9
SUPPORTING DEVICES, PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TRIALLING THE PEOPLE’S FORUM

The mission of the People’s Forum is described in §6.1 as being to improve the performance of liberal democracies by enhancing the quality of their public policy and also the legitimacy, or public acceptance, of that policy. These objectives are to be achieved by the Forum using two strategies: accelerating the development of mass public opinion and producing political influence for that part of this opinion which is likely to be the best developed. To implement these strategies, the People’s Forum is designed to work with existing democratic institutions and activities, such as the legislature and the executive, free media, the lobbying and campaigning of interest groups and the random sample polling of public opinion. In §9.1 below, we consider whether, in doing these things, the Forum might be supported by democratic innovations that have been either proposed or used. The possibility of those devices being supported by the Forum is also considered.

In §9.2 a preliminary list is presented of ways for monitoring the effectiveness of the People’s Forum as it operates. Some of these performance indicators would use democratic institutions and innovations such as opinion polling, democracy audits and the Deliberative Poll®. If, during the introductory phase of the operation of a Forum, performance indicators show that
it has some potential to achieve its mission, the public may be encouraged to have more confidence in it, which might help it work more effectively and increase the probability that it would become established as a political institution. Because of the possibility of such interactions, some devices listed here as having a potential to support the People’s Forum also have potential as performance indicators.

9.1 Devices that may synergize with the People’s Forum

The two strategies of the People’s Forum will tend to reinforce each other because some of the development of mass public opinion it achieves will be registered in its results, which may help these registrations of relatively sophisticated views to develop political influence. That tendency would be strengthened by the other mechanisms discussed in §7.2.6, and the resultant rising public status of the Forum could help it to further develop mass public opinion. Much of this development would occur among those voting in the Forum as many of them will be taking interest in and discussing or debating its questions as part of their engagement in it. But the wider public will witness some of this activity and may learn from it as well as being encouraged by it to vote in PF polls. Such development of opinion would be driven by the Forum offering two types of incentive for citizens to argue and discuss issues with each other. One type is egoistic: the incentive of wanting to shape the Forum’s voting trends in order to confer the political influence of those trends — whether potential or real — onto one’s own views. The other type is solidarity or prosocial: a desire of citizens to assist the development of the opinions of their society as registered by the People’s Forum, because this may influence public policy and could thereby increase public welfare.

The Forum’s provision of egoistic and solidarity incentives for public discourse should encourage citizens to form and assist groups that campaign on the issues it treats and also groups that intensively deliberate these issues. Intensive deliberation groups
may be composed of citizens randomly selected from the electorate or the population, or self-selected (by volunteering to participate), or randomly selected from volunteers. Examples of deliberation groups that are randomly selected from the population are citizens’ juries, planning cells, citizens’ assemblies, Deliberative Polls® and online deliberative polls. Some of the self-selected groups are the 21st Century Town Meetings run by AmericaSpeaks, National Issues Forums and the study circles run by Everyday Democracy. The third type of structure, random selection from volunteers, is employed by consensus conferences. As all these forums are designed for intensive deliberation, their size is usually limited to a tiny fraction of society, in order to allow personal intra-group communication. They may be considered to execute both of the polity-wide strategies of the People’s Forum to some miniscule degree, however slight, and thereby to have potential to assist it, and vice versa. For the first PF strategy — the facilitation of the development of mass public opinion — intensive deliberation forums will have little effect, as they are primarily restricted to working on the opinions of their members. However, their representativeness, especially that of strict random sample forums, gives them a potential to persuade non-participating citizens to support their verdicts, because some nonparticipants may realize that these verdicts are likely to be what they would think, if they had the opportunity to deliberate effectively (Fishkin 1997, 162; Brown 2006, 211). Such confidence by citizens in a representative process has been well developed for law court juries and, as political scientist John Ferejohn (2008, 202) observes, has also been demonstrated for the British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform: ‘the CA process itself acquired a trustworthy reputation and this gave reason for voters to support its recommendation’. Whenever such public trust is achieved by a deliberative forum it should gain political influence and thus begin to execute the second strategy of the People’s Forum — developing political influence for that part of mass opinion that is likely to be the best developed.
If intensive deliberation forums operate in a society that has a People’s Forum and consider some of the issues that the Forum treats, they are likely to produce conclusions consistent with the Forum’s voting trends on those issues and which forecast, with some reliability, what the ultimate conclusions of the People’s Forum would be, after it had run those questions for several, or perhaps many, years. Because intensive deliberation forums are likely to have such predictive capacity, their managers might call on all citizens to support their results by voting in alignment with these in the Forum’s polls and by calling on politicians to implement the policies being advocated by the Forum’s polling trends. Many commentators on public affairs might endorse such calls. In this manner, the People’s Forum and intensive deliberation forums should draw attention to each other, making both more effective in facilitating the development of public opinion and also in developing political influence for the relatively developed opinion that they express. This symbiosis may produce a synergy in which the combined effect is greater than that of adding the effects of the People’s Forum operating on its own in a society to the effects the intensive deliberation forums would deliver if they were run there without the People’s Forum.

