. Even after an issue is politically decided and acted on, the Forum may continue to address it if there is reason to believe that citizens want, or should want (in the opinion of the Forum’s managers, as discussed below), to keep their choice under review.

The Forum’s focus on fundamental, long-running issues is necessary for it to clarify democratic directorship and thereby correct the first democratic dysfunction. It is only by determining strategic policy that popular rule can provide effective directorship for a polity and thereby make it a fully functional democracy. If popular rule does not consciously and deliberately do this (which §2.2.3 and §2.2.4 describe as largely the current
situation) then either the polity will drift somewhat aimlessly in terms of fundamental goals, or some other influence will take charge and direct the polity at this strategic level. Such undemocratic direction will, of course, largely control the polity in future tactical and operational policy as well.

6.1.2 The structure of the poll
Each voting event of a People’s Forum that is conducted for a particular society or group of societies would usually be repeated at regular intervals of sufficient length to allow some possibility of development in public opinion. In contrast with continual polling, such separation of polls also makes it possible for all those who are concerned to express themselves at the same time, which potentially makes the result for each poll a set of preferences that amounts to a democratic social choice. An established People’s Forum might therefore conduct its voting events at the same time each year. This periodicity should also prevent citizens becoming fatigued with too much voting. However, in the start-up phase of a People’s Forum, the poll might initially be held quarterly or half-yearly a few times to stimulate public interest. As noted in the previous section, this poll is repetitive, so it would endeavour to ask the same sets of questions on the same issues each time it is held. These issues, the questions, and the menus of answers offered for each question, are selected by the poll managers and set out in a ‘ballot paper’ available to the public as a free booklet and also on a website. An issue, or a question, or a menu of answers would only be changed (by the managers, as described in ‘Ballot paper’ below) if it is found to be unsuitable or if the public has made up its mind and is no longer evolving its view. Such stabilizations of opinion would be identified by the poll as it shows levelled trends in opinions over successive polls, as discussed below. New issues would be placed on the ballot by the People’s Forum managers whenever suitable topics become apparent to them. However, as noted below under ‘Ballot paper’ and in more detail in §7.2.13 (E3, E2), the public will have a large degree of control over this agenda-setting.
Voting would be voluntary, a self-selecting process that invites all electors (citizens legally eligible to vote) to participate. Voters would be free to respond to as many or as few of the issues and questions as they like. One ‘vote’ may comprise answers to any questions on any of the issues presented at a polling event. As noted above, the poll results would not be binding on legislatures, merely advisory. Initially this political influence is likely to be much weaker than that of conventional opinion polls, but due to the effects of the structure of the People’s Forum described below, it should become stronger and exceed the influence of opinion polls as public deliberation and voting continues over the years. Repetition of the same questions over many years would provide a consistent agenda, promoting continuity in the associated public debates. This should facilitate the development of public opinion on these questions and create or accelerate trends in the opinions of that part of the community that is voting. The annual repetition of the poll would allow these trends to be plotted. On those questions where participating opinion is stable, or where the trend has flattened out in the last few years of polling, the process would indicate that the community in general is satisfied with these views. These questions could then be taken out of the poll.

6.1.3 Voting process
The People’s Forum poll would be open for voting for a week each time it is held, to give time for public interest to be stimulated by daily progressive tallies during that week and to help ensure that those who intend to vote do not forget to do it. Votes are to be lodged by telephone or internet. Tallying would be electronic and thus virtually instantaneous, so that each night of the week of polling the cumulative results on selected issues may be shown on television. The internet and print media could also give daily updates that might cover all the issues on the ballot and include charts illustrating the voting trends on each issue over the years up to the present event. At least in the early phase of operation of the Forum, this media coverage would not be legally required because this would make establishment of
the institution much more difficult by requiring strong government support. It is hoped that many media outlets would see a potential for growth in public demand for their coverage of the Forum's activities and therefore provide it to help that demand grow and expand their ratings and market. They could expect this effect not only during the week of voting, but also in the form of a sustained increase in demand for information on the subjects covered by the ballot paper. The manager of one television channel in Australia has been asked about providing free daily coverage of voting in such a system over one week each year and he indicated an interest in doing this as a news and current affairs service. Forum managers would encourage such cooperation by issuing daily summaries of the voting, ready for transmission and printing.

Ways of ensuring one vote per elector per poll are discussed in §7.2.13 (E22), which focuses mainly on using the electoral roll in the Australian situation. The ideal voting security system would allow spontaneity of voting, so that registration is not a prerequisite and the elector can vote on impulse at any time during the week the poll is open. Spontaneity of voting allows those who become concerned about the way the poll is currently going in particular issues to vote and to urge others to vote before it closes at the end of the week. Such interactions should help to get people involved in the process during the week of voting and this may encourage wider discussion and deliberation of the issues presented throughout the year in anticipation of the next poll. Voters who decide to change a vote they have lodged may do so before the poll closes. Voting on impulse would work against the objective of giving political influence to citizens who have given serious thought to issues (see §6.3.4 below), but it should help to draw the hitherto disengaged into the process. People who become involved in voting in this way may then pay more attention to the issues and develop their deliberative inclinations and skills by dealing with the types of questions posed, as explained under §6.1.4 below. It may be anticipated that holding the poll open for a week and allowing voters to change their vote during this period may encourage manipulation by special
interests, perhaps by scare tactics applied through the media. This seems unlikely to be effective because voters will have had the previous year to reconsider the issues and any sudden intensive attempt to sway them at the time of polling may look obviously underhand. Interests that are attacked in this way will have a few days to respond to some of it before the close of the poll and may also carry on their counterattack through the year before the next poll. A positive aspect of such competition is that it should increase the discussion of issues and thereby facilitate deliberative effects between polls. If manipulation during the polling event becomes a real problem, then voting can be made irrevocable and the event could also be restricted to one day. Further consideration of countermeasures against manipulation is given in §7.2.10.

Having the voting event run for a week and allowing voting on impulse may be important practices only for the first few years of polling, in order to encourage as many citizens as possible to become involved. It may then seem advisable to move out of the introductory phase by making prior registration obligatory, and/or to reduce the voting period to a weekend or a day, in order to make voting a more premeditated act, thus giving the results a more deliberated status in the eyes of the public. However, these changes may not make the poll results reflect a more considered opinion as they would help the strongly prejudiced to be well represented. This effect, together with reduction of the public exposure of the poll during voting, may lower its profile or status and thus the deliberation it stimulates. These changes are therefore not recommended at this stage, but experience in managing a People’s Forum may indicate that they are worth trying.

6.1.4 Ballot paper
A People’s Forum ballot paper would treat an indefinite number of fundamental long-running issues. As well as being extensive, this agenda should include the most controversial of such issues, to provide something of interest to as many people as possible and to stimulate public involvement. Although the number
of issues treated could be very large, the attention span of the public will limit publication of poll results by the mass media to perhaps a hundred issues, and of these, less than 10 might be focused on at each poll. Newspapers may be inclined to cover a much greater number of issues than television and radio. If the number of issues voted on is very large, complete listings of the results and trends may be published in other outlets such as websites, magazines, technical journals and books. A Forum for a nation of federated states would provide different ballot papers for each state to pose questions on state affairs as well as questions on national policy, and these different papers would be coordinated so that the same national questions were posed in all of them.

The description of each issue that the ballot paper gives should be concise and limited to perhaps less than a page. Where appropriate, the description should relate an issue to others that the ballot paper invites respondents to consider, before answering the questions on that one. Several questions would be posed on each issue and where possible these would include ‘justification questions’ that inquire into the reasons for the voter’s response to preceding questions on that issue, in order to promote the questioning of prejudice, world views and values. Poll results on justification questions should also stimulate constructive public debate on those questions between polls. Each question on the ballot is to be accompanied by a range of answers for the voter’s choice. Other types of questions would also be posed where appropriate and feasible, such as the action that is desired of government, the voter’s understanding of how that action would work and his or her willingness to pay, as discussed below in §7.2.2 (E13) and §7.2.4 (E14).

As the menus of issues, questions and answers offered to the voter would be on public display in the ballot paper for years, criticism and endorsement of these menus would be invited from the public and plenty of time would be available for reactions by both the managers of the poll and the public. It would thus be an open process that places the managers under constant public scrutiny to ensure relevance, comprehensiveness
and competence in the selection and framing of the menus of issues, questions and answers. The penalty for a public perception of poor performance would be the collapse of the People's Forum through distrust, ridicule and boycott by citizens.

The ballot paper would help citizens deal effectively with an issue if the description it gave and the questions it posed summarized the problem to a few crucial concepts that are described in a manner that is easily understood and helpful. Complex issues of technology, risk and values must be distilled to their essentials and questions must be incisive and oriented to problem-solving. The managers of the poll should be well informed on political issues and have skills in issue analysis, question technique and the psychology of public deliberation.

6.1.5 The execution of the Forum's strategies
The execution of both of the Forum's strategies fundamentally depends on its ballot paper. For the first strategy — encouraging the development of mass public opinion on strategic issues — the paper must cover those that are the most important for citizens to carefully consider. Politicians avoid some of these because they confront electors with costly choices. The ballot paper must help to solve issues by focusing on causes and this may include addressing other, related issues, so these must also be placed on the ballot, with each referenced to the others. As the Forum's polls will reflect any development of opinion that such tactics facilitate, its results should become widely known for reflecting relatively well-considered opinion and this should generate political influence for these polls. The Forum's first strategy will therefore help to execute its second strategy as well: that of producing political influence for the best developed policy ideas.

The second strategy is deliberately elitist in that it aims to empower the views of those who are more concerned with the issues and therefore more likely to be well informed on them. Rather than being a problem for democratic equality of opportunities for participation, this elitism may help to ameliorate disengagement from politics by encouraging the disengaged to
join the ‘elite’ by voting in the Forum and publicly debating its questions.

If these polls are to create a strong political influence for the opinion they help develop, they must become popular public institutions. Such popularity would be indicated not just by whether a significant proportion of the electorate votes in Forum polls, but also — and mainly — by the status of their results in the eyes of the public. This status should show whether the general public expects government to implement the Forum’s findings. If these polls are actually run they would be compared with conventional opinion polls, which should draw the attention of the public to the hazardous influence of the latter. Public communication scholar Leo Jeffres (2005, 617–18) observes that in public opinion polls there is a well-documented public willingness to offer opinions on topics citizens know nothing about and respond to ambiguous questions about fictitious public affairs issues … In a democracy, and the consumer society, the public itself, political leadership, and influential need ‘feedback’ about each other for the system to work. The question is whether we can improve poll results to merit the position surveys occupy in society today.

The People’s Forum is intended to provide a positive answer to Jeffres’ query, for it provides a poll that should reflect less suggestion and ignorance and more considered judgement. Some of this judgement will be developed by the continuity of debate and the deliberative nature of this discourse that would be promoted by the Forum’s repetitive process. By showing trends in the development of opinion the Forum might also indicate whether more sophistication appears likely to be developed in the near future.

The five main ways by which the Forum is intended to function are given below in §6.3, followed by more detailed specifications of its mechanisms and explanations of these in Chapter 7. The broad view in §6.3 of the functions of this design is utilized there to judge its probable performance by evaluating how
well it should perform those functions. However, before this is presented, the next section develops the procedure to be used for that evaluation.

6.2 Evaluating democratic institutions

As triple dysfunction theory diagnoses failure by democratic government, it might be expected to provide a framework for evaluating the potential effectiveness of new institutions for improving democratic government. However, perhaps it would place too much faith in a particular theory to use it not only to guide the design of a new institution to improve government (as done at the beginning of this chapter and in §6.1 and §6.1.1), but to compare the promise of this design with that of others of similar purpose — especially as the others may have other virtues in addition to correcting triple dysfunction or compensating for it. Further reason for not using triple dysfunction theory for such comparisons is that a design that corrects triple dysfunction may produce other dysfunctions as it operates, or it may not be of a type that is politically or economically feasible to install and operate. The People’s Forum and competing designs are therefore evaluated more directly and comprehensively (below in §6.3 and §6.5.2 respectively) by assessing how well they should assist existing representative liberal democracies to perform. For this purpose we must specify what we mean by good performance.

The specification of objectives for democratic government that is developed below is derived primarily from Graham Smith’s (2009, 12) helpful concept of the ‘desirable qualities or goods that we expect of democratic institutions’ (emphasis in original), but our derivation necessarily transforms expectations of democratic institutions into expectations of what those institutions should do for democratic government. Smith proposes two classes of expectations for a democratic institution. The first is its provision of democratic goods, which ‘arguably … embody Robert Dahl’s classic criteria of a democratic process’ (G. Smith 2009, 13). In Smith’s terminology, democratic
goods are effects that are, or might be expected to be, realized by an institution (Smith 2009, 12–13), which differs from Dahl’s (2006, 8–10) approach in that his democratic criteria are opportunities for the realization of such effects. Smith specifies four democratic goods: (1) inclusiveness, the degree to which citizens of diverse social perspectives are involved in the decision-making process of the institution being assessed; (2) popular control of decision-making by the institution, which means control (by those participating in the institution) of its problem definition, its option analysis, its option selection and the implementation of the options it selects; (3) considered judgement by participants in the institution (G. Smith 2009, 25); and (4) the transparency of its process to all citizens, whether they participate directly in that institution or not. Smith’s second class of the goods ‘that we expect of democratic institutions’ (2009, 12) is institutional goods, which are those things that we expect of any institution. These fall into two subclasses: the efficiency of the institution and its applicability or transferability to the situation in which it must operate. That situation is defined by the type of democratic political system in which the institution must function, the scale of that political system (the size of the polity) and the type of political issue that is addressed.

