

Write the Rules and Win: Understanding Citizen Participation Game Dynamics

Answering the Participation Question

In attempting to move beyond normative-based theories and simple descriptive accounts of extra-electoral citizen participation, this article explores the biases that are inherent in citizen participation mechanisms and proposes a model to estimate when and why different participation mechanisms might be used during “citizen participation games.” Mechanism bias is explored using a matrix designed to gauge how different mechanisms afford different degrees of agenda-setting and decision-making control to citizens and state officials. Attention then turns to leadership capacity to explain the mechanisms through which teams of citizens and government officials might play their participatory games. A second matrix suggests that the choice of mechanism may vary considerably depending on whether rookie leaders are matched against other rookies, novices, or expert opponents. Though the model suggests that mechanisms affording less control to citizens are more common, it also implies that in the future, citizen players may demand mechanisms affording them more control as their leaders gain experience.

During the public policy process, state officials and citizens frequently interact through a wide array of extra-electoral citizen participation mechanisms, such as opinion polls, public inquiries, and referenda. To better explain when and why different mechanisms are used to facilitate participation, this essay begins with the premise that although citizens and state officials often hold contrary policy preferences, they both engage in two-staged “citizen participation games” to secure support from opponents for policy goals. In the first stage of the game, both sides “ante up” their political capital and endorse the process through which engagement takes place *before* any substantive engagement occurs. First-round losers thus endorse participation mechanisms with rules that often significantly inhibit their chances of success in the second round of the game, when final policy decisions are made. After illustrating the advantages and disadvantages afforded to participants by 26 participation mechanisms, this essay suggests that mechanisms offering citizens the least control are most likely to be used when citizen

participants are inexperienced or disorganized, whereas experts will likely ante up only under more favorable rules of play.

Extra-Electoral Citizen Participation Theory

The public policy process in most Western countries includes electoral and extra-electoral citizen participation. Elections are used to select a group of representatives from among the citizenry to make collective decisions about scarce community resources. Extra-electoral citizen participation refers to processes by which citizens are included in policy making between elections (Dahl 1956). When the primary mechanisms used to conduct elections are electoral systems, there are many mechanisms by which extra-electoral citizen participation can be facilitated. Walters, Aydelotte, and Miller (2000) list 11 distinct mechanisms, while Bishop and Davis (2002) offer 13. Rowe and Frewer (2005, 276–77) provide 100 terms used to describe various mechanisms, which they then reduce to a more comprehensive set of 25. Table 1 presents a list of 26 extra-electoral citizen participation mechanisms, most of which should be familiar to the reader, with the possible exceptions of citizens’ assemblies (British Columbia 2006), citizens’ juries (Smith and Wales 2000), participatory budgets (Ebdon and Franklin 2004; Novy and Leubolt 2005), plebiscites (sometimes called nonbinding referenda), study circles (Ryfe 2002), and deliberative surveys (Fishkin, Luskin, and Jowell 2000).

Scholarship surrounding electoral systems has spawned many long-lasting empirical theories. Anthony Downs’s median voter theory (1957) and Duverger’s “law” that plurality elections favor two-party systems (Riker 1982) are two prominent examples, but there are many others. However, according to Roberts, theory concerning extra-electoral citizen participation is “not particularly well developed” and only “in the early stages” (2004, 335). This is unfortunate, as demand by postmaterialist activists (Abramson and Inglehart 1987) for more meaningful participation (Smith and Wales 2000) and an increase

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Table 1 Extra-Electoral Participation Mechanisms

1. Advertising
2. Citizen advisory board
3. Citizens' assembly
4. Citizens' jury
5. Focus group
6. Green/discussion paper
7. Initiative
8. Interactive Web site
9. Internet chat group
10. Local government
11. Newsletter
12. Participatory budget
13. Plebiscite
14. Public hearing/inquiry
15. Public Meeting (with Q&A)
16. Public service announcement
17. Referendum
18. Research panel
19. Sponsored lobby group
20. Stakeholder forum
21. Study circle
22. Survey (closed-ended questions)
23. Survey (deliberative)
24. Survey (open-ended questions)
25. Telepolling/televoting
26. White paper

in the number of possible participatory mechanisms, such as those of a deliberative nature (Fishkin 1997), have increased the need for theory in this area to help explain, for example, how the mechanisms listed in table 1 might affect participation process outcomes and why some might be used in one but not another situation.