In this manner, the People’s Forum might work with other deliberative institutions to produce a polity-wide deliberative system. As advocated by several political theorists in *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale* (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012), these systems would provide a division of labour in democratic government that may have parts that are weak in deliberation but which contribute strongly to the deliberative outcome of the whole. For example protest demonstrations, partisan rhetoric and possibly even partisan media may create inclusion and energize participation, thereby stimulating the development of public opinion and policy.

Some of the most promising types of intensive deliberation panels for synergism with the People’s Forum are now briefly described.
**Citizens’ Juries.** The citizens’ jury comprises a small number of citizens (12–24) who are selected by stratified random sampling and paid a small honorarium by a sponsoring body, such as a public authority. It is run by an independent organisation that provides a facilitator. The jury hears evidence, questions witnesses, deliberates over 3–4 days and produces a report that the sponsoring authority is expected to respond to. Citizens’ juries have been run in the United States by the Jefferson Centre and in the UK by several organizations, including the Institute for Public Policy Research. Oregon’s Citizen Initiative Review Commission operates in a similar way, as it randomly selects juries to deliberate citizens’ initiative propositions. These groups produce ‘Citizens’ Statements’ that are included with each initiative ballot paper, to summarize the key points of the proposition as decided by the voters’ peers.

Political scientists Vivien Lowndes, Lawrence Pratchett and Gerry Stoker (2001, 448) report that ‘not only are people prepared to join ‘juries’, but the public at large is willing to trust their decision-making — even over that of elected representatives.’

**Planning Cells.** Planning cells are the German equivalent of citizens’ juries, being randomly selected groups of around twenty-five citizens who advise government authorities. They are rather more formal in the way information is provided and also in their organization, as they rotate participants between small cells of five to make sure they all interact (Smith 2005).

**Consensus Conferences.** These are small deliberating groups similar to citizens’ juries, but their members are largely self-selected, being chosen by socio-demographic criteria from a pool of volunteers who have responded to advertisements with written applications. They have been run by the Danish Board of Technology since the 1980s. Each conference is preceded by a series of preconference meetings where the members learn about the issue and frame questions. The panel’s recommendations have no binding authority on government, but have some-
times had a direct impact on the legislative process (G. Smith 2005).

**The Deliberative Poll®.** This system was devised by James Fishkin and uses a random sample of 250–500 citizens, which is large enough to make stratification unnecessary. The group begins its work with each member completing an opinion poll on the issue to be deliberated, and then 2–3 days are spent hearing evidence from specialists and deliberating in small groups. The work is concluded with a repetition of the same opinion poll of the members, and this is compared with the pre-deliberation poll. These comparisons give clear evidence of participants changing their views during the process, having reflected on evidence presented and on the views of other participants (G. Smith 2005). However, some scholars (e.g. Shapiro 2005; Gleason 2012) question whether these changes are always improvements in the quality of the opinions of the participants, because the Deliberative Poll® may constrain their thought with its ‘heavily rule-bound’ structure (Ryfe 2002, 365). One aspect of this is the almost inevitably biased framing of issues and priming of participants by the few experts who are selected to brief them; another is the improbability that any of those few experts will think laterally enough to recognize counterintuitive but crucial concepts, such as the pervasive democratic dysfunction discussed in Chapter 5 as the ‘scarcity multiplier’.

The Deliberative Poll® has also been conducted online. In this format, deliberation is by a random sample of around 500 citizens and runs for two hours per week for four weeks. The change in opinion that is achieved by this version appears to be less pronounced than with face-to-face deliberative polling (G. Smith 2005).

**Deliberation Day.** Deliberation Day was devised in 1999 by James Fishkin and Bruce Ackerman to try to expand the sample of the Deliberative Poll®, potentially to the whole nation. This would be a one-day public holiday held ten days before major national elections to enable registered voters to deliberate
pivotal issues in small groups of 15 that come together during that day, in plenary sessions of 500. Attendees would be paid US$150 for their day’s work of citizenship. This idea has been widely discussed, but many are sceptical, such as political scientist Philippe Schmitter.

The deliberation day— I don’t think that's a very sensible idea. I think what makes more sense is to have much broader kinds of mechanisms of deliberation. We talk about smart voting for example which allows you to look at the voting record of deputies and also the proposed preferences of different candidates, take the test yourself and find out which candidate is closest to your preferences for example. To me that’s much more feasible and exciting to the individual. (cited in PowerInquiry 2004, 6)

Nine years previously, political scientist Adolf Gundersen noted that

whereas Fishkin stresses representative, group processes, or deliberative forums, I stress universal, undifferentiated ones. (The difference here is really one of emphasis: the two kinds of process are not mutually exclusive. It is just that the latter kind has been too often overlooked). (Gundersen 1995, 247, brackets in original)

**AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meetings.** These meetings are conducted for one day with between 500 to 5,000 citizens who are self-selected, as they have volunteered in response to advertisements. Some outreach may be used to ensure a reasonable level of participation from relatively disengaged citizens. The meeting employs small group dialogue involving 10–12 demographically diverse citizens and an independent facilitator. These groups are connected by computer, voting keypads and large closed-circuit television screens. Experts present balanced information and give advice as needed. A clear link to decision-makers such as public authorities is established at the outset and their representatives attend the proceedings, but the results are not binding on these authorities (G. Smith 2005).
WORLD WIDE VIEWS. This system has been devised by the Danish Board of Technology and its partners, in order to extend representative deliberation across the planet. It includes design elements from the Deliberative Poll®, AmericaSpeaks and the consensus conference. In each country, citizens are selected as randomly as is feasible and given an invitation to join a WWV group. From those who accept, a group of 100 is chosen on the basis of representing the demography of their country in age, gender, occupation, education and other respects. Some countries may have several groups meeting on different sites, and all groups from around the world pool their findings via a web tool. The initial application was for World Wide Views on Global Warming, delivering its findings two and a half months before the December 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (WWV 2009; WWV 2010). On 26 September 2009, approximately 4,000 people gathered in 38 countries to consider what should happen in Copenhagen. The outcome was significantly more progressive than the findings of conventional polls. Ninety per cent of the representative participants believed there was an urgent need for Copenhagen to produce a new agreement; eighty-eight per cent wanted this to halt global warming to within 2 degrees Celsius of preindustrial levels; and seventy-four per cent favoured increasing the prices of fossil fuels in developed countries (Herbick and Isham 2010).

NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS AND STUDY CIRCLES. These are locally sponsored, various-sized public forums of self-selected participants. National Issues Forums are coordinated across the US by the Kettering Foundation. Every year its NIF Institute focuses on several major issues by publishing issue books, each of which describes three or four approaches to one issue (never just two polar opposites) as a framework for deliberations. Discussions are led by trained moderators. The Foundation regularly collates the findings of the forums and its reports are published and presented to elected officials to give them an insight into the considered views of concerned members of the public. Study circles are similar to National Issues Forums and are organized
by the Paul J. Aicher Foundation's Everyday Democracy at East Hartford, CT (G. Smith 2005).

Televote. This name has been applied to two types of forum that culminate in a vote by telephone. One type uses self-selected participants and the other a random sample. Participants are presented with questions, information, pro and con arguments and invited to deliberate on these by themselves and with friends or acquaintances for a few weeks before voting. The self-selecting version was invented in California in the early 1970s by social psychologist Vincent Campbell, who used newspaper advertisements to invite people to take part. In 1978, political scientists Ted Becker and Christa Daryl Slaton altered it by using random selection to have a representative sample of the public deliberate and vote on the Hawaii State Constitutional Convention. Their system has been subsequently used on eleven other occasions in Hawaii, New Zealand and California (Slaton 2001).

E-Democracy. E-Democracy started as the Minnesota Politics and Issues Forum in 1994, running internet-based forums for discussing state, national and global political issues. More than fifty of these forums have operated across the US, UK and New Zealand. Participation is self-selected, and a manager lightly moderates the discussion in each forum, ensuring that users follow the rules of engagement. On occasions, the press has covered the online debates of the Minnesota Politics and Issues Forum, which indicates that it may have an agenda-setting influence. Participants have reported that their involvement increases their political interest and knowledge as well as their understanding and respect for the views of other citizens (G. Smith 2005).

Civic Commons in Cyberspace. The Civic Commons in Cyberspace (ccc) was proposed by the UK Institute for Public Policy Research in order to extend the Minnesota E-Democracy model from a forum facilitating the development of public opinion to one that empowers this opinion and develops it more compre-
ccc was designed by Jay Blumler and Stephen Coleman (who are quoted in §2.3.3), and they specified that it be run by a new publicly funded agency and should promote, facilitate and summarize online deliberations, with authorities expected to react formally to whatever emerges from these public discussions. ccc would create a central access point for citizens to deliberate on public issues at all levels of government, and would provide a one-stop shop for politicians to find out about these discussions. It ‘would have a particular interest in exploring new ways of consulting intelligently with the broadest possible range of citizens’ (Blumler and Coleman 2001, 16). It may therefore see needs to coordinate citizens’ deliberations by staging public events such as polls, so that all who are interested know when to engage and can do so in a way that produces a collective choice for a polity. An operating ccc could therefore have a strong interest in the People’s Forum. Although bearing some resemblance to the Forum, ccc has a more complex function as it would engage in ‘promoting, publicising, regulating, moderating, summarizing, and evaluating the broadest and most inclusive range of online deliberation’ (Blumler and Coleman 2001, 17). In contrast, the Forum would not have its staff actively regulating, moderating and evaluating deliberations. It would rely on citizens to do the evaluating with their annual vote, and its regulating and moderating of deliberations would be limited to the guidance it offered via the composition of its ballot paper. This guidance would comprise the selection of issues, their descriptions, the selection of questions and the indications given to voters of relationships between issues. The only regulation by the Forum of public argument and deliberation would be alterations of the ballot paper (such as in response to public criticisms) and this would include updating the range of issues it presents.