We now review whether Smith’s democratic goods are goods that contribute to good democratic government. As democratic government is government by the people, good democratic government is good government by the people. This would seem to be not only good government in terms of its outcomes, but also good interaction among the people as they govern; that is, as they investigate, debate, discuss, consider, understand and choose those outcomes. Dahl (2006) has emphasized that in a democracy such interaction must express political equality among citizens. The democratic goods of an institution’s contribution to good democratic government might therefore be expected to be its contributions to both governmental outcomes and political equality, which are here called governmental goods and political equality goods. Smith’s democratic goods of an institution are therefore replaced here with its governmental
goods and its political equality goods. This replacement invites us to exclude Smith’s fourth democratic good, transparency, from both these new goods and transfer it to the class of institutional goods. This is necessary because the transparency of an institution cultivates trust in it and acceptance of it by all citizens; so an institution with this good has an essential element of transferability to democracies, which is one of the two subclasses of institutional goods. It should be noted here that institutional goods are not only goods of the institution but also goods of the institution’s contribution to government; because efficient, transferable institutions will make more contribution than those that are inefficient or poorly transferable.

The replacement of the democratic goods of an institution with its contributions to democratic government in the form of governmental goods and political equality goods requires consideration of what those goods are. To recognize governmental goods, the criterion used here is the public choice notion stated in §2.1, that a government is good if it produces a good provision of public goods. To judge whether this provision is good, Beetham’s (1992, 42) fifth principle of liberal democracy is used: The judgement is to be made by citizens. This seems just, because it is the people who need, use and ultimately provide or maintain public goods. As good government does a good job of providing public goods, it follows that it must be very democratic because it will provide or maintain those important public goods that comprise political equality. But the converse is not necessarily the case, for although a very democratic government will provide political equality this may not be sufficient for good government. Other public goods may be neglected, not least because political equality may give some (or much) political influence to citizens who are ignorant or excessively self-centred, in which case government outcomes might be improved by moderating this equality. One element of such moderation could be Dahl’s approach of specifying political equality as the opportunity for equal political action, rather than as the actual realization of equal political action.
As good government will provide political equality, it might be thought that we can delete political equality goods as a separate class and account for them as governmental goods. However, this is not done here because these two types of goods are significantly different. As discussed below, governmental goods are an institution’s capabilities to assist government to provide public goods of all types, whereas political equality goods are an institution’s capabilities to assist government to provide only those public goods that comprise political equality (four of which are identified below in 6.2.1).

This replacement of Graham Smith’s democratic goods of an institution with governmental and political equality goods is accompanied by changing the meaning of goods being realizations for participants in an institution, to being opportunities for realizations by all citizens, as conceived by Dahl (2006, 8–10). The exception to this is transparency, the only one of Smith’s democratic goods of an institution that may be experienced by all citizens of the polity (G. Smith 2009, 12). Governmental and political equality goods are thus contributions that an institution makes for all citizens, while it functions as a part of their government. Partial replacement of the democratic goods of an institution with goods that are an institution’s contributions to government also draws attention to what a government must do to perform well—that is, what it must do to make a good provision of public goods. Two governmental goods are suggested as necessary for this. One of them is a conversion of Graham Smith’s democratic good of the realization of considered judgment on public policy issues by the participants in an institution, which Dahl treated by specifying that democracy requires equal and effective opportunities for citizens to develop enlightened understanding. As with political equality goods, Dahl’s concept and term are used here for this governmental good of enlightened understanding because specifying it as an opportunity rather than as a realization makes it much more feasible for an institution to provide it to all citizens of a polity as it operates as a part of government. The other governmental good suggested here is that, as it is often the case that only
some of the citizens of a polity have enlightened understandings of a public goods issue, those understandings of some citizens should prevail over the ignorance of the others in the shaping of public policy. This good is here called the political prevalence of enlightened understanding. We now might note what may be a remarkable coincidence, or an admirable consistency, or a sneaky manipulation: Providing the two governmental goods identified here turns out to be the twofold strategy the People’s Forum would use to achieve its mission (see §6.1 and §6.1.5).

It was noted above that a good government must be very democratic because it will provide or maintain the public goods that comprise political equality. We can therefore drop the specific objective of designing an institution to produce good democratic government and simply focus on designing one to produce good government. We now inspect political equality goods, governmental goods and institutional goods more closely, to make sure that all goods in each class are covered.

6.2.1 Political equality goods
Robert Dahl (1998, 37–38; 2006, 8–9) gives the following five basic criteria for an ideal democracy:

1. Equal and effective opportunities for all members of the demos to communicate their views on public policy to other members, before the relevant policy is enacted (Dahl’s ‘effective participation’ criterion).
2. Equal and effective opportunities for all members to vote on enactment of policy (which includes equality of their votes).
3. Equal and effective opportunities for each member to learn about policy proposals (Dahl’s ‘enlightened understanding’ criterion).
4. Exclusive opportunity for the members to control the agenda.
5. Inclusion of virtually all adults and social groups as having these four rights as members of the demos. The inclusion provided by a political institution is the extent to which it provides both presence and voice to citizens of all social perspectives. Presence is active participation and voice is the
hearing afforded any participant, together with his or her influence over the output of the institution (G. Smith 2009).

It is suggested that Dahl’s third criterion of opportunities to gain *enlightened understanding* is fundamentally different from his other criteria, as it appears necessary for quality of participation rather than equality of participation. If Dahl’s equalities of participation (criteria 1, 2, 4 and 5) are to produce good government (a good provision of public goods), they must be complemented with a high quality of participation, that is, *enlightened understanding*. The availability of equal and effective opportunities for *enlightened understanding* is therefore considered to be a governmental good (as previously noted), while Dahl’s criteria 1, 2, 4 and 5 are considered to describe political equality goods.

In this section, then, we have replaced three of Smith’s four democratic goods of an institution (inclusiveness, popular control and considered judgement) with the following five goods of an institution’s contribution to government: four political equality goods (opportunities to communicate, to vote, to control the agenda and to include citizens of all social perspectives) and one governmental good (opportunities for enlightened understanding). The attention that this replacement gives to political equality implements Dahl’s (1998, 36–37) recognition that this equality is fundamental to democracy: ‘all the members are to be treated (under the constitution) as if they were equally qualified to participate in the process of making decisions about the policies the association will pursue’. In this statement, Dahl’s ‘as if’ indicates a concern for the justice of all members having the freedom or right to participate, rather than a concern that all members actually do participate. Consistent with this meaning, Dahl (2006, 10) later emphasized the significance of rights. ‘Democracy consists, then, not only of political processes. It is also necessarily a system of fundamental rights.’

As noted previously, Graham Smith’s democratic good of popular control of an institution is control over its problem definition, option analysis, option choice and implementation of the choice. Popular control of problem definition and op-
tion analysis are addressed here at the level of an institution’s contribution to government by the political equality goods of polity-wide opportunities to communicate views and control the agenda (Dahl’s criteria 1 and 4), while popular control of option choice is addressed by the political equality good of polity-wide opportunities to vote on enactment (Dahl’s criterion 2). The ingredient of political equality that is classed by Graham Smith as a democratic good of an institution but which is not explicitly provided for a whole polity by those three political equality goods is popular control of the implementation of policy choice, but this may be considered to be produced for the whole polity by those three political equality goods, as it should be effected, over time, by political pressure applied by citizens through their equal and effective opportunities to communicate views, to control the agenda, and to vote on enactment. The fourth political equality good of inclusion should also apply pressure for implementation.

6.2.2 Governmental goods

Opportunity for enlightened understanding was classified above as a governmental good, which means that the degree to which this opportunity is provided by an institution that is performing as a part of a system of government is not only a part of the value of that institution, but a part of the value of that government as well. As we have seen, a good government is one that makes a good provision of public goods. As it is the people who need, use and ultimately provide and maintain or dispose of public goods, it is only they who have the moral authority to decide what provision of these is good or bad. To do this competently they need to be well enough informed to be able to recognize public goods and assess their benefits and costs. So they need equal and effective opportunities to gain enlightened understanding of these goods. Such opportunities will therefore help produce good government, and as this makes a good provision of public goods, those of political equality will be well provided and that government will thus be very democratic. As indicated above at the conclusion of the opening part of §6.2, the provi-
sion of opportunities to gain enlightened understanding would essentially implement the first strategy of the People’s Forum, which is to accelerate the development of mass public opinion on strategic issues.

However, this governmental good is not enough to produce good government because opportunities for enlightened understanding will not ensure that all citizens, or even just a majority of them, are enlightened on every important issue, so the provision of public goods may be flawed (and as we have seen, in some cases such as public goods of long-term significance, very badly flawed) by the political influence of those citizens who are uninterested in, or incapable of, enlightenment on such issues. This problem is the third part of triple dysfunction, excessive compromise. There is, therefore, the need for a second governmental good from institutions: That they enable the understandings of relatively enlightened citizens to have much more political influence than the understandings of the others. It is therefore proposed that the other strategy of the People’s Forum, to have the ‘political influence of informed citizen opinion prevailing over that of less informed citizen opinion’, describes a second governmental good, which is here called the political prevalence of enlightened understanding. On its own, this good is antidemocratic because it allows some citizens a greater presence and/or voice than others, thereby blocking the political equality good of equal and effective opportunities for all social groups to be fully included in communicating their views, voting on enactment and controlling the agenda. If political prevalence of enlightened understanding operates in a government that is democratic, it is because democracy is provided, not by governmental goods, but by political equality goods. These create the conditions for citizens who are ignored by political prevalence of enlightened understanding to reject this situation, or to acquiesce in it, or to endorse it. They may attempt to reject or endorse by using their equal and effective opportunities to participate.

There may also appear to be a need for innovations to provide ‘defence against manipulation of the public interest’ (G. Smith 2001, 77), which would constitute a third governmental good.
However, this defence is essentially provided by the combined effects of the two governmental goods described above. Equal and effective opportunities for all citizens to gain *enlightened understanding*, together with *political prevalence of enlightened understanding*, should protect the democratic development of public policy from being distorted or blocked by special interests. Accordingly, the assessment of the provision of these two governmental goods by an institutional design must include scrutiny of its capacity to resist political corruption by corporations, by other powerful private interests and also by public authorities. The latter may have self-serving or ignorant agendas that they attempt to implement with manoeuvres such as co-opting citizens; exhausting their capacity to participate with lengthy, laborious or costly procedures; exploiting their emotive reflexes for narrow political gains; or using public funds to blind them with propaganda. It is concluded that we need only two governmental goods.

6.2.3 Institutional goods
Institutional goods are the desirable qualities we would expect of institutions in general, and as the institutions we are considering are to be parts of systems of government, then ‘institutional goods’ are goods that are contributed to government by institutions. Graham Smith (2009, 13, 26–27) proposes four institutional goods: one of *efficiency* and three of *transferability*. *Efficiency* is the degree to which the institution minimizes the costs it imposes on both citizens and public authorities, so it includes economy of time and effort for participants, as well as financial economy. The *transferability* of an institution for facilitating government is its ability to work in three contexts: the type of *political system* (its political, social, economic and cultural practices), the type of *issue* dealt with and the *scale* of the application of the institution, from local to global government.

As noted above in §6.2, one cause of failure in transferability might be a lack of transparency to citizens of how the institution works, which causes them to distrust and reject it. *Transparency* to all citizens is therefore considered here to be an insti-
tutional good of transferability to democratic political systems, rather than as a democratic good of an institution as in Graham Smith's classification. Another characteristic of an institution that affects its transferability to democratic political systems is the feasibility of introducing the institution. This is a crucial component of transferability because whether the institution functions depends entirely on whether it can be introduced into the existing democratic environment and run for sufficient time to generate a popular support that sustains it as a part of the political process. As deliberative democracy theorist John Parkinson (2006, ix) notes, proposals for deliberative institutions must show: ‘how to get to those end points from where we are now. Otherwise the dream of a genuinely deliberative democracy will remain just that, a dream’. The major determinant of feasibility of introduction in democracies appears to be whether the institution is a type that can be introduced by a private initiative or whether its introduction requires a political will that produces financial backing and executive action by government. In a democracy, such political will is usually much more difficult to develop than a private initiative, because while the latter may require the motivation of just a few people with the necessary money or technical expertise or other type of power, the raising of political will is likely to require the motivation of many thousands or millions of people. An adequate private initiative in this field might be to establish a small-scale version of the new institution that can later be expanded and converted to full-scale political application, or the writing and publishing of a book that describes the innovation and the case for implementing it, which motivates interest groups or individuals with the resources to run a polity-wide trial. Such a demonstration to the public may then develop political will that elicits support from government so that the institution is maintained, strengthened and introduced into other polities.

The obstacle of the difficulty of raising political will is partly created by politicians being averse to new institutions that significantly change politics because they are oriented to, self-selected for and experienced in dealing with the current political
system. Graham Smith (2005, 113) has noted that ‘public authorities lack the will, resources and freedom to embrace democratic innovations.’ Observing the US political environment, Gastil (2007, 646) offers a similar view:

Leaders in both parties … are likely to reject any serious threat to a status quo that both sides believe, in their hearts, favors their own party. Special interests accustomed to easy access to government will likely resist the idea with even more ferocity, and … there is no reason to doubt their power.