Normative Theories

Most extra-electoral citizen participation theory uses a normative lens to evaluate the mechanisms through which such participation is facilitated, using some notion of desirability to rank such processes. There are two categories of authors who pen normative-based studies: those who think that increased citizen control over the policy process is a social “good,” and those who think that state officials are best qualified to make decisions for the community. Sherry Arnstein (1969) offers perhaps the most enduring example of the first category. In her oft-cited “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” Arnstein situates participatory exercises and their corresponding mechanisms according to how much they help or hinder citizens in controlling outcomes based on the normative assumption that ethnic minorities and low-income people *should* be afforded more control over public policy.

Many authors who evaluate citizen participation mechanisms support Arnstein’s approach and normative premise. For example, Fiorino states that “the case for participation should begin with normative argument,” and “citizens are the best judge of their interests” (1990, 227). Influenced by what has been described as the discursive “turn” (Fischer 2003),

King, Feltey, and Susel endorse the idea of citizen control as “good” by promoting what they deem “authentic participation,” or “deep continuous involvement in administrative processes with the potential for all involved to have an effect on the situation” (1998, 320). Like Arnstein, King, Feltey, and Susel evaluate mechanisms based on the idea that increased citizen participation is a social good to be promoted, and they evaluate mechanisms and processes accordingly. Other authors disagree. For example, while acknowledging that “public input has its place in policy analysis,” Walters, Aydelotte, and Miller classify participatory mechanisms from the perspective that state officials are best suited to make policy decisions for the community:

The founders of our country meant for decision making in government to be removed from the direct influence of public passions. Madison thought that this arrangement was a good way to avoid the mischief of factions. In addition, governments at all levels face complex and highly technical questions. The public is uninformed on many of these issues: they may not be aware of legal constraints, definitions, or other aspects of a problem that must be understood in order to make an informed decision. Having people serve full time in government positions, whether elected or appointed, allows them to devote their attention to these difficult questions. (2000, 357)

Though popular, assessments as to whether a particular mechanism increases citizen control is “good” or “bad” are often unconvincing because their normative assertions are entirely unjustified or, at best, extremely thin. Many authors who feel that more citizen control is “good” fail to incorporate even the most basic democratic theory into their work (see, e.g., Dahl 1989; Held 1996; Hyland 1995). Those who propose that state officials are best qualified to make decisions might at least refer to theorists such as Joseph Schumpeter (1996), who presents reasoned arguments against even minimal extra-electoral citizen input into the policy process. Failing to provide a solid foundation greatly undermines normative evaluations of participation mechanisms, although parts of this work can be salvaged to help construct more useful empirical theories about citizen participation. As later sections show, this essay attempts to fill a needed gap between public participation as a civic “good” or “bad” by exploring whether participation is efficacious, regardless of its impact on policy outcomes.

Empirical Theories

Other scholars seek to develop purely empirical theories regarding extra-electoral citizen participation mechanisms. That is, they do not start from the position that increased citizen participation or control is

either desirable or undesirable but rather from the view that such interactions exist and need to be better explained and understood. Rowe and Frewer appear to follow this line of inquiry by deeming “irrelevant” mechanism typologies based on normative principles such as “fairness, public acceptability, equity, democracy, representativeness, transparency, and influence” (2005, 262). They further dismiss normative evaluations based on their assertion that variations between mechanisms are “not related to the *general nature* of different mechanisms but their *specific applications*” (the variance is *within* as opposed to *among* mechanisms)” (262–63). Instead, the authors organize mechanisms according to “efficiency,” which is defined as “appropriate elicitation, transfer, and combination of public and/or sponsor views,” further defining “appropriate” as “maximizing the relevant information from the maximum number of relevant sources and transferring this efficiently to the appropriate receivers” (262).