A ccc could not function without the active support of a government willing to (a) provide it with public funding, (b) allow an independent body to run it as it saw fit and (c) formally respond to the results of citizens’ deliberations. The broad reach of ccc means that it might have been added to the comparison
of four reforms for democratic government that is presented in §6.5.2, but this was not done because its reach appears to be limited in two ways: It is restricted to online forums and it lacks a poll that converts polity-wide opinion into a collective choice at a point in time. It therefore seems that PF has more potential to directly improve government function, but, as noted above, CCC might be very useful in assisting PF. In respect of CCC’s online function, Blumler and Coleman (2001, 13) note that the ‘digital divide’ should not be a problem as the internet makes it easier for individuals to find and follow what concerns them personally, and by lowering the costs of obtaining information, the influence of social status on political involvement may be reduced. Citizens and groups with few resources can undertake acts of communication and monitoring that previously were the domain mainly of resource-rich organisations and individuals. (Blumler and Coleman 2001, 13)

Citizens’ Assemblies. The Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform for British Columbia was a representative deliberative forum that ran from January to December in 2004. It was established by the government of BC with a commitment that it would hold a referendum on its findings. The Assembly comprised 160 randomly selected citizens with an independent chairman, and it studied the options for electoral reform in BC. It reviewed evidence given at 50 public hearings, received 1603 written submissions and deliberated before determining its recommendations by voting. Assembly members were assisted by holding meetings at weekends, with child care and payment for their work.

This process differs from other deliberative forums in that it was ongoing for a considerable time and had an official undertaking that its recommendations would be acted on. As this was to put them to a referendum, the wisdom acquired by the members of the assembly was partially discarded by having the relatively disengaged and uninformed general public make the final choice. Although the final vote within the Assembly was near unanimous at 146 to 7, the referendum result was only 57.7% in
favour of the Assembly’s verdict. However, this was far higher than the same proposal would have secured if it had come from the legislature (Goodin 2008, 269). The public exposure of the Assembly’s deliberations and its statistical representation of all citizens may not only have educated some of them about the issue, but also encouraged some of them to trust the Assembly’s work and use its findings as a heuristic for their vote in the referendum. However, these effects were not enough for the Assembly’s extremely strong choice of an STV electoral system to be approved by the statutory 60% majority of public votes.

Ontario followed BC with its own Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform, which started in September 2006 and finished in May 2007 with a recommendation of 94 members for, and 8 against, mixed member proportional representation. The final result was less impressive than that in BC, for when the Ontario choice was put to a public referendum in October 2007 it was rejected by 63 per cent of voters. A forum patterned on the citizens’ assembly called the Citizens’ Parliament (newDemocracy Foundation 2008) was run in Australia from October 2008 to February 2009 on ‘How can Australia’s political system be strengthened to serve us better?’ This event did not have government sponsorship, so its recommendations were not put to a referendum. They are therefore unlikely to be pursued and executed, a destiny that is assured by a tendency for those recommendations to fail to be specific about both their ends and the means by which they are to be achieved (Dryzek 2009, 3).

Brazil’s National Public Policy Conferences. This pyramidal system is outlined at the end of §6.5.2.4. As a national scale deliberative institution, each of its conferences has both citizens and public servants deliberating one issue for many months, a process that progresses from municipal meetings to state ones and finally to a national conference. Although the results are nonbinding, they have a considerable influence on government.

Conclusions on Mutual Support by the People’s Forum and Intensive Deliberation Forums. The use of the internet by E-
Democracy and Civic Commons in Cyberspace gives them a potentially unlimited reach across both the number of participants and the number of issues being treated that resembles the potential of the People’s Forum. However, the undertakings of both of those organisations to actively manage discussions prevents them from handling many issues simultaneously, a problem that the People’s Forum would avoid by facilitating deliberation without monitoring or controlling the give and take of public debate, as discussed in §7.2.2. The primary problem with CCC is that of raising the political will to get it launched and run. It was proposed early in 2001 but has not yet been tried out, presumably because it relies on a commitment by government to establish it, fund it and heed the public deliberations it reports. A way of overcoming this problem may be to use private funds to initiate the People’s Forum first. If this successfully established the Forum as a political institution in a province or a nation, then the argument for establishing CCC might be easier to promote, for it could be proposed by the Forum as a mother department that funds the continuing operation of the Forum, as well as other operations. Those would include intensive deliberation forums such as deliberative polling, consensus conferences and on-line groups, which would help synergise the work of the People’s Forum as discussed above. Intensive deliberation forums could also complement the work of the People’s Forum by indicating how the general public would respond to issues that are too short-term for treatment by the Forum, if all citizens were to carefully deliberate them.