The Citizens’ Assemblies of British Columbia and Ontario illustrate some of the limitations imposed by the requirement that political will is needed to introduce an innovation. Although this requirement did not prevent that device from being introduced in Canada, it appears to have constrained its design and application to the extent that those Assemblies were made impotent. These constraints were that implementations of their findings were subject to both a referendum and a minimum 60% super-majority in that vote, if they were to change the status quo. In addition, the need for political will to instigate these Assemblies has, to date, constrained their application to an issue that citizens are very obviously distrustful of politicians handling — the issue of electoral reform. Citizens’ Assemblies provide a way for politicians to be seen to have that type of issue addressed without being suspected of corrupting the outcome.

It seems, then, that if an innovative political institution with potential for significant impact requires political will for its introduction, its feasibility of introduction is likely to be low, but if private initiative and funding is sufficient to introduce it, then this feasibility may be high if the design is promising in terms of its other institutional goods and also its political equality and governmental goods, for these features could make it attractive to potential private initiators.

The incentive given by a design, for all citizens to use it as a means of participating in democratic government, might appear to be another transferability good. As Graham Smith (2005, 113)
observes: ‘Citizens must believe that participation will make a difference… that the results of participation exercises are able to influence decision-makers… Citizens must be respected and given incentives (or a reason) to participate’. Whether a design is ‘open’, in that it allows participation in it by all citizens, or whether it is ‘closed’ to the general public, by restricting participation with mechanisms such as election or random selection, citizens’ *incentive to use that institution* is taken here to be the incentive they have to use it by approving it and expecting their government to sustain it and implement the policy choices it recommends. This incentive is not interpreted here as citizens’ incentive to use an institution by participating in it, because very few can experience this incentive with closed designs.

*Incentive to use the institution* should arise from ‘what most psychologists believe are the four core motives that influence our decision-making in social dilemmas… understanding, belonging, trusting and self-enhancing’ (Van Vugt 2009, 41). However, the degree to which an institutional design might evoke these motives may be judged by inspecting the institutional, political equality and governmental goods that have already been selected. The institutional good of *transparency* will produce trust and the institutional goods that address *strategic issues* at the *scale of large polities* in ways that work with the political system (political, social, economic and cultural practices) may foster understanding, belonging, trust and self-enhancement. Political equality goods (*communication between citizens, voting, agenda control by citizens and full inclusion*) and governmental goods (*enlightened understanding and political prevalence of enlightened understanding*) will also evoke understanding, belonging, trust and self-enhancement. Any assessment of citizens’ *incentive to use the institution* will therefore duplicate the assessments of these other goods, so it is not included as yet another good in this evaluative framework of political equality, governmental and institutional goods.
6.2.4 Evaluating goods of democratic institutions
The foregoing adaptation of Graham Smith’s evaluative framework changes the number of goods to be assessed from eight to twelve. Smith’s eight are his four democratic goods of inclusiveness, popular control, considered judgement and transparency, together with the four institutional goods of efficiency and of transferability to political system, scale and type of issue. The twelve that are now proposed comprise three sets: the first is a set of four political equality goods — those of inclusiveness and of opportunities to communicate, to vote and control the agenda; the second is a set of two governmental goods — enlightened understanding and its political prevalence; and the third is a set of six institutional goods — those of efficiency and five types of transferability to liberal democracies, which are suitability for those political systems, applicability to strategic issues, applicability to polities of large scale, transparency of the institution and feasibility of introducing it to the political system. This change from eight to twelve goods enables some of them to be more specific and may therefore make it more meaningful to try to judge how well each good is likely to be provided by a particular design for the government within which it is to function. Such judgement may be expressed by choosing a numerical rating for each good, and this is done below in §6.3 for the People’s Forum, with the results summarized in Table 6.1 (p. 287). This assessment is repeated in §6.5.2 for the goods that appear likely to be generated by three more designs, and all four designs are compared in Table 6.2 (p. 312). This comparison is a very simplified overview and must be regarded as only a rough indication of the relative promise of these four proposals. However, it is a comparison that may be systematically reviewed in three ways: by reconsidering how well each design might provide each good; by considering whether different goods should be given different weightings (Tables 6.1 and 6.2 assume that each is equally important); and by considering whether the evaluative framework itself needs changing. As emphasized above, this framework assesses provisions of goods that are ‘goods’ for all citizens of the polity, not just for those who participate in the
institution being evaluated. It may be tempting to favour a design that promises high provisions of goods that are only ‘goods’ for those who participate in the institution, but if the institution does not provide those goods for government, then it does not warrant such approval as its purpose is to assist the provision of good government.

The basis for this assessment of the People’s Forum is now prepared by describing its five major functions. Each description is followed with a subjective evaluation of the likely execution of PF strategies and the likely provision of goods by that function.

6.3 Five major functions of the People’s Forum

The five major functions that are now described give a broad account of how the People’s Forum should execute its two strategies and provide institutional, political equality and governmental goods. These five functions are: public deliberation of issues; public deliberation about what issues are deliberated; focus on basic or fundamental issues; meritocratic influence; and economizing cost and the effort required from citizens. At the conclusion of the description of each of these functions an evaluation is made of how well that function is anticipated to contribute towards the two strategies of the Forum and its three classes of goods. The strength of each contribution is indicated by ranking them as ‘very low’, ‘low’, ‘moderate’, ‘high’ or ‘very high’, and at the end of this survey Table 6.1 lists and adds up these anticipated effects on the Forum’s execution of its strategies and its provision of goods.

6.3.1 Public deliberation of issues

The People’s Forum would provide a slow process that allows years for public judgment to evolve. Its poll would be open for all electors to vote. This opportunity for voluntary participation should encourage citizens to publicly debate and deliberate the issues on the ballot paper, so that this paper becomes an agenda for those activities. The Forum would impose minimal control
over citizens’ deliberations as it would not facilitate deliberation by mediating individual discussions, and its agenda would be open to citizens’ suggestions for amendments while providing only basic information on the issues it presents. However, the agenda would aim to produce more considered judgements by the public by facilitating greater focus and continuity in the current processes of public argument and inquiry. It would do this with its selection and framing of issues, its incisive choices of questions and its consistent repetition of these over many voting events. Most of the changes made to the agenda would be to add new issues and withdraw others as they are resolved. Public discourse should be encouraged by the periodicity of the vote as this would give annual feedback to the people on what those who are engaged are thinking, why they are thinking that and how their views are changing. This should provoke and inform further reflection, enquiry, discussion, debate and the demand for accurate and relevant information. The People’s Forum poll would only be open for voting by citizens on the electoral roll of the state or nation, but as the process would be public and transparent, the whole community could contribute to the arguments, to the search for information and to the development of public opinion.

EVALUATION. The function of public deliberation would help to execute the first strategy of the People’s Forum, the development of mass public opinion. The strength of this is rated ‘low’ because of citizens’ confirmation bias (e.g. Haidt 2012, 89–90) and widespread political disengagement. The function would also assist (as a ‘moderate’ effect) the execution of the second strategy (producing political influence for the part of public opinion that is likely to be relatively well developed) by registering only the views of citizens who are interested in the issues treated by the Forum.

One institutional good of efficiency and four of transferability should be provided by this function. Efficiency (high) is provided by eliciting deliberation with a list of crucial questions rather than by the direct mediation of a myriad of debates and dis-
cussions. The four transferability goods that should be provided are: a widespread acceptability of this function by citizens in liberal democratic political systems (very high); its applicability to policy development on strategic issues (very high); the transparency of the deliberative process (high); and the suitability of this process for large-scale democracies (very high). This function would also provide the political equality good of opportunity for all citizens to communicate their views to each other (high). As it would contribute to both governmental goods it would also help to execute the two strategies of the Forum. The first governmental good would tend to be supplied (low) by the function providing more opportunity and incentive for all to gain enlightened understanding (noted above as the first strategy) and the second governmental good, political prevalence of enlightened understanding (noted above as the second strategy), would tend to be supplied (moderate) by the function producing a public recognition that the Forum registers (while also helping to develop) wisdom that is worthy of strong political influence.

6.3.2 Deliberating what is to be deliberated

The People’s Forum would assist deliberation of public policy by providing a forum not only for specific issues, but for debating at least three aspects of this process: (1) which issues should be run; (2) the most useful questions to pose on these; and (3) the scope of each menu of answers that is offered to voters. As the ballot paper would publish the People’s Forum menus of issues, questions and answers, these menus will always be open to criticism or endorsement by citizens. The voluntary voting of the poll will thus oblige its managers to preface the ballot paper with an invitation for citizens to comment on it and to suggest new issues, questions and answer options. Any controversy on such aspects of the ballot paper should lift the profile of both the poll and the issues it treats — and if such controversy is handled well by the managers of the Forum, then this should encourage more citizens to deliberate its issues and vote in its polls.
**EVALUATION.** As this function is an extension of the public deliberation function, it should also help execute both strategies of the People’s Forum (first strategy, low and second, moderate), which is also a provision of some of the two governmental goods of enlightened understanding (low) and political prevalence of enlightened understanding (moderate). Public deliberation of the agenda should also provide two institutional goods of transferability: transparency that will help generate the political will to maintain the institution (high), by making it attractive to citizens of liberal democratic political systems (high). This function also provides the political equality good of equal and effective opportunities to control the agenda (high).

6.3.3 Examining basics
Public polling expert Daniel Yankelovich (1992) has stated that public opinion on an issue often develops slowly over a long period, such as ten years or more for one that is complex. This may be an understatement, for it seems likely that the process may stall on issues where underlying assumptions remain unrecognized and/or unquestioned, as seems to have happened with racial equality in much of the US for a century after the Civil War. Illusions may therefore arise of public judgment having developed completely when a potential remains for it to be radically transformed by more thought and information. The long, slow and open-ended deliberation of the People’s Forum should be especially suited to such public examination of basic assumptions, ideology and world view. Its transparency to scrutiny by all citizens would help to raise new questions, evidence and insights. The ‘justification questioning’ referred to in §6.1.4 above and the other types of questions discussed in §7.2.2 (E11, E12, E13), should facilitate critical inquiry and help the public shake itself free of prejudicial hang-ups. It may be found that for some issues deliberation may never end, as each generation may want to think for itself and re-examine the foundations of its opinion. In such ways, the People’s Forum may help citizens reassess not only their public policies and laws directly, but also indirectly by helping them review and develop their values, world view
and culture. Slovic and colleagues (Kahan et al. 2006) have emphasized that culture is a crucial determinant of the quality of deliberation, so a positive feedback may take place in which the Forum’s fostering of public deliberation helps citizens improve their deliberative skills. Jackson (2009, 203) regards such cultural growth as crucial for our future, for example because ‘the cultural drift that reinforces individualism at the expense of society, and supports innovation at the expense of tradition, is a distortion of what it means to be human.’

**EVALUATION.** The focus on fundamentals in public policy should help execute both strategies of the Forum. This may only happen to a ‘low’ degree with the first strategy — facilitating the development of mass public opinion — because of the confirmation bias of citizens and the disengagement of many from politics. The effect on the second strategy is rated ‘moderate’ because as the Forum operates it is likely to produce a broad public realization that it focuses on fundamentals, which should create a public expectation that politicians be guided by its findings. The focus on fundamentals should promote the institutional good of **efficiency** of operation (high) by placing limited expenditure and citizen effort where it might be most effective in improving public policy. This focus also creates the institutional goods of transferability to fundamental or **strategic issues** (very high) for any **scale** of polity (very high). By laying out for inspection the fundamental policies that underpin other policies — those that are medium term (tactical) and short term (operational) — this function should enhance the **transparency** of public policy-making (very high). It should also contribute to the political equality goods of opportunity for citizens to **communicate their views** to each other (moderate) and to **control the agenda** (moderate). This function should also make a crucial but nevertheless faint (low) contribution to the governmental good of opportunities for gaining **enlightened understanding** (as discussed above for the Forum’s first strategy). And as discussed above for the second strategy, the focus on fundamentals should produce (to
a moderate degree) the governmental good of political prevalence of enlightened understanding.

6.3.4 An element of meritocracy
Meritocracy is often considered incompatible with democracy. As it is government by those citizens with the ability to govern well, many citizens are excluded, so government by ‘the’ people (in the sense of ‘all the’ people) does not appear to be achieved. Those citizens lacking the capacity or interest or time for this work are discouraged or prevented from participating, and the political equality at the core of democratic practice appears to be thwarted. However, as discussed in §6.2 (in its opening section and in §6.2.1), Dahl (2006, 8–10) defines this equality as equality of opportunity, or a right, rather than equality of action. To maintain this right we must be careful that a meritocratic institution does not prevent citizen participation but merely encourages those with the ability to contribute constructively to do so. Those who are not encouraged by a meritocratic design to actively engage should at least be encouraged by it to passively support its meritocratic function by approving it or acquiescing in it. Citizens may be inclined to do this if such a design allows them to become actively engaged at any time they choose, such as if they became concerned about political trends.