Rowe and Frewer’s approach to understanding extra-electoral citizen participation is flawed, for two reasons. First, the authors seek to sidestep normative challenges by substituting “appropriate” and “relevant” for “equity” and “fairness.” But simply asking who deems receivers “appropriate” or sources “relevant,” and by what method they are selected, raises the very normative questions that the authors seek—but fail—to avoid. Second, it is simply absurd to assert that performance variation occurs only within, and not between, mechanisms. To claim that it makes no difference whether, say, focus groups or referenda are used to facilitate citizen participation, but only how these mechanisms are employed, ignores centuries of research indicating that institutions (in this case participation mechanisms) matter in that they set the context and conditions of participant interaction (March and Olson 1984; Shepsle and Bonchek 1997; Weaver and Rockman 1993).

Other authors seeking to avoid normative quagmires attempt to “map” participatory mechanisms based on their characteristics rather than some normative notion of better or worse. For example, Ryfe arranges 16 local and national organizations by size (small, medium, large) and group goals (education, conflict resolution, cooperation, action, policy) in order to “develop a preliminary map of the terrain of discourse practice in all its complexity and fluidity” (2002, 364). In their essay “Mapping Public Participation in Policy Choices,” Bishop and Davis situate mechanisms according to their general perceptions as to when they are more often used and their possible limitations, arguing that public participation is best seen as a nonnormative, “discontinuous set of techniques chosen according to the issue at hand and the political imperative of the times” (2002, 26).

While avoiding the pitfalls of the normative approach, mapping citizen participation mechanisms constitutes

only half of what is needed to develop an empirical theory of citizen participation. On their own, classification exercises merely suggest a number of reasons as to why and when certain citizen participation mechanisms *might* be used, but they provide no means by which to test or demonstrate whether these theories actually hold. According to Dowding, “In order to discover the relative importance of causal factors we need to move to other techniques. This is what social scientific research is all about. This is why social scientists specify *models*” (2001, 91). What is missing from the extra-electoral citizen participation literature is a model by which we can hypothesize about citizen participation and eventually gather data to test whether or under what conditions these models hold.

Of most interest, perhaps, is providing a model to explain why, under seemingly similar conditions, different citizen participation mechanisms are used. In other words, why do some governments choose to use referenda, as in New Zealand (Nagel 1994), to decide whether to, say, amend their electoral systems, whereas others use task forces, as in the United Kingdom (1998), or citizen assemblies, as in British Columbia? (2004). Although this article maps various citizen participation mechanisms according to how much they aid or hinder citizens and state officials, it moves further than those offered by past authors and presents an informal model that, at its core, suggests when and why different citizen participation mechanisms might be used.¹ Such a model not only helps practitioners and citizens decide which mechanism they might endorse, but also it may illuminate opponent strategies.

The Citizen Participation Game

The citizen participation game is played between teams of citizens and state officials who hold contrary, or even opposite, policy preferences. They engage in the game because, on their own, neither side has the political capital required to secure their policy goals.² To move ahead with their plans, they need to add their opponents’ political capital to their own. Government players require additional support from citizen players for policies that are unpopular with the general public or politicians. Citizen players need to secure additional political capital from government players in order to have their policy goals enacted by the state. This is not to say that the preferences of citizens and government officials always conflict. Officials and citizens agree on many issues and often work together to find solutions to policy problems. However, there are also many issues on which contrary preferences collide and neither side has the ability to force a conclusion without the support of the other. It is under these situations of conflict that the citizen participation game is played and during which the rules of engagement are most critical.

The citizen participation game has two distinct rounds, each with its own prize. In the first round, both sides

merely decide whether to ante up and endorse the process, or “rules of the game,” through which future participation will take place. In this case, winning involves citizens or state officials securing endorsement for a process that is favorably biased. Endorsement may be as formal as to include even written guarantees, but it can be as informal as agreeing to have one’s organizational logo or name placed on a report or participant list. Substantive interaction between citizens and state officials only begins in the second round. This round proceeds based on the mechanisms endorsed in the first round and involves a struggle for control of game outcomes, including agenda setting and decision making. Of crucial importance is the idea that the participation game has two rounds and that first-round play occurs *before* the players sit down at the negotiating table, are presented with an issue, or are invited to testify at a public hearing, for example. Recognizing that the rules of play often determine the eventual outcome of any game, this essay concentrates on the first round in order to develop a model by which to assess mechanism bias and, subsequently, more accurately predict when and why various mechanisms are most likely to be employed.³