If the resolution of an issue being treated by the People’s Forum ballot paper is especially urgent, then those who are very concerned about it may decide to accelerate the Forum process by funding a random sample intensive deliberation forum to demonstrate what the future development of public opinion is likely to be on this issue, if it became better known throughout the community. This demonstration might cultivate public confidence most effectively if it was performed by a citizens’ assembly, as that would run for a substantial period (say a year) and allow submissions from the public.
Two other innovations that might be considered for operation in conjunction with the People’s Forum are pyramidal democracy (see §6.5.2.3 and §6.5.2.4) and the People’s House (§6.5.2.2). Pyramidal democracy would pursue the Forum’s mission of improving the quality and legitimacy of public policy by inviting citizens to have confidence in the deliberations of chains of representatives that invite input from all citizens. It would do this with strategies that approximate those used by the People’s Forum. The first PF strategy, developing mass public opinion on strategic policy, would be attempted (without the focus on strategic policy) by offering political participation to all citizens in the small intensive deliberation groups at the base of the pyramid. The second strategy, of giving political influence to the most developed part of mass public opinion, is to be executed by the pyramid giving this power to the small group of delegates at its apex. However, the complexity of transmission of this influence from all citizens at the base to the few at the top, together with the work involved in citizens attending meetings at the base, may mean they have less incentive to get involved than they have to engage with the People’s Forum. Also, as discussed in §6.5.2.4, important strategic policy deliberated at the base may have little chance of being debated and publicised at the top if there are many levels in the pyramid. As the People’s Forum and pyramidal democracy are similar in mission and strategies, they might be viewed as alternatives to each other rather than as complementary. But the ability of the Forum to treat an unlimited number of issues simultaneously and to focus on strategic policy means that the two institutions should complement each other, as suggested for NPPCs at the conclusion of §6.5.2.4. This complementarity may be that as the Forum develops policy ideas across the strategic spectrum simultaneously, it may coordinate those ideas so that pyramids can follow them to produce policies in different areas that work with, rather than against, each other.

The mission of the People’s House is described in §6.5.2.2 as being to give a voice to the public, curb special interests, counter legislative gridlock and aggregate electors’ preferences more
equitably. This bears some similarity to the mission of the People’s Forum of improving the quality and legitimacy of public policy, but the strategy of the House is rather different. Instead of encouraging the development of the opinion of the general public and then assisting citizens to gain confidence in the section of their opinion that is most likely to be best developed, the People’s House would help a very large random sample (43,500) of the public to develop its opinions and ask all citizens to have confidence in these. Such confidence would depend mainly on public awareness of the following three features: That the sample is very representative; that it deliberates carefully; and (perhaps) that it is large enough to give most citizens some prospect of being able to have meaningful contact with at least one of its members.

The strategies of the People’s Forum and the People’s House might be compared by viewing the Forum as aiming mostly at improving the quantity and quality of participation while the House aims mostly at improving the quality of representation. These two institutions might therefore complement each other. If they were both operating in a polity, the Forum’s strategies should assist politicians to endorse the well-developed policies of the House by assisting all citizens to understand and accept those policies. At the same time, the House would help the Forum by advocating, within the legislature, specific parts of the broad spectrum of policy that the Forum would be slowly developing over successive polls.

9.2 Performance indicators for the People’s Forum

If the People’s Forum is tried out, it would be useful to have objective procedures that monitor how well it works. Direct procedures would assess the Forum’s achievement of mission, and indirect ones would assess its execution of strategies and its provision of the institutional and political equality goods expected of an institution for assisting government (as discussed in §6.2 and applied in §6.3 and §6.5.2). As the two governmental goods described in §6.2 are to be provided by the Forum’s two
strategies, the provisions of these goods are gauged by judging the execution of those strategies. Performance indicators may therefore be produced by assessing the first fourteen of the following sixteen types of performance, the last two (the provision of governmental goods) not being needed as they are covered by iii and iv.

**Types of performance indicators**

*Achievement of mission by a People’s Forum:*
  i. Improving the quality of public policy.
  ii. Improving the legitimacy of public policy.

*Execution of strategies by a People’s Forum:*
  iii. Accelerating the development of mass public opinion, especially on strategic public policy.
  iv. Producing political influence for the part of public opinion that is relatively well developed.

*Provision of goods by a People’s Forum*
  Institutional:
  v. Efficiency.
  vi. Transferability to political system.
  vii. Transferability to strategic issues.
  viii. Transferability to large-scale polities.
  ix. Transparency.
  x. Feasibility of introduction.

  Political equality:
  xi. In communication (of citizens’ political views).
  xii. In voting by citizens.
  xiii. In agenda control by citizens.
  xiv. Full inclusion of all classes of citizens.

  Governmental:
  xv. Enlightened understanding (especially on strategic issues, which is covered by vii above). This indicator is equivalent to iii above.
xvi. Political prevalence of enlightened understanding. This indicator is equivalent to iv above.

As the assessment of the achievement of mission directly indicates performance, it is potentially a more reliable indicator than assessing the execution of strategies. The descriptions of possible indicators that are given below focus only on those concerning mission and strategies and do not address provisions of institutional and political equality goods, as these are relative details of performance. They could be investigated as additional indicators if considered useful, and this might be done in ways similar to those suggested below for indicating achievement of mission and execution of strategies.