Conventional opinion polls have no meritocratic effect as they systematically sample whole communities. This sampling damages the competence of democratic governments with views that are ill-informed, as discussed in §2.4. The People’s Forum would limit this damage by using the self-selective sampling of voluntary voting to bypass views that are ill-informed due to disengagement. The Forum should thereby produce some of the governmental good of political prevalence of enlightened understanding, which may trouble those who emphasize the importance of political equality for democracy. However, as noted above, Dahl (2006, 9) specifies this equality as ‘equal and effective opportunities’ to participate politically, rather than equal participation by every citizen. The apparent conflict here may seem to be between good democracy (good democratic
government) and good government, but, as discussed in §6.2, there should be no conflict as a good government is a very democratic one.

Caplan (2008, 197–98) emphasizes that as voters tend to be irrational, an element of meritocracy is essential if democratic government is to work well.

A test of voter competence is no more objectionable than a driving test. Both bad driving and bad voting are dangerous not merely to the individual who practices them, but to innocent bystanders … Most worries about de jure or de facto changes in participation take the empirically discredited self-interested voter hypothesis [SIVH] for granted. If voters’ goal were to promote their individual interests, nonvoters would be sitting ducks. People entitled to vote would intelligently select policies to help themselves, ignoring the interests of everyone else. There is so much evidence against the SIVH, however, that these fears can be discounted. The voters who know the most do not want to expropriate their less clear-headed countrymen. Like other voters, their goal is, by and large, to maximise social welfare. They just happen to know more about how to do it.

The degree to which the self-selective sampling of a Forum’s poll will reflect more sophisticated views than opinion polls may be limited in the first few years of that Forum’s operation, because people who are concerned about public issues but do not value public goods or are ill-informed will vote along with others who are also concerned but more inclined to consider the value of public goods or are better informed. Across a succession of polls by the Forum, the encouragement that this process should give to broad public deliberation may succeed in increasing the sophistication of mass public opinion (see §6.3.1 and §6.3.2 above; also §7.2.2). However, any such deliberative effect is likely to be greatest with the section of the public that is interested enough to vote in the Forum’s polls, so this engagement should significantly differentiate these results from those of opinion polls. The meritocratic effect of the Forum should therefore occur in two
ways: (1) bypassing the opinions of those who choose to remain disengaged and (2) facilitating the development of the opinions of those who do engage. In addition to being meritocratic, the Forum may also slightly lift the sophistication of mass public opinion through the public visibility of the discourse that it fosters.

Any public disapproval of the meritocratic self-selection of the Forum’s voting should be moderated by awareness that self-selective voluntary voting is used by almost all liberal democracies to appoint presidents and representatives and by many for referendums. Acceptance and appreciation of this ‘elitism’ may increase with time, because as the Forum operates it will be compared with random sample opinion polls, which should help citizens recognize the danger of giving political influence to the apathy and ignorance expressed in the latter. This elitism may therefore come to be widely regarded by citizens as reason to accord special status and political influence to Forum polls, so that a low voter turnout (say, five per cent of those eligible to vote) does not impress citizens (and therefore does not impress their politicians) as a good reason to ignore their results and trends. To the contrary, low turnouts may be taken to mean that the results reflect only the views of those citizens who are really interested in the issues covered. Exposure of the general public to the Forum process should therefore slowly develop a public expectation that political representatives should be guided by its findings, which is the Forum’s second strategy. Of course, this potential for political influence will encourage special interest groups to mobilize their supporters to vote in the Forum and to produce propaganda to sway other potential voters to their point of view. This should help rather than hinder the public deliberation of issues, for such groups are likely to be opposed by others expressing different views and voting accordingly in the Forum’s polls. The Forum ballot paper should help guide these debates in constructive directions by its balanced descriptions of the issues and its choice of the most crucial questions for each issue.
Dogmatic personalities will be attracted to vote in the Forum, but this should give them more exposure to opposing viewpoints and information, for the Forum’s issue descriptions and questions would be designed to do this. Moreover, dogmatists, along with more reasonable people, will feel obliged to publicly engage with the arguments that oppose theirs. The Forum’s repetitive polling would prolong such discussions and arguments and help them stay focused over many years on specific questions by maintaining substantially the same agenda. In this situation participants will need to understand opposing arguments to see how they might improve their own to lift the vote for their view in future polls. The Forum may thus help dogmatists, as well as open-minded participants, to develop more reflective, informed and socially responsible thinking. However, especially in the early years of a Forum’s operation, some dogmatic people may reject it as an insidious evil because its questioning approach calls for openness, dialogue and exchange of ideas, which abjures their belief in faith. As political theorist John Dryzek (2006, 47) observes: ‘Those asserting identities may feel insulted by the very idea that questions going to their core be deliberated. What they want is instead ‘cathartic’ communication that unifies the group and demands respect from others.’ As discussed in §7.2.2 (E10) and more fully in Chapter 8, there are genetic and learned psychological limits to the loosening of dogmatic attitudes, but any achievements in this direction should help improve democratic governance.

The intention of the People’s Forum to bypass those who remain disengaged is not so much an attempt to ignore people who are alienated or demoralized, but to develop political influence for those who think about and want to express their views on public goods problems that are persistent and important — which includes the problem of alienation. The Forum may be able to help ameliorate alienation by sustaining a public discourse on what to do about it and by giving public-spirited citizens a platform for advocating the interests of those who are alienated (see Caplan’s view above). The operation of the Forum also offers the marginalized an opportunity to have a say
that is currently not available to them. It may even give them an incentive to do this, for if they hear that its polls ‘bypass the disengaged’ they may suspect this refers to them and rebel against this treatment by voting. Some of them may then discuss their views with others who also feel alienated and urge them to vote as well.

**Evaluation.** It is noted above that the meritocratic function of the Forum should give it political influence, which means that the Forum would be executing its second strategy — the development of political influence for that part of public opinion that is most likely to be well developed (moderate effect). The political influence that the Forum develops from its meritocratic effect should also help to execute its first strategy of developing mass public opinion as it should provide citizens with incentive to vote in the Forum and thereby to take more interest in the issues it covers (low effect).

The meritocratic function will produce the institutional good of **efficiency** (high) by enabling those who are not interested in democratic work (such as learning about issues and contributing to public debate) to leave this to those who are. A little of each of the political equality goods of equal and effective opportunities for members to communicate their views to each other on public policy (rated low), to vote (low) and to control the agenda (low) may be generated by meritocracy because the political influence it creates for the Forum should encourage all citizens to use it — by debating the issues it deals with, by voting in its polls and by reviewing its agenda. This incentive may not be generated in the first few years of operation of the first Forum that is run in a polity, but could develop as it becomes established and gains a reputation for potential or actual influence. A contribution to the political equality good of **full inclusion** (very low) will only be made if the Forum’s meritocratic function arouses the interest of hitherto politically disengaged citizens. Political influence from meritocracy should foster the governmental good of opportunities for enlightened understanding (the Forum’s first strategy) by encouraging citizens to vote
in the Forum and thereby to take more interest in the issues it covers (low effect). The direct effect of the Forum’s meritocracy is to produce the governmental good of political prevalence of enlightened understanding (anticipated to be a moderate effect, as indicated above for the Forum’s second strategy).

6.3.5 Economizing citizen effort

Any attempt to increase political participation by citizens must minimize the time and effort it demands from them (Beetham 1992; G. Smith 2009, 18–19). For the People’s Forum to work under this constraint, no more than one poll per year (after an initial year or two of more frequent polling to establish its public profile) seems both necessary and sufficient. Limiting the frequency of polling to no more than once a year may also allow time for public discourse to produce some change in the opinion that is registered by successive polls. Economy would also be produced by the Forum focusing on helping the public to indicate only the broad strategic directions in public policy, for this would leave the mass of detailed tactical and operational decision-making within these guidelines to politicians. The ‘economy of time’ provided by the design of the People’s Forum is further discussed below in §7.2.13 (E10).

**EVALUATION.** Economy of effort and time invites citizens to engage with the Forum and thereby assists it to execute its first strategy of developing mass public opinion. This is judged a low effect due to citizens’ disengagement from politics and their confirmation bias.

Economy would also produce the institutional good of efficiency (moderate) by minimizing the input required from citizens to make the institution work. It also helps to deliver the transferability goods of suitability for liberal democratic political systems (high) and feasibility of introduction (moderate) to these systems. Economy of citizen effort also helps to provide all four political equality goods: those of all citizens having equal and effective opportunities for communicating their policy views to each other (moderate effect); to vote (moderate); to control the
agenda (moderate); and to experience full inclusion (moderate). By minimizing the task for citizens, this function also fosters the governmental good of opportunities for them to gain enlightened understanding (low effect, as above with the Forum’s first strategy).

6.3.6 Summary of anticipated contributions by five major functions of the Forum

The contributions that are anticipated to be made by these five functions towards executing the Forum’s strategies and providing goods are listed in Table 6.1. The anticipated contributions are summed in the right-hand column by rating them on a scale of 0–5, where 0 means that the Forum cannot execute a strategy or provide a good and 5 signifies that it should be very effective in doing so. With the partial exception of the institutional good of feasibility of introduction (as discussed below), these ratings are assessed from the preceding summaries of functions in which anticipated contributions to strategies and goods are described as being either nonexistent or somewhere on a scale of very low to very high. Readers may, of course, give different ratings according to their interpretations of how well the Forum would perform. The ratings in Table 6.1 are later compared in Table 6.2 with goods ratings for three other institutional designs, to judge which might be the most promising to try out at an operational scale.

The preceding descriptions of the five functions indicate that the Forum may only do a patchy job of executing its first strategy—facilitating the development of mass public opinion on public issues of strategic importance. Those citizens who have some interest in these issues should be assisted by the Forum to develop their knowledge and opinions while the great majority of citizens may substantially ignore the institution, so the total contribution of the five functions to this strategy is given the low rating of 2. The Forum is given a high rating of 4 for anticipated execution of its second strategy (producing political influence for the section of public opinion that is most likely to be highly developed) because its meritocratic function may start to work
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategies of PF and goods that PF may produce</th>
<th>The anticipated contributions to PF strategies and goods by five major functions of PF</th>
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<td>1 Public deliberation of issues</td>
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<td>First Strategy</td>
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<td>Second Strategy</td>
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**GOODS**

**Institutional Goods**

| Efficiency of institution                    | high | – | high | high | mod | 4 |
| Transferability of institution               | v high | high | – | – | high | 4 |
| To political system (lib. dem.)             | v high | – | v high | – | – | 5 |
| To type of issue (strategic)                | v high | – | v high | – | – | 5 |
| To scale of polity (large)                  | v high | high | v high | – | – | 4 |

**Political Equality Goods**

| Communication                                | high | – | mod | low | mod | 4 |
| Voting                                       | – | – | – | low | mod | 3 |
| Agenda control                               | – | high | mod | low | mod | 4 |
| Full inclusion                               | – | – | – | v low | mod | 2 |

**Governmental Goods**

| Enlightened understanding                    | low | low | low | low | low | low | 2 |
| Political prevalence of en. un.             | mod | mod | mod | mod | – | – | 4 |

Table 6.1. Anticipated contributions to PF strategies and goods by five PF functions. * The anticipated total effect of the five functions on the Forum's execution of a strategy and on its provision of a good depends to some extent on the number of functions that contribute and especially on the expected effectiveness of each contribution. For example, all five functions should make some contribution to the good of enlightened understanding, but each is expected to be slight, hence the anticipated total effect is rated low, at 2 on the 0-5 scale described under §6.3.6. ** For feasibility of introduction see §6.3.6.
well after the Forum has been running for some time and has become widely understood by participants, commentators and the general public.

From the preceding descriptions of anticipated provisions of goods by the five functions, the Forum should do a good job with the institutional good of *efficiency*, so the anticipated total contribution to this by those functions is rated 4. Of the five institutional goods comprising transferability, applicability to *type of political system* (liberal democracy) is given a high rating of 4 because the Forum is expected to be welcomed into liberal democracies by their citizens as a continuation of the current trend for them to seek issue-based ways of doing politics that bypass ideologies and traditional party-based work. The Forum should also be effective in helping to manage *strategic issues* (5); and at coping with *large-scale* (5) polities such as state, national, multinational and potentially even global governance. *Transparency* (4) is rated high as the first three functions are expected to allow close public scrutiny of the Forum. The transferability good that is only slightly accounted for by this limited (see §7.1 below) selection of five functions is *feasibility of introduction* (3), but this is rated fairly high as the Forum’s design allows it to be introduced to a liberal democracy by private action, an approach that is discussed in general terms above in §6.2.3 and in relation to this institution in §6.4 and §7.2.12 below.