9.2.1 Indicators of achievement of mission (indicator types i & ii)
The following four performance indicators (PI1–PI4) might show how well an operating People's Forum improves the quality and legitimacy of public policy.

PI1. Based on democracy indices. A few broad changes might be monitored in the quality and legitimacy of the public policy of a democracy after it has commenced using a People's Forum by observing trends in its democracy index as assessed by organisations such as the US-based Freedom House, Democratic Audit in the UK, Worldwide Governance Indicators (Kaufmann et al. 2010) and The Economist Intelligence Unit (Economist 2008c; Economist 2010). For example, The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Index of Democracy monitors five categories of democratic function for each country: electoral process and pluralism; functioning of government; political participation; democratic political culture; and civil liberties. Each of these categories is analysed into several sub-categories (from eight to fourteen of these), and for each sub-category the country's performance is given a rating. Some of these sub-categories concern the legitimacy of public policy, for example, 'Public confidence in government’ and ‘Public confidence in political parties’
(in the category ‘functioning of government’). It may be possible to use some of these democracy index components by comparing the rates of change they show in categories or sub-categories before the introduction of the People’s Forum against those attained some years after its introduction.

PI2. Based on public opinion polls. Some of the assessments of sub-categories for democracy indices are derived from mass public opinion polling within the polity being assessed. Polling of this type might be done in a more detailed manner than that currently employed by democracy index researchers to ascertain citizens’ perceptions of the quality and legitimacy of government policies on specific issues, both before and after a People’s Forum is introduced.

PI3. Based on expert opinion. Surveys asking questions similar to those for PI2 may be posed, not to the general public, but to experts in public policy, such as academics and executives of interest groups, to give another indicator of the quality, but not legitimacy, of policy before and after the introduction of a People’s Forum.

PI4. Based on intensive deliberation forums. Intensive deliberation forums that are either self-selected or random samples might assess the effect of the People’s Forum on the quality of public policy. The findings of the random sample types may also indicate the potential for the legitimacy of the public policies being developed by a People’s Forum. That potential might be realized only after extensive public debate on those policies, via the Forum.

9.2.2 Indicators of execution of the first strategy (indicator type iii)
Indications of change in the development of mass public opinion (especially on strategic issues) by an operating People’s Forum should be given by the following two devices.
PI5. Based on polls of public opinion. Several mass public opinion polls before and also after the advent of a People’s Forum, on questions posed by it, may show whether it appeared to accelerate the rate of change of this opinion on these questions.

PI6. Based on expert opinion. Surveys of experts in mass public opinion (such as political scientists and the executives of interest groups) on their perceptions of the effect of a People’s Forum on the development of mass public opinion on questions that it has run and of which they have good knowledge may indicate how well the Forum is executing its first strategy. This performance indicator is similar to that of PI3, but it focuses on the development of mass public opinion under the People’s Forum instead of its effect on the quality of public policy.

9.2.3 Indicators of execution of the second strategy (indicator type iv)

The following indicators should show the extent to which an operating People’s Forum is generating political influence for relatively well-developed public opinion, as registered by People’s Forum polls.

PI7. Based on forum turnout. A percentage of electors voting in the Forum that is close to zero would indicate negligible influence, but only a small percentage, say 5%, in combination with good ratings for PI8 below may indicate considerable influence for the opinion expressed in People’s Forum poll results. The figure of 5% is suggested, as that should be a considerable part of the percentage of the community that is knowledgeable on political issues (which is suggested in §2.2.3 to be less than 20% for many issues). Thus, something like a turnout of 5% or more at People’s Forum polls might eventually become widely accepted by the public as a politically respectable voice.

PI8. Based on polls of public opinion. Mass public opinion poll ratings of approval and disapproval of the following two aspects of the Forum should indicate its political influence:
1. The People’s Forum system and management.
2. People’s Forum poll results and their trends.

These polls should be conducted on a regular basis, such as annually, to identify any trends in mass approval or disapproval of the system and its results.

9.3 The inadequacy of small-scale trials of the People’s Forum

It would be very helpful if the effectiveness of the People’s Forum could be assessed by trying it out at a small scale that costs much less than the ten million dollars or more anticipated for the operational scale, state or national trials recommended in §6.4. Any such experiment must indicate whether the People’s Forum is likely to achieve its mission at the large scale of operation for which it is designed or — as an indirect indication — whether it will execute its two strategies at the large scale. As its mission is to improve the quality and legitimacy of public policy in a provincial or national or multinational jurisdiction, it would seem unlikely that a small scale trial of the Forum could reliably indicate whether it would do this — but could such a trial test the likelihood of it being able to execute its strategies? If it could, then it would also be testing the likelihood of PF executing its mission, for any execution of the strategies, especially the second one, should produce a corresponding execution of the mission.