For political equality goods, the five major functions should provide good opportunities for all citizens to *communicate their views* to each other (4), to *vote* (3) and to *control the agenda* (4), but *inclusion* (2) will be poor as many citizens will remain uninterested in public affairs, especially the strategic policy that the Forum will focus on. The governmental good of opportunities for all citizens to gain *enlightened understanding* (2) should only be slightly provided, because of the disengagement of many citizens. The governmental good of *political prevalence of enlightened understanding* (4) should be well provided, if transferability is high, which appears likely.
6.4 Initiating and running the Forum

The potential ‘market’ for the People’s Forum initially comprises liberal democratic state and national governments. It might then be adapted to also serve in multinational and global governance. Its operation in liberal democracies may set examples that encourage publics under less democratic and even authoritarian regimes to press for its establishment in their polities. A government could finance a People’s Forum as an independent service to the public and in doing so may have it managed by an NGO or a private business to ensure that it is seen by the public to be free of government control. Several attempts to interest politicians in this system have indicated that they are unlikely to provide it unless citizens experience it, develop a desire for it and then urge their governments to fund it. A demonstration trial therefore appears to be a necessary first step for its implementation. The design of the Forum enables such a demonstration to be done without government support, so funds for this purpose might be sought from private sources such as philanthropic foundations, NGOs, citizens (via crowdfunding), opinion polling companies, media businesses, telecommunications companies or corporations interested in promoting their image or in improving government policy to create greater strategic certainty for corporate investments. A trial of the Forum could be initiated by an existing NGO or by a few citizens who formed an NGO for this purpose. Such a body would attempt to raise the necessary money and, if successful, this would be used to hire a small team of perhaps ten people to establish and run the Forum. As noted in §6.1.4, ‘issues of technology, risk and values must be distilled to their essentials and questions must be incisive and oriented to problem-solving.’ The management team must therefore include members with a good knowledge of political issues and with skills in issue analysis, in poll question technique, in the psychology of public deliberation, in business management and in information technology. This team would arrange for some work to be outsourced, such as advertising the polls and applying information technology, so that they could
focus on designing and compiling the ballot paper, on public relations, on supplying polling results and analysis to the media and on the overall management of the Forum. If the first year or two of the Forum’s operation generates positive public interest, this may start to develop political pressure for it to be accepted as a formal part of the apparatus of democratic government. If this pressure became strong, the state may take responsibility for funding the Forum, but its management must remain independent of government and entirely in the hands of its staff. The regulation of these managers would be done by public pressure, for if the People’s Forum acquired a public reputation for bias, or irrelevance, or some other serious defect then citizens will destroy it by not voting in it and by encouraging their politicians not to fund it and to ignore its results.

In the Australian situation, the island state of Tasmania should be a good laboratory for a trial as its physical separation from the rest of the nation gives Tasmanians a distinct sense of being in a position to influence their future. The size of the Tasmanian population, at half a million, should be sufficient for vigorous debate on fundamental, long-term issues. This state also has an extensive and continuing experience with very divisive issues so it should welcome a new way of approaching these. The cost of a five-year trial of the People’s Forum here, based on telephone and internet voting, free hard-copy plus website ballot papers and some advertising, may be around AUS$10 million. After five years such a test should be indicating whether the poll is starting to develop public acceptance as a political institution. During this period it may not have generated political influence, but may be raising anticipation of this, attracting increasing voter participation, facilitating public thought on key issues and showing trends in its voters’ opinions on the issues it treats. The initiation of such a trial might stage the first three polls at six month intervals, to generate publicity for the Forum and to quickly pass through any backlash vote in reaction to initial poll results. Subsequent polls may then be annual events.

An obstacle to such a trial in Australia is that the federal government is prevented by law from making its electronic
electoral roll available to private interests which are not legally authorized to use it. If a non-government group is running the trial, this would preclude the possibility of high security impulse voting as discussed above under §6.1.3, but this problem may be tackled by the Forum running a sequence of polls without serious voting security. If this relies on a website ballot paper without free hard copy, the cost of a five year demonstration may be around AU$5 million. This should enable the public to see the potential of the system, so if citizens then wanted it trialled as a functioning political institution, pressure of public opinion may elicit cooperation from the government, together with financial backing from this or other sources, to permit a fully operational poll. Once this was established and running successfully it may provide an example of public participation that attracts wide interest from around the world, prompting politicians or citizens to introduce the People’s Forum to other states and nations and possibly adapting it for international and global applications.

6.5 The People’s Forum compared with principles and designs for deliberative democracy

As the People’s Forum is designed for large-scale operation it has an overarching reach that could use input from other devices that operate with limited scope. Such limitations may be that these devices cannot treat a large number of issues at the same time; cannot facilitate deliberation of issues with fundamental or systemic impacts; and cannot include very large numbers of citizens in their deliberations. An example of a device that has at least the first and last of these limitations is the Deliberative Poll®, which is briefly described below in §9.1. This device could give some indication, each time it is run, of what an operating People’s Forum is likely to do for public opinion some years in the future, on one issue—if that one is not strongly affected by other issues. If Deliberative Polls or other devices of limited scope are deployed carefully for this forecasting function, they might produce effective publicity for the People’s Forum, helping it to attract more voters, to generate more public de-
liberation and to exert more political influence. Such deliberative mini-publics (which are statistically reliable samples of the population) could also assist a People's Forum by providing local, intensive sites of deliberation that contribute something to the broader development of public opinion, adding a little to the wisdom registered by the Forum. In return, People's Forums would assist the operation of such mini-publics by presenting state, national or global expressions of influential public opinion that they might be able to contribute to. Saward (2001) has proposed that cooperation between direct and deliberative democratic devices would improve democracy and Smith (2005, 112) observes that if ‘different innovations are able to increase and deepen citizen participation in different ways, then the creative and imaginative combination or sequencing of democratic innovations has the potential to improve the effectiveness of citizen involvement in decision-making processes’. Political scientist Carolyn Hendriks (2006, 499, 502–3) sees this as a necessity for deliberative devices, because ‘unless a micro forum is closely connected to its macro discursive setting, then it risks drowning in a sea of other public conversations.’ She therefore advocates an ‘integrated system of public deliberation’ in which ‘structured deliberative arenas work together with some of the more unconstrained, informal modes of deliberation operating in civil society’. As the People's Forum has the potential to encourage very large numbers of people to simultaneously deliberate a large number of fundamental issues it may provide the basis of such an integrated system.

6.5.1 The People’s Forum compared with principles for deliberative democracy and public management

As the People's Forum is a deliberative design, criteria for ensuring public deliberation in democratic government should help to indicate the Forum's potential to perform. Political scientist Archon Fung and sociologist Erik Olin Wright (2003) have proposed such criteria in the form of principles and 'design properties' of 'Empowered Participatory Governance' (EPG). Their first
principle is a focus on practical problems and concrete concerns of society at local levels. The People’s Forum has this focus but only in an indirect way as it is designed for systemic treatment, which means attending to fundamental causes of problems. The other two principles of EPG are more easily recognized in the design of the Forum and they call for deliberative democracy. They are: bottom-up participation and the deliberative generation of solutions. In addition to these three principles, the People’s Forum broadly follows the three ‘design properties’ of EPG. The first of these, devolution of power, would not be to local bodies as in EPG, but would go further, to citizens. The second design property, centralized supervision and coordination, is basic to the Forum as this is what its managers would do. The third, a ‘state-centered’ approach, to ‘colonize state power and transform formal governance institutions’ (Fung and Wright 2003, 22) is a crucial feature of the People’s Forum, for if it proved effective its popular acceptance would urge the state to enact the policy trends that evolve in its poll results.

Peter Levine, Archon Fung and John Gastil (2005, 273–74) have observed that within the community of political theorists advocating deliberative innovations for democracy, there appears to be broad agreement that any such device should:

1. have realistic expectations of political influence;
2. include key stakeholders and publics in deliberations;
3. foster informed, conscientious discussion working towards common ground;
4. use neutral, professional staff to help participants through a fair agenda;
5. earn broad public support for its recommendations;
6. be sustainable.

They also note (Levine et al. 2005, 274–77) that full consensus is often not possible but benefits flow from trying to develop it; that organization is vital; and that scale is important, i.e. scaling ‘out’ to reach as much of the public as possible as well as scaling
‘up’ to address concerns at strategic levels, such as state, national and global. Levine, Fung and Gastil (2005, 238) stress the importance of an open-minded, ongoing discovery of one another’s possibly changing values and interests, which we call dynamic updating… [P]articipants in productive deliberation should continually and consciously update their understandings of common and conflicting interests as the process evolves.

The People’s Forum appears to address all of these concerns to some degree. The specification of neutral, professional staff is met, not by providing facilitators and expert advice on issues for panels of citizens, but by having the Forum’s polls administered by professionally qualified staff who may consult with specialists on issues and on the content of the ballot paper, especially on the selection and description of issues, the selection of questions and the flagging of connections between different issues and questions.

Journalism scholar David Ryfe (2005, 59, 57, 63–64) observes that deliberation by citizens is episodic, difficult and tentative; that it is driven by feelings of accountability, by high stakes and by diversity of views; and also that it is facilitated by rules, leadership and learning by deliberating with others who are skilled at it. The Forum appears to accommodate or use most of these responses. Its facilitation of deliberation by rules, by leadership, and by deliberating with those who have such skills is attempted by the presentation of a well-designed ballot paper. Elizabeth Theiss-Morse and John Hibbing (2005, 243) emphasize that face-to-face deliberation is difficult for the general public, mainly because many citizens are uncomfortable talking about policy, lack interest in politics and are busy doing other things that seem personally more relevant to them. They make this observation from numerous focus groups on politics that they have conducted around the US and from ‘a careful review of the empirical evidence [which] suggests that many people lack the motivation to engage in civic life generally and politics specifically … joining groups is not a way of embracing politics but a
way of avoiding politics’ (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005, 244). The People’s Forum is designed to cope with this reluctance by not relying on meetings of citizens; by utilizing a poll to provide incentives to think about issues; and by designing the ballot paper to facilitate this.

Legal scholar and ex-chief of the Obama Administration’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Cass Sunstein (2002), has expressed concern that a tendency for people to discuss issues in like-minded groups or ‘enclaves’ creates extreme views. He notes that the individualization facilitated by wealth and technology divides communities because it helps people to associate with those who have similar views. For example, political blogs can create partisan communities who demonize each other. To try to prevent this, Sunstein (2002, 188, 195) suggests that the

trick is to produce an institutional design that will increase the likelihood that deliberation will lead in sensible directions, so that any polarization, if it occurs, will be a result of learning, rather than group dynamics … It is desirable to create spaces for enclave deliberation without insulating enclave members from those with opposing views, and without insulating those outside the enclave from the views of those within it.

The People’s Forum would work against such insulation by publicizing poll results that show not only the differing views of citizens but some of their reasons for these differences. This would invite the public to debate those reasons and deliberate on them, so that people either get closer to consensus or understand their differences better, which may help them to eventually agree that the majority should prevail. For more on polarization and how the Forum would tackle it, see E13 in §7.2.2.

A potential problem for any system of governance is the probability that incentive compatible devices (ICDs) will impair the cooperative dispositions of citizens (Orbell et al. 2004). ICDs are instruments such as laws or tax schemes that align the self-interest of the individual with the interest of the group. As
the framing of choices by these devices obviates the need for citizens to invoke ethical concerns about public goods, these concerns may atrophy or their development may be neglected (Frohlich and Oppenheimer 1996). This makes the fostering of ethical individual responsibility and the improvement of collective welfare difficult to combine in formal institutions (Frohlich and Oppenheimer 2003). Democratic institutions should therefore not rely exclusively on ICDs. The People’s Forum should not encounter this problem because it invites citizens to maintain and develop their social responsibility by involving them in devising and choosing ICDs. They would do this by contributing to the compilation of the ballot paper and by using the Forum’s polls to express themselves and to hear each other.

Brian Head and John Alford (2008) report that research and practical experience in public management suggests that the social complexity of ‘wicked’ problems requires that they be managed by wide-scale collaboration. They recommend that this be done with systems thinking that has an outcomes focus and also by ‘adaptive leadership’. Leadership scholar Ronald Heifetz (cited in Head and Alford 2008, 20–21) has described this as a ‘mobilizing of adaptive work’ in which the public manager

leads organizational members and/or stakeholders themselves in doing the collective work of identifying the problem and developing ways to deal with it. In effect, those who are led are asked to perform the shared leadership role of setting a direction (emphasis in original).

So those who are led are asked to lead, by ‘setting a direction’. This is the remedy suggested for democracies by the triple dysfunction hypothesis: that the people should become active, competent directors. The People’s Forum is designed to assist them to do this by facilitating their collaborative communication. Head and Alford specify that such institutions must build trust and commitment in stakeholders and other parties: the Forum may do this by being transparent, by being vulnerable to rejection by citizens and by making the execution of its policy
recommendations contingent on a general level of acceptance, as discussed below in §7.2.9.

6.5.2 The People’s Forum compared with other proposed deliberative designs

The People’s Forum is now compared with designs that are similar in purpose, as they are intended to develop public policy across the large scale of liberal democratic polities, mostly by means of enlightened understanding by citizens. As noted previously and discussed below in §9.1, many more deliberative devices have much merit, but as they do not aim for transferability to large scale they are not comparable with the Forum.

The comparison given below starts with descriptions of three previously proposed designs. Each description ends with an assessment of that design’s apparent capacities to provide the goods defined above in §6.2. In these assessments, suggested ratings of these capacities are given in brackets after the name of each good. As was done for the People’s Forum in Table 6.1 (p. 287), these ratings are on a scale of 0 (cannot provide that good) to 5 (very effective in providing that good). Of course, readers may give ratings that differ from those allocated here, according to their judgements of the likely effectiveness of the design in question. As emphasised above in §6.2.4 each of these ratings is the extent to which the institution is assessed to contribute a good to government, not the extent to which the institution generates that good for those who directly participate in the institution. A preliminary comparison of these three designs and the People’s Forum is given in Table 6.2 (p. 312). This comparison is then expanded with observations on five more design proposals.