For the Forum’s first strategy — accelerating the development of mass public opinion across a large jurisdiction (especially with regard to strategic policy) — such a trial might use three randomly selected groups of the same size to represent the behaviour of the members of such a jurisdiction. Two of these groups would be selected at the beginning of a period of perhaps five years, during which one of them would be exposed to the Forum’s distinctive ‘deliberative’ technique, which is based on offering group members an annual vote in a Forum ballot. The other group would be offered one vote at the beginning of this
period on the same ballot paper and would then have no further input into the trial. At the end of the trial period, a third group of the same size would be randomly selected from those members of the large jurisdiction who have not previously voted on that ballot paper and they would be offered one vote on it, with no opportunity to deliberate before voting. This vote would be compared with the final and contemporaneous vote of the sample group that had been participating in the annual vote over the five year period, to see if there was a significant difference. Any such difference should arise from the deliberative influence of the Forum’s process on the members of the sample that was exposed to the opportunity to vote annually over the five-year period. The vote of the sample group that only voted once, at the beginning of the period, would be compared with the vote of the group that only voted once, at the end of the period, to indicate the changes in opinion that occurred over the large jurisdiction without any influence from the Forum.

Such comparison cannot, however, test the Forum’s effectiveness because only part of its deliberative technique can be applied to small groups. That part of the technique has three main components: (1) the way the ballot paper is written (including menus of incisive questions, as discussed in §7.2.2) together with its very large menu of issues for potential voters to choose from; (2) a regular and spaced vote, such as an annual poll, that provides publicized periods for deliberation that culminate in feedback on attitudes (the poll result) and trends in those attitudes (successive poll results), which may assist the next period of deliberation; and (3) voluntary voting, which may promote communication about issues as citizens urge each other to vote, while it also invites only those who are interested in the issues to vote. However, a large part of the Forum’s deliberative technique cannot be applied to small groups. This part is the offer to the members of a group of the possibility or probability that their vote will have political influence. Awareness of this will motivate some members to try to use this influence by voting and also by arguing with other members about the specific questions that are presented by the poll, in the course of which the members
of the group may learn more about those questions than they otherwise would have done. But awareness of the possibility of such political influence cannot arise in the members of a group that is too small to have that influence. Such lack of incentive to learn is made even more likely for small experimental groups by the types of issues that the Forum would deal with. As these are persistent, long-term problems, many of which are interrelated and of fundamental importance, they can only be influenced by large jurisdictions with political systems that can act strategically. It is therefore only members of such very large, politically potent groups that can imagine they might influence this type of policy and that could thereby be strongly motivated by the running of Forum polls to argue, deliberate and vote. As members of small groups will therefore not be as motivated by a Forum poll to think as much about the issues it presents as the members of very large groups could be, a trial of the Forum in a small group is likely to underestimate the Forum’s potential to execute its first strategy of accelerating the development of public opinion on strategic issues.

To run a small-scale test of the effectiveness of the People’s Forum’s execution of its second strategy (producing political influence for the part of mass public opinion that is likely to be relatively well developed), one randomly selected experimental group appears necessary. If this sample accurately represents the many members of a large jurisdiction, it might be expected to simulate their behaviour. The simulation we need here is to run the People’s Forum within this sample group for several years, with a sequence of polls at regular intervals of a year, or at least of several months. As the vote is voluntary, only those in this sample who are interested in any of the many issues on the ballot paper would be expected to vote, as envisaged for an operational-scale Forum. The results of these trial polls would therefore be considered to represent the views of those within the sample group that have the better-developed views on the issues presented. After several years of polls, all the members of the sample group would then be asked whether they think that the poll trends should be translated into law or government
policy. The response is likely to indicate a very strong execution of the Forum’s second strategy by showing that the members of the sample readily grant political influence to the voters among them, because there is very strong support from all members for the voting trends to be enacted in law or policy. That support is likely because the voters within the sample may be virtually its entire membership, so we have the members supporting their own views. Something like this situation may well occur with such a sample because its members could feel obliged or stimulated by the attention given to them — in being randomly selected and then personally advised of the availability of a regular poll — to take an interest in the issues presented in it and also to vote in it, whereas they may be less likely to do that as citizens in a polity that offers an operational-scale Forum. This could mean that almost all the members of the sample actually vote in the polls they are offered, so there is little difference between the opinions of the whole sample and that very large majority of it that chooses to vote. If this happens, then we do not have a test of whether all the members of the sample grant political influence to a small subset of it who choose to vote, for the subset is not small, being virtually all the members. This ‘test’ may therefore overrate the effectiveness of the Forum in executing its second strategy. The test may also have the opposite effect because the lack of reality of the situation in which the members of a sample group are expected to take some interest in strategic policies for their group while that group has no prospect of implementing them may be too uninteresting for any of the group members to take seriously. They may therefore fail to debate these issues, fail to develop policies on them and be totally careless about granting any such policies political influence within the group because the group is far too small to be able to implement those policies.

Small-scale trials therefore seem likely to fail to simulate the performance of the People’s Forum in large jurisdictions by underestimating its capacity to execute its first strategy and over, or underestimating its capacity to execute its second strategy. Even if such trials were not confusing in these ways, they would still
be somewhat deficient because they do not specifically assess the Forum’s capacity to achieve its mission in large jurisdictions, which is to improve the quality of public policy (especially strategic policy) while developing public legitimacy for that policy.