6.5.2.1 The Popular Branch

The Popular Branch was proposed by legal scholar Ethan Leib (2004) as a mini-public that would enhance the representativeness of the US federal government and facilitate its policy development. This institution would comprise 525 citizens compulsory selected as a stratified random sample of all those US citizens
who are eligible to vote, and it would work in one location as 35 juries, each with 15 members also selected as stratified random samples (Leib 2004, 23) and which compare their deliberations in plenary sessions. The Popular Branch would consider issues nominated by citizen-initiated referendums (CIR) that achieved a response of at least ten per cent of US voters. Each issue would be deliberated for a few days with facilitation similar to that of the Deliberative Poll, including the presentation of balanced information on the issue being dealt with. The findings of the Branch would become law, so its establishment would require amending the US Constitution.

It would appear that as the Popular Branch deals with one issue at a time, it may be limited to producing findings at rates that may be much slower than one issue a week, depending on the complexity of the issue. This may be a bottleneck and could produce flawed conclusions by deliberating some issues before fully considering others that are strongly related to them. Another problem is the need for political will to establish and maintain the Branch. Leib (2004, 135) hoped that this would develop through citizens and politicians experiencing events such as Deliberative Polls, but he concedes ‘it is hard to expect politicians, who often feel they don’t have enough power, to delegate it back to the people’.

**Institutional Goods.** As the structured deliberation of the Popular Branch means that only one issue can be deliberated at a time, the agenda of issues to be deliberated in a given period, say a year, is a matter of public contention that calls for popular control, so CIR is to be used to select the issues to be treated. This limits efficiency (3) as CIR is very expensive: It now costs more than US$1 million to place a measure on a CIR ballot in California (Lupia and Matsusaka 2004). Leib’s design is based on the assumption that strictly representative samples deliberating in a structured manner are essential for enhancing democracy, a view that has also been expressed by political scientists James Fishkin and Cynthia Farrar (2005, 77): ‘The most significant challenge ahead is to find ways to adapt, institutionalize, and
take the deliberative poll to scale while preserving its defining elements. These elements include a large random sample of citizens and their systematic exposure to different points of view.

Random sampling creates a difficulty with transparency (2) that may produce low transferability to democratic polities: the people may not have faith in deliberations from which the vast majority of them are excluded. Deliberation must take place at lower as well as at elite levels in order to develop not only laws and policies, but the attitudes and opinions that are needed to sustain them (G. Smith 2003, 86). If fundamental changes in law and policy are to be supported over the long run by citizens, then those who choose to take an interest must be able to understand these changes and have an opportunity to influence them. John Parkinson has noted this legitimacy problem in schemes such as Leib’s and calls for

us to loosen the tight institutional restrictions some early theorists had inadvertently imposed on deliberative designs, allowing us to think about legitimacy as being created across multiple deliberative moments in a wider deliberative system… involving many more people in deliberative democracy than any one micro-deliberative process could ever manage, even though not all of them can deliberate in the technical sense. (Parkinson 2006, 174)

Another problem for transferability is a lack of feasibility (1) of introduction that arises from the need for political will to initiate and run the Popular Branch. Transferability to type of political system (4) is anticipated to be high as some form of it should be applicable to any liberal democratic culture.

The Branch’s restriction to handling one issue at a time is likely to cripple transferability to fundamental, strategic issues (1), because issues that are strongly related may be overlooked. The root causes of many problems with public goods will be neglected through attention to symptoms that are more apparent or urgent and thereby produce good responses to CIR. The selection of agenda items by CIR does not guarantee enough public deliberation on the selection and sequencing of items on the
agenda. On some strategic issues, competent policy may depend on the adjustment of popular values and priorities. At the very least this requires public deliberation, so the exclusion of citizens by the sampling that selects the members of the Branch will impede or block progress. The final transferability good is applicability to large-scale national government, which is high as the Popular Branch is specifically designed for this purpose.

**Political equality goods.** The random sampling of the Popular Branch provides virtually no extra opportunities for all citizens to communicate their views to each other on those matters it deals with. It also excludes opportunities for all citizens to vote on policy. In addition to deficits in efficiency and transferability, another effect of the financial cost of CIR would be to limit opportunities for popular control of the agenda. Inclusion of all socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural and other groups should be fairly well achieved by the stratification of the random sample.

**Governmental goods.** Opportunities for all citizens to gain an enlightened understanding of the issues being dealt with are largely absent in the Branch’s process. It appears likely that the special interests who manipulate the actions of elected representatives could also influence the politics of randomly selected representatives. As both types of representative are a very small fraction of the electorate, special interest operatives will be able to exert some influence on how they vote and who attains leadership positions within their assemblies. As journalist Jonathan Rauch (cited in Snider 2007, 4) observes, random sample panels ‘won’t be insulated from politics but will be insulated from accountability.’

The governmental good of the political prevalence of enlightened understanding would only be provided by the Popular Branch to a very limited degree. Although the publication of the considered verdicts of the Branch may give a little support and political influence to the views of well-informed citizens, the likely poor transferability of the Branch to strategic issues may
confuse any such support and influence on these fundamentals of public policy.

6.5.2.2 The People’s House
Political scientist Kevin O’Leary (2006) proposes a deliberative improvement of American national government through a much larger sample of 435 deliberating groups called local citizen assemblies, each of which has 100 randomly selected citizens who choose to accept the role. Members are limited to two-year terms and each assembly would represent a congressional ward in addition to its current representation by a member of the House of Representatives. Local citizen assemblies would conduct their business face-to-face, two or three evenings a month and they would be linked by internet, so that together they form a decentralized national ‘Assembly’ of 43,500 delegates. In the first stage of its establishment, as envisaged by O’Leary, this Assembly would not have formal power, but its deliberations and votes could inform Congress and the president. The agenda for the Assembly would be set by a national steering committee of 50 people randomly selected for a two-year term from 435 candidates, each of whom is nominated from each of the 435 citizen assemblies. Agenda items would be selected from the Congressional legislative program, with a focus on bills passed either by the House of Representatives or by the Senate and awaiting ratification by the other. As the whole national Assembly would have to deal with each legislative proposal at the same time, it would deal with a very restricted number of these each year.

Stage two of O’Leary’s proposal is the People’s House, which is the national Assembly after it is empowered by constitutional amendment to help set the legislative agenda and to have the capacity to veto bills passed by the House of Representatives or the Senate. The House of Representatives and the Senate could each override a People’s House veto with a 60 per cent vote. The People’s House would also have the ‘gate-opening’ power to force a floor vote on certain bills heretofore stuck in committee and destined to die. Other positive powers include the authority to
initiate bills in either the House or the Senate, the power to offer amendments to bills under consideration on the floor of the House or the Senate, the ability to pass formal instructions to individual representatives, and the right to draft at-large resolutions addressed to the House of Representatives or the Senate as a whole. (O’Leary 2006, 8)

The members of the citizen assemblies would receive $100 per month for their contributions and the 50 members of the steering committee would each be paid $75,000 per annum as their work would be a demanding and crucial job that may require full time commitment (O’Leary 2006, 159). The latter salary would help ‘to assure the integrity and honesty of these delegates when they are the focus of lobbying efforts by various interest groups’ (O’Leary 2006, 249n32). These remunerations total US$55,950,000 and this must be increased to more than US$60 million by the cost of support, including that of 25 technical and administrative staff.

O’Leary (2006, 113–26) summarizes the mission of the People’s House as giving a voice to the public, curbing the excessive influence of special interests, providing the public with a mechanism for breaking legislative deadlock and producing a fairer aggregation of electors’ preferences. Although the People’s House is designed as an addition to the US system, in some similar form it may be adaptable to other democracies, including parliamentary types and those with proportional representation from multimember electorates.

Institutional goods. The People’s House design provides moderate efficiency (3) in that its total financial cost of over US$60 million per annum is spread among all citizens (O’Leary 2006, 159). It may lose some efficiency by frustrating legislators, as discussed below under governmental goods. However, as noted there this loss may produce a governmental good.

Transferability to democratic political systems will be limited by the lack of transparency (3) to all citizens that arises from the random sample structure, but this may be compensated to
some extent by the large number of representatives, making them fairly accessible to citizens. Another limitation for transferability is that the feasibility of introduction (2) of the People's House depends on the development of the political will to create the legislation to establish the Assembly and then to amend the Constitution to transform it into the House. O’Leary (2006, 130–32) suggests that this problem could be overcome by introducing the system in just a few states, to start to develop a national political will for the Assembly. But even an introduction on this scale requires political will that may not be possible to generate (Gastil 2007, 646). Another difficulty for feasibility of introduction is that each prospective member of the national Assembly / People’s House is unlikely to have the incentive to ‘give up a good portion of their lives to seriously grapple with public policy issues’ (Snider 2007, 4) when they are only paid $100 per month and are merely one voice among 43,500, which in turn is a body that would only have some influence on legislation.

Transferability in respect of strategic issues (2) may be restricted because the Assembly / People’s House cannot simultaneously deal in a comprehensive manner with a multitude of issues. This is likely to cause crucial interconnections between issues to be neglected, including examinations by citizens of their own values and priorities. The national steering committee can only place on the agenda those issues that all 435 local citizen assemblies could consider as a national Assembly or as a People’s House in a period of a few months or a year, so a very restricted number of issues will be attended to annually. The tendency of the People’s House to focus on the current legislative program of Congress reinforces this effect. Furthermore, the random sampling of the House will do little to facilitate deliberation across the demos. The People’s House may therefore be rather blinkered, disjointed and inflexible in its deliberations. Symptoms of issues may be attended to while fundamental causes are ignored. Any such confusion of priorities in deliberation may limit the development of public opinion and culture, blocking the enactment of reforms that could work. This effect of random sampling is also noted below as producing a deficit
in the governmental good of opportunities for citizens to gain enlightened understanding. In contrast to this deficit, however, transferability to large-scale national governments in various liberal democratic political systems appears quite practicable.

**Political equality goods.** The Assembly/People’s House would provide some increased opportunity for all citizens to communicate their views to each other because the very large sample of 43,500 would attract public attention to their deliberations. This large number of representatives would also give citizens more access to these political agents, which should motivate citizens to communicate their views on policy, to both representatives and other citizens. Opportunities for all citizens to vote on policy are not provided by this design. Opportunities for all citizens to control the agenda are limited as their input must pass through the People’s House and then through the 50-member National Steering Committee, which is largely restricted to helping Congress set the agenda. Full inclusion of social groups should be achieved by the very large sample.

**Governmental goods.** As noted above, because the Assembly/People’s House design does not invite all electors to actively participate, it is unlikely to encourage many citizens to think more effectively about issues. This deficit of opportunities for developing enlightened understanding is likely to mean that the quality of the legislation and public policy that elected politicians can produce with the assistance of the Assembly/People’s House is somewhat limited by a lack of mass public support. The same defect is predicted above for the Popular Branch, but the People’s House should not perform as badly in this respect due to its much more widespread presence in the community. Even so, the 43,500 members of the People’s House may be limited enough in numbers to enable special interest operatives to distort or prevent the development of enlightened understanding (Rauch, cited in Snider 2007, 4).

Any disconnect between the deliberated views of the People’s House and mass public opinion may cause the veto power of the
People’s House to frustrate legislators in their role of representing mass opinion. This frustration may be wearing for legislators, despite their ability to overrule the People’s House with a 60 per cent supermajority vote, but these political struggles — arising from what might seem to be inefficient design — may cultivate two governmental goods. The first is some stimulation of public debate and education about the issues involved, which is taken into account by the rating of 2 suggested above for enlightened understanding. The second governmental good is some demonstration to citizens that their politicians should defer to the deliberations of the People’s House because it represents public interests more competently than the mass of citizens can manage via the political influence of their often disengaged and thus often ill-informed public opinion. This limited governmental good is a slight tendency for the People’s House to produce political prevalence of enlightened understanding (2).

6.5.2.3 Pyramidal democracy
In contrast to the addition of mini-publics to current representative systems by the Popular Branch and the People’s House, a quite radical change has been suggested independently by political scientist Stephen R. Shalom (2005; 2008) and mathematician Marcus Pivato (2009). Pivato calls this system pyramidal democracy and points out that a three-tier approximation to it is currently used for participatory budgeting in many cities in Brazil. He notes that it is not a new idea, having been discussed as early as the seventeenth century.

Pyramidal democracy is intended to completely replace current democratic provincial and national governments with several tiers of popular assemblies in which each tier is composed of representatives from the tier below. All citizens in a nation are invited to attend an assembly or ‘node’ (Pivato 2009) in the primary tier and each of these nodes would elect one member to represent it at similar-sized nodes in the second tier, which would likewise elect representatives to nodes in the third tier and so on, up to one supreme node that constitutes the top tier. This node performs the ultimate legislative and executive func-
tions and would be much larger than the lower nodes, having 100 members. Shalom envisages that the total pyramid of ‘nest-
ed councils’ would have 25–50 citizens in each council or node, while Pivato’s preference is for a minimum of seven and a maximum of ten citizens in each. These size restrictions are intended to facilitate interpersonal deliberation (whether face-to-face or online) but large size would minimize the number of tiers. The mathematics of this system is that seven tiers (with the first or primary tier comprising the nodes at the base) could serve a nation of 100 million citizens, if all nodes comprised 10 citizens or representatives (except that at the top, which would have 100 members) even if there were no age or other restrictions on eligibility to participate. Similarly, nine such tiers could represent ten billion people. If only one person in six were interested in participating in the primary tier, then eight tiers might govern the current population of the planet in this way.

Pyramidal democracy offers face-to-face or online deliberative participation to all citizens at the primary level and for many citizens at higher levels. Each representative is accountable to the node she represents, which can replace her at any time by electing another. Pivato specifies that node membership would be voluntary, with citizens choosing to enter a particular node according to the types of issues in which they are interested, whereas Shalom envisages geographical proximity as the determinant, to enable face-to-face deliberation. Node members would be free to choose whether to accept a new member, to expel a current member and to replace their representative in the tier above them. The operation of nodes on the basis of ideological affinity or interest in particular types of issues would be facilitated by deliberation conducted live online and by email, blogs or other types of ‘virtual forum’. Representatives in the upper tiers will have to handle many and varied issues so their work would be full time, requiring commensurate payment. These people will be very competent as their ascent through each tier will be based on personal assessments of their dedication and ability by fellow members of the nodes they have worked in. Pivato points out that this makes pyramidal democracy meri-
tocratic, as well as being deliberative and accountable to all citizens via the chain of communication in which representatives report back to the nodes they represent. He also points out the possibility that ‘cascades’ of representative replacements or defections could propagate up the pyramid, causing it to become unstable or collapse, but he shows that this could be prevented by constitutional provisions of mandatory waiting periods for replacing representatives, for allowing new ones to start voting, for allowing them to defect, for allowing defectors to start voting in new nodes and for nodes that have less than the minimum number of members to regain their minimum size.

Shalom’s design, which he calls ParPolity, uses the geographical basis of the membership of nodes to provide a pyramid that covers local and provincial affairs in its lower tiers and national or wider affairs in its upper levels. He recommends a ‘High Council Court’ that would prevent majority decisions unjustifiably harming minorities. This would be formed by randomly selecting 41 citizens for staggered two year terms. A system of Lesser Council Courts for each tier above the primary level would be needed to judge whether an issue should be decided at a higher level or not. As Pivato’s concept is for nodes to form around types of issue, his version may require separate pyramids for local, state (provincial), national and global issues. Attending more than one of these pyramids might make the citizen’s task too onerous or unfocused so they may choose to specialize in just one level of government. Coordination of policies between these levels and pyramids may cause problems. With Shalom’s version, citizens interested in the broader policy of higher level tiers may find it difficult to start deliberating such national or global policy in primary level nodes as these could be focused on local issues. While Shalom’s system appears confusing for citizens, Pivato’s may also overload them with the problems of coordinating the policy work of different pyramids.

Pyramidal democracy needs a clearer formulation and the following assessment is primarily an attempt to evaluate Pivato’s version. The ratings given below for the goods of pyramidal democracy are therefore especially questionable.
Institutional goods. Pyramidal democracy will lack efficiency (3) by demanding much time from citizens, but this problem may be alleviated to some extent by this system eliminating the expense of the formal institutions of electoral democracy, together with the work of party members (such as supporting electoral campaigns) and advisors for politicians. Efficiency may be assisted by the large numbers of enquiring and deliberating citizens increasing the demand for information that is relevant and accurate. This may convert professional lobbying from spin and trading favours to providing reliable information for node members and the general public.

Pivato’s system may have a deficit of transferability to democracies if its long chains of responsibility impair transparency (2) for citizens at the bottoms of pyramids. These chains may be further complicated by the need to coordinate policy between several pyramids that focus on different spatial scales of jurisdiction, from local to national and global, and also on different temporal levels of policy, from operational to strategic. Low feasibility of introduction (1) is another transferability problem because the introduction of pyramidal democracy appears to require a very strong demand across the community that would generate the political will to introduce it as an official system that could replace the current legislature of elected representatives. Pivato suggests that this popular demand may be developed by implementing the pyramidal system in an incremental, experimental manner that should educate citizens about its potential and prevent failure of governance at large scales by uncovering flaws before the pyramid is applied to regional or national government. He sees the political will for pyramidal democracy as starting in ‘micropolities’ such as student groups, private clubs and professional associations. However, such groups show no sign of wanting the complexity of the chains of representation of multi-tiered pyramids. Perhaps the narrow focus of their interests makes this not only unnecessary, but an encumbrance.

Another transferability problem is that their long chains of responsibility may prevent pyramids from considering enough policy problems in a given period to enable them to be com-
petent on strategic issues (1). This could be a major flaw, for as pointed out above, many issues are interrelated and should therefore be deliberated in a coordinated manner, such as simultaneously, or in a specific sequence and also with feedback that helps citizens to update their thinking as their opinions on related issues are developed. In order to deliberate strategic issues, nodes may have to follow an agenda that applies to a whole pyramid and possibly across more than one pyramid. This would enable upper-tier nodes to introduce topics to all lower tiers when upper-level deliberations reveal needs for the grassroots to consider questions they have overlooked, such as citizens having to pay more taxes or change other expectations in order to enable the implementation of new policy that may be identified and favoured by an upper tier or by one pyramid. This problem of the transferability of a pyramidal system to strategic issues is discussed further in the next section (§6.5.2.4), which analyses a proposal by the Nicolas Berggruen Institute on Governance. Although the relatively simple three-tiered pyramid that was developed for participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, works well, it is a tool for operational rather than strategic policy, being applied to annual budgets.

Pyramidal democracy is potentially transferable to large-scale (5) national, multinational (and potentially global) liberal democratic political systems (4). However, it seems questionable whether communication through long chains of delegation and between pyramids can produce good accountability, and this is registered above in the low transparency rating.

Political equality goods. Pyramidal democracy would give citizens more opportunity to communicate their views (3) to other citizens across the polity than electoral democratic systems. This is due to the possibility of communication within nodes, between tiers and then across tiers (between the nodes in a tier) as representatives report views up to the next one and then back down to nodes in lower tiers for deliberation. These effects would be supported by nodes in upper tiers analysing and publicizing policy problems, because these groups would
be professionally remunerated and would have the time and facilities to do this. However, communication between pyramids might confuse citizens with too much information.

Citizens have restricted opportunity to vote on policy (3), as voting for all citizens is limited to their participation in either a primary level node or a higher tier node as a representative. Representatives can only vote in the node in which they represent a lower tier node: they cannot vote in the node they represent. The long chains of responsibility may create difficulties for popular control of the agenda (3). Voluntary membership of nodes, together with the obligation to attend meetings, may prevent full inclusion (3) of all socioeconomic and other groups, despite the freedom of each node to form around interests that its members have in common. Experience with participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre indicates that inclusion will not be achieved in each pyramid, as nodes that deliberate strategic or high level jurisdiction issues will tend to be dominated by politically active middle-class citizens (G. Smith 2009, 69–70).

**Governmental goods.** Membership of nodes may provide opportunities for all citizens to gain enlightened understanding (3) that are limited by the small size of these groups. Polarization is likely when nodes form around common interests. This may happen in the lower tiers and produce standoffs in upper tiers so their members vote rather than deliberate. Pivato (2009, 19) anticipates that such clashes of views would counter polarization as representatives report back to their nodes in subordinate tiers, but this reciprocating process may be too time-consuming and indirect for much educational effect and could discourage participation. Nodes at the lower levels may be too short-lived or changeable in their membership to be able to make well-considered judgements and to be consistent in their decisions. This could make it difficult for higher-tier members to represent lower tiers. The potential for very large numbers of participants assists enlightened understanding because it makes the manipulation of public opinion by special interests potentially very expensive and increases the probability that such corruption will
be exposed to public censure by the many citizens that are trying to contribute constructively as members of nodes.

The meritocratic function of pyramidal democracy may produce political prevalence of enlightened understanding (4). The likely problem of lack of transferability to strategic issues may limit the utility of this meritocracy by limiting its enlightenment, but this is registered by the low rating given to transferability to strategic issues.

6.5.2.4 Comparing the four designs and observations on five more

The ratings that have been suggested above for anticipated provisions of goods, together with those suggested for the People’s Forum in Table 6.1, are compared in Table 6.2. As indicated in §6.2.4, these ratings and also the evaluative framework into which they are entered are not intended to be the last word, but are presented for consideration, which may elicit alteration or endorsement of the ratings, or allocation of different weights to each one, or alteration of the framework itself. One rating that might need closer attention is the institutional good of transferability to political system. For simplicity, the system considered here for this comparison is ‘liberal democracy’, which ignores the different political, social, economic and cultural characteristics of each type of liberal democracy. If the comparison between institutional designs was to be made for their suitability for, let us say, Australia, then the characteristics of that liberal democracy should be considered in choosing the rating for transferability to political system for each design. Another point to note here is that Table 6.2 gives two sets of total scores—a complete one and another that has the ratings for feasibility of introduction omitted in order to compare the potentials of the four designs without the complication of also considering whether they could actually be introduced into the political system that is being considered.

The People’s Forum ranks here as the most promising of these designs, with a total score of 44 that also includes the highest rating for feasibility of introduction (3). Another feature of this
### Table 6.2. A comparison of goods anticipated from four institutional designs.  
* The ’goods’ in this table are the capacities of institutions to facilitate large-scale government on strategic issues in liberal democratic political systems. Differences in the importance of types of goods are not identified (they are not weighted). The capacity of each institutional design to produce each good is subjectively assessed on a scale of 0-5 in the descriptions of these designs in this chapter (§6.3 and §6.5.2).

** For the ratings of goods anticipated from the People’s Forum, see Table 6.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of goods</th>
<th>Anticipated provisions of goods* (0 = no provision, 5 = very effective provision)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Popular branch</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Added to electoral democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compulsory random sample</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>Efficiency of institution</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transferability of institution</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To political system (lib. dem.)</td>
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<td>To type of issue (strategic)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To scale of polity (large)</td>
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<td>Transparency</td>
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<td>Political Equality</td>
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<td>Full inclusion</td>
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<td>Governmental</td>
<td>Enlightened understanding</td>
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<td>Political prevalence of en. un.</td>
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<td>Total goods</td>
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assessment is that the designs based on self-selected participation (pyramidal democracy and the People’s Forum), which are thereby open to participation by all citizens, have the highest total scores. The other two designs have restricted participation because they employ random samples, which tend to produce lower capabilities in political equality and governmental goods.

We now consider five more designs that might be comparable with the four dealt with above because they also have a scale of application that might facilitate the development of strategic policy for liberal democratic governments. These systems are: sortition, Intelligent Governance, the National Public Policy Conferences of Brazil, the Council of Citizens and the ‘Cincinnati’ system. Sortition is the appointment of political representatives by random selection from the populace (instead of by election, as discussed in, for example, Burnheim 1985 and Burnheim 2016). This system could allow constructive face-to-face deliberation by representatives because the absence of electoral pressures would free them for frank exchanges of views and information. However, this potential for deliberation at the top may be distorted by special interests being able to manipulate representatives because of their limited numbers, a problem that would also occur with the random sampling of the Popular Branch and the People’s House. Furthermore, as intensive deliberation would largely be confined to representatives in these random sample systems, they may not generate much enlightened understanding in citizens at large. As sortition systems would replace electorally representative systems of government, their establishment would be stymied by a lack of political will for this in elected representatives. Sortition therefore has a low feasibility of introduction that makes it a currently impractical prospect and partly for this reason it is omitted from Table 6.2. If the ratings total for goods, excluding feasibility of introduction, that is assessed for sortition indicates it should be trialled as a full-scale political system, then this may require another innovation with higher feasibility of introduction to be implemented first, in order to establish a new type of elected government that is more capable of considering whether it should replace itself.
rescuing democracy

with randomly selected representatives. The selection of this preliminary innovation might utilize the comparative framework employed in Table 6.2.

Intelligent Governance (IG) has been proposed by Nicolas Berggruen and Nathan Gardels (2013). This ingenious but complex proposal is not added to the comparison of four designs in Table 6.2 because it is primarily based on pyramidal democracy and thus appears likely to generate goods largely as assessed for that system in §6.5.2.3. In the example of IG given by Berggruen and Gardels, the peak of the pyramid would be a lower house of 100 representatives that is likely to be relatively free of the problems that are generated or exacerbated by party allegiance, such as antagonism, dogmatism, deception and governmental deadlock. An executive, or head of government, is elected by the lower house and he or she nominates a four-member collective head of state — the Quadrumvirate — for confirmation by the lower house. The executive, the Quadrumvirate and the lower house jointly appoint forty distinguished or otherwise well-qualified members of an upper house of fifty, the other ten being selected from the citizenry by sortition in order to counterbalance the expertise of the appointed forty with the views of the general public. These various organs of government interact with several veto and supermajority rules. For example, the Quadrumvirate could call mandatory-voting referendums in which a 60% supermajority would bind the government to implement the result.