9.3.1 Simulation instead of small-scale experiment
As small scale trials may be misleading, simulation by thought experiment or by computer might be regarded as sufficiently reliable for indicating whether the People’s Forum is worth the expense of trialling at operational scale. To consider mental simulation first, this should focus on the likelihood that the Forum will do those things that are crucial for its success. At the broad level, there are three such capabilities: that the Forum is amenable to being established at an operational scale and that, as it operates, it executes both of its strategies. As discussed previously in §7.2.12, establishing the Forum (essentially function 11) is not fundamentally extremely difficult or impossible, so we focus on the probability of it being able to execute its strategies. To judge this, we assess its probability of performing the functions that would execute those strategies. For this purpose we refer to the twelve functions listed in §7.1 and discussed under §7.2, rather than the five more general functions discussed in §6.3 (which are covered by the twelve). To identify the functions that are crucial, we first rank the strategies in order of importance. The first strategy is to develop mass public opinion on strategic issues, and the second is to produce political influence for the opinions of that section of the public that is more likely to be sophisticated in strategic policy. As political studies show that the first strategy is extremely difficult to execute to any degree (see §2.2.3 and §2.2.4), the second strategy is arguably the most important for the successful operation of PF. We therefore focus on this and assess the likelihood of it being executed by considering two aspects of PF’s functions: the significance of a function in executing the second strategy and the probability that the function will be performed by the Forum. This assessment is done by selecting the most significant functions first and then judging the probability of their execution by the Forum.
The functions needed to execute PF’s second strategy are, as indicated by the notation Sm in the list of 12 in §7.1, functions 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12. Of these, 5, 7 and 9 appear to be especially significant for that execution. This makes function 12 (public confidence in PF) significant as well, because it is necessary for function 5 (political influence for PF voting trends). Functions 6 and 8 are relative details (less significant for the second strategy) and are, in any case, judged as probably achievable with the PF design (see their descriptions in §7.2.7 and §7.2.9), so they can be dropped from further consideration. Function 10 (PF producing political will for difficult decisions) depends on function 5, which emphasizes the significance of function 5. This focuses us on the probability of PF executing 5, 7, 9 and 12. Function 12 (public confidence in PF) will depend partly on the heuristic produced by executing function 7 (meritocratic influence), and it is suggested that the PF design should adequately execute both of them, if function 9 (freedom from corruption) is effectively implemented. So, to judge the probability of PF’s success we must primarily assess the probabilities that it will perform functions 5, 7, 9 and 12. These assessments may be attempted by reading §7.2.6 (function 5), §7.2.8 (function 7), §7.2.10 (function 9) and §7.2.13 (function 12). It is suggested that those accounts indicate that a well-managed PF is likely to execute all of those four functions reasonably well. All the other functions also appear feasible, so it appears that PF should work.

As several of the twelve functions are interdependent to some degree, a computer simulation might be able to give a better idea of the probabilities of their execution by PF and thus the probability of PF executing its two strategies and achieving its mission. Such simulation might cover the operation of PF under: (a) a range of probabilities that PF will perform each function; (b) a range of strengths of those performances; and (c) different strengths of interactions between functions. Such modelling should indicate the sensitivity of PF’s performance to each variable and thereby give a clearer idea — under subjectively realistic ranges of assumptions — of whether it could perform its functions and execute its strategies. This approach bears some
similarity to the game-theoretic computer simulation used for political forecasting by several firms in the US, such as Mesquita and Roundell LLC, but that method does not appear suitable for our purpose, as it is designed for ‘strategic situations’. Over hundreds of such cases, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita’s predictions have been assessed by the CIA at more than 90% successful (Bueno de Mesquita 2009, xix). ‘Strategic situations’ are not events such as elections where millions of people each have an extremely small influence, but those where relatively small numbers of people are haggling over a contentious decision. In such cases, influential players and their interactions can be identified and modelled in modes such as negotiation, coercion, bullying and cooperation (O’Connell 2012, 43). However, it may be possible to apply simulation that is not necessarily game-theoretic to predict the performances of institutional designs. In game theory, the actors and their situation and influence are identified, which allows the computer to generate their likely interactions and responses. Simulation of institutional performance may follow a parallel approach by identifying the design elements (such as those specified in Chapter 7 for PF), assessing how they would interact with human nature to produce design functions (such as those specified in Chapter 7 for PF) and then assessing how these functions would interact with human nature to produce or fail to execute the strategies or mission of the institution. The reliability of such predictions might be tested by varying the human responses within what are judged to be likely limits to see what this does to the simulation. If such sensitivity analysis predicts likely failure of the institution, it may suggest either changing specific design elements or abandoning that particular basic design.

However, in view of the urgency of the need to improve governance, together with the expense of modelling and the inherent uncertainty of its theoretical output, it seems advisable to give first priority to a trial of the People’s Forum in the real world of politics across a provincial or national jurisdiction.