IG is intended to produce a strong element of meritocracy as it is structured to make citizens more accountable to the common good, representatives more accountable to citizens and to facilitate deliberation by these principals and agents. However, the complexity of the system may obstruct their accountability and deliberation. For example, public deliberation is expected to be encouraged by the proportional representation employed at the base of the pyramid, in which local districts of 2,000 constituents each use STV (the single transferable vote) to elect ten delegates to form a council that represents them. This should enable minority interests that are as small as a tenth of the electorate
to have a representative explaining their views in most of the ten member councils at the first or local level. However, these minority views are liable to be overlooked as representation proceeds up the pyramid, so that the proportional representation achieved at the base may be lost at the apex. In Berggruen and Gardels’ example of a government for a nation of eighty million people, local councils elect one of their ten members to represent them in a twenty-member council at the regional level, which in turn elects one of its members to represent it in a twenty-member council at the provincial level, where one hundred provinces each elect a member to a hundred-member lower house of the parliament/legislature. At each stage of this pyramidal representation, minority views will tend to be supplanted by mainstream attitudes. At the local level, one or two members of a local council may be quite unable to convert the other nine or eight members to minority views that pose radical, or subtle, or complex challenges to existing assumptions and world views. For example they would find it extremely difficult to promulgate (within their local council) the anti-growth or steady-state economy propositions discussed in Chapter 5, or the suggestions in Chapter 4 of providing employment by sharing it rather than by growth (§4.2.1) and of limiting national population to an optimal carrying capacity (§4.2.3). To introduce such strategic issues they would need an expert grasp of the arguments for and against their view, superb communication skills, an understanding of—and empathy for—conservative psychology and also (probably) the support of a social environment in which such paradigm change was being constructively discussed in the media. ‘Expert grasp of the arguments’ is likely to be lacking in advocates, whether they are progressive or conservative, as people often do not analyse their case effectively. They are usually motivated by emotions and then rationalize their cause with ‘evidence’ selected by confirmation bias (e.g. Haidt 2012; Kahneman 2011).

Strategic challenges to existing assumptions and habits of thinking are therefore unlikely to gain the understanding and support of local councils. If a few local councils in a region are
won over by such challenges and send a few motivated and articulate delegates to explain their unconventional views at their regional council they will face similar difficulties there, which may be even less surmountable as that council has twice as many members as a local council. In the improbable event that one or two regional councils send delegates with paradigm-changing views to their provincial council, they will strike the same problem there. The odds therefore seem to be heavily against the provinces sending delegates representing such views all the way to the lower house. The national parliament may therefore work in ignorance of important minority views and thereby help to conceal them from the community at large. This could be a crucial problem as important calls for change are usually initiated by very small minorities, and if societies are to rapidly adapt and progress they need political systems that quickly and effectively expose such strategic ideas to public scrutiny. As the anthropologist Margaret Mead is reputed to have observed: ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.’ The political system should facilitate rather than obstruct that process, which means it should proportionally represent the various streams of political thought at the most visible and prominent levels, which are provincial and national legislatures. Rather than utilizing pyramidal democracy, such representation might be better pursued by electing members of parliament or congress from multimember electorates via proportional representation such as STV. Sortition might also do this if it selects a legislature that is large enough to include significant numbers of representatives with minority views.

It was noted above in §6.5.2.3 that the election by council members of one of their number to represent them at a council in the next level of a pyramid should produce the meritocratic effect of selecting representatives for high levels that are competent and public-minded. In addition, Berggruen and Gardels (2013, 111) explain that the ‘reason for this indirect approach to electing a parliament/legislature through a pyramid structure is to remove the distance between the representative and rep-
resented at each level.’ However, as just discussed, pyramidal representation may increase this distance — if it is thought of as ‘policy distance’ — because representation at all levels above the base in an IG pyramid is not proportional. Thus, instead of removing policy distance between represented and representative, this distance may increase up the pyramid, which will obstruct the development of strategic policy by neglecting potentially important innovations in policy.

Notwithstanding this potential for weakness, IG appears to be making some progress. It has raised considerable interest and preliminary moves are being made towards erecting some elements of its structure. Berggruen may be overcoming the low rating of 1 suggested in §6.5.2.3 for the feasibility of introduction of pyramidal systems with his financial resources, his ability to involve influential politicians, entrepreneurs and academics, and a judicious selection of three very prominently dysfunctional governance systems for the development and trial of IG. These three cases are the State of California, the European Union and the global group of twenty leading economies, the G20. Those cases are being tackled by committees that select institutional reforms from the IG template and then try to implement them. Starting with such prominent dysfunctions appears to be a good strategy for establishing IG, as it should give it the best chance of being operationalized and of demonstrating its capabilities to a global audience. If IG succeeds with these cases it may gain a reputation that invites its application to other failing forms of governance.

IG has a wider objective than PF as it aims to reform government structure at all levels, from base to apex. PF focuses only on the base — the opinions of citizens — and should therefore be able to help IG to function. At that level, the strategic focus of PF should provide a capacity to review policy paradigms. One possible example of this is that PF might be needed to generate the popular support within a polity that is required to establish IG in the first place. Another effect of these differing foci is that the IG objective of reforming all levels makes it more complex than PF. Citizens may therefore find PF easier to understand and em-
braces. Its more limited focus also positions PF to produce a simpler form of government than that specified by the IG template. This simplicity may prove crucial in making democracy work well, for it should maximize the transparency of incentives and lines of responsibility, which in turn should strengthen the accountability of representatives to citizens and of citizens to their common good. A hypothetical example of the potential for PF to produce simplicity, clarity and strength of operation is that its implementation in bicameral democracies might produce a review or guidance function that makes the upper house or senate superfluous and enables it to be abolished because PF is doing its job — and more. If that structural change was combined with election to the lower house by proportional representation from multimember electorates the result would be a unicameral parliamentary government with strong public participation, more deliberation by citizens and representatives, effective representation and accountability and a significant element of meritocracy. For this scenario it is notable that political scientist Arend Lijphart (2012, 279, 297) has found that parliamentary governments based on proportional representation produce ‘consensus democracy’, which provides significantly higher quality democracy than non-consensual types. To assess ‘quality’ Lijphart used the democracy index of the Economist Intelligence Unit and the Worldwide Governance Indicators. He observed that consensus democracy is promoted by coordinated or ‘corporatist’ interest group systems that utilize strong peak organisations and aim at compromise and concertation. It is arguable that, as PF would facilitate such coordination, compromise and concertation by sustaining public debate on crucial strategic issues, it should make democratic governments more consensual, even if they do not have proportional representation. PF may thereby act as a ‘peak organisation’ that improves government.

In addition to Brazil’s participatory budgeting (see §6.5.2.3) that country also has another pyramidal process working successfully on national issues — the National Public Policy Conference (Pogrebinschi and Samuels 2014; Pogrebinschi 2012). The first of these was held in 1941, on public health, but only
in recent years have they become frequent, with 83 being held over the period 1992–2010 on a variety of subjects. The pyramidal structure of these conferences enables citizens and public officials to deliberate issues together and to deliver their policy recommendations to the national government. Although non-binding, these recommendations have been found to make significant contributions to legislation and government policy. Each conference begins at the municipal level, with meetings in hundreds or thousands of cities simultaneously across the country, which are open to any citizen and develop ideas on policy for one issue. Representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) and government agencies also participate. Each municipal conference selects a delegate to its state conference and these appoint delegates to the national conference. The rules typically require that a majority of voting delegates to both the state and national conferences come from CSOs. The largest NPPC was the 14th, on health in 2011, which had 600,000 participants. Between 2003 and 2011, about 7 million people took part in at least one of these events, making them by far the largest experiment with such practices in the world. The formal summoning of NPPCs is by presidential or ministerial decree, but the initiative usually comes from a collaboration of government officials and key CSO representatives. The NPPC system appears to be a considerable improvement in democratic government, but it has a narrow policy focus (on just one issue or type of issue at a time) that leaves much space for the People’s Forum to work alongside it by dealing with the entire spectrum of strategic issues in a coordinated manner.

The chair of Common Good in New York, Philip K. Howard (2014, 168–70, 182–83), has proposed that nine people of ‘high distinction’ should serve five year renewable terms as a US ‘Council of Citizens’. This would issue reports on the long-term implications of current policy and its members would be chosen ‘by and from a Nominating Council composed of two nominees by each governor of a state.’ The Council of Citizens would ‘have no mandatory duties other than to nominate independent commissions to advise Congress on the rewriting of laws. Con-
gress shall provide funding adequate to support staff and shall provide an honorarium to each member of the council in an amount equal to the salary of a member of Congress.’ Howard anticipates that the ‘absence of any political ambition or obligation’ by these councillors should give them credibility and that this would be heightened when most of them ‘come together behind a cogent point of view’. Two problems with this proposal are: first, that getting the Council up and running depends on the existing political establishment wanting to do this; and second, that as it is not designed to foster public deliberation it may do little to help politicians adopt more enlightened views.

The ‘Cincinnati’ system has been proposed by two Australians, palaeontologist/environmental scientist Tim Flannery and entrepreneur/philanthropist Catriona Wallace (2015). They suggest that politics would address issues more honestly if political parties (which are organised around candidates seeking votes and funds for campaigning) were replaced by web-based chat rooms that help citizens debate issues and recognize those amongst them (called ‘Cincinnati’) who are worthy of election to parliament. Flannery and Wallace cite Podemos in Spain and DemocracyOS in Argentina as examples of such open-source, platform-first (rather than party-first) approaches to politics. The Cincinnati system does not depend on support from current political establishments, but it may require too much work from chat room participants and thereby fail to sustain engagement by enough citizens. This may mean not only that its feasibility of introduction is virtually zero but that its ability to keep operating is doubtful. Furthermore, as the agendas of the chat rooms are not organised by some publicly accountable entity, their work may be largely wasted by addressing superficialities instead of systematically tackling strategic aspects of public policy.

6.6 Perspectives on the promise of the People’s Forum

The promising result for the People’s Forum in Table 6.2 (p. 312) may (or may not) be exaggerated because its functions are more
closely inspected than the functions of the other three systems. From this or other perspectives, the reader might prefer to allocate different ratings with less optimistic views of the Forum and/or more optimistic views of the other contenders. However, an argument against such preferences is the possibility that the Forum performs well in Table 6.2 because of its two strategies for improving democratic government (those of helping mass public opinion to develop and of inviting the public to give political influence to that section of mass opinion that is most likely to be well-developed). Pyramidal democracy would also tend to execute these two strategies and ranks second here with a score of 35, whereas the designs of the lower-ranking Popular Branch and People's House are not strongly focused on those objectives, mainly because they employ random samples and thereby have less potential for public participation.

The second of the Forum's two strategies is very significant because, as discussed in §2.2.3, §2.2.4, §4.1 (8) and also later in Chapter 8, public disengagement and the tenacity of world views makes the first strategy (the development of mass public opinion) very slow to have much effect. Diana Mutz describes some of the disengagement as being caused by people wanting to avoid risking their relationships. This means that it is questionable whether conversation alone is the best route to exposing people to oppositional political views… Deliberative theorists… have not gone so far as to suggest in concrete terms how people might interact with one another in mixed company, and yet simultaneously pursue active lives as political citizens… Clearly not all citizens feel they can speak their minds freely without repercussions for their public or private lives. And yet the goal of reducing risks, both individual and collective, is an extremely valuable one that has yet to be incorporated into political theory or practical politics. (Mutz 2006, 144, 149, 151)

The design of both the People's Forum and pyramidal democracy address this challenge of specifying ‘in concrete terms’ how citizens might minimize collective risks by conducting more
active political lives that minimize individual risks. Both designs attend to this by providing sites of political influence that should build the ‘diverse networks’ advocated by Mutz (2006, 150): ‘Only when ... [we have] the ability to build and maintain diverse networks, and to evaluate and promote ideas through them—will the metaphor of a marketplace of political ideas ring true for American political culture.’ In a similar vein, two scholars of nonprofit organization, Mark Moore and Jean Hartley (2008, 19), state that ‘the most important problem facing the public is discovering itself and identifying its own true interests. We argue that this challenge will only be solved by more practice with, and innovation in, the processes of democratic deliberation itself.’ These views are consistent with those of Ian Marsh. In discussing a perceived decline of democratic governance in Australia, he recommends that renewal requires a richer or more elaborated public conversation about policy frameworks. In turn, this requires an institutional structure capable of mediating the strategic or agenda entry phase of the issue cycle ... Further, this phase must be located in the mainstream of the political drama ... [and not be] automatically subordinate to the will of the executive. (Marsh 2005, 38)

A serious impact on the quality of political deliberation requires institutional change. But this needs to occur in the power structures that frame its core dynamics, not in an irrelevant periphery. (Marsh 2007, 336)

Of the four institutions assessed in Table 6.2, the People’s Forum and pyramidal democracy are arguably the most strongly located ‘in the mainstream of the political drama’ and ‘in the power structures that frame its core dynamics’. This is due to the openness of their designs, which are structured to work directly with mass public opinion.

There is considerable evidence that citizens in liberal democracies may quickly appreciate the Forum’s potential when they see it in operation. Their strong distrust of politicians and in-
increasing disengagement from parties and ideologies, together with their keen interest in politics at the level of particular issues, should lead them to welcome the Forum as a way to come together to exchange views, to deliberate these and then issue directions to their governments. The advent of, and public support for, online political organizations such as Getup!, MoveOn, Change.org, Avaaz and Wikileaks demonstrate desires for such capabilities. The People’s Forum would help voters to think about issues, to follow the public arguments on these and to give specific directions to politicians without the time-consuming and sometimes stressful work of face-to-face discussion and deliberation, which includes attending political meetings and working for political parties. As citizens are increasingly accustomed to high responsiveness by the market to their individual demands, they may also be attracted by the Forum’s potential to generate more responsiveness from government. Although the Forum cannot produce social choices that are decisive for every voter (that is the nature of social choice), it would make those choices much more specific than those made by voting for political parties and representatives. The Forum would also produce social choices that are much better deliberated and coordinated than those from conventional referendums.