Citizen Participation Mechanisms and the Matrix of Control

As discussed earlier, there is persistent and convincing evidence that institutions matter and that the rules by

which decisions are made affect decision-making process outcomes. Just as institutions that facilitate electoral participation can help or hinder, say, minority groups (Davidson and Grofman 1994; Grofman and Davidson 1992) or women (Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Rule and Zimmerman 1994) win legislative seats, so, too, might it be expected that the different rules by which citizen participation is facilitated might help or hinder participants’ control over outcomes. As explained in the following subsections, figure 1 situates 26 citizen participation mechanisms on a matrix of control in order to illustrate the advantages and disadvantages to citizen and government game players.

Decision-Making Control Axis

The decision-making control axis is arranged like that of Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation (see also Shand and Arnberg, explained in Bishop and Davis 2002, 20). Arnstein groups eight “rungs” according to three distinct “tiers” of participation. For Arnstein, *nonparticipation* describes processes that are substituted for real participation, including manipulative and therapeutic processes where participants are disabused of “incorrect” attitudes. *Tokenism* describes processes where participants are allowed to hear and/or have a voice, but decision-making control is retained by the governing authority. Finally, Arnstein’s *citizen power* refers to processes where

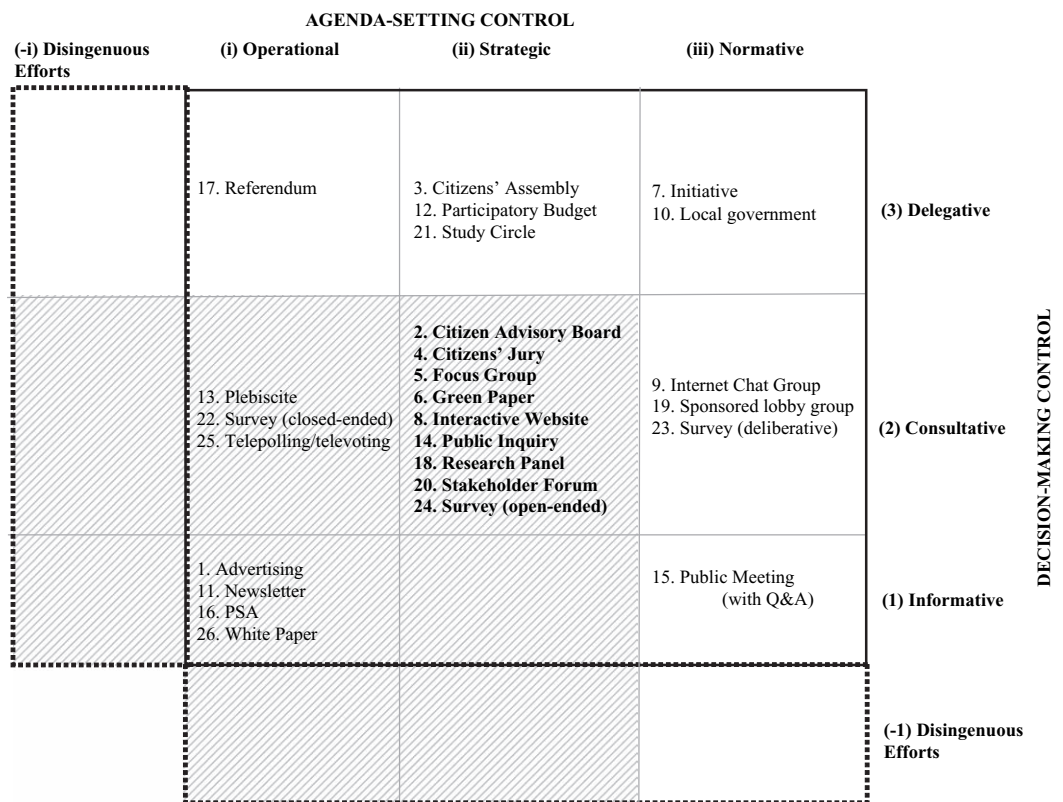


Figure 1 Matrix of Control

citizen participants partner with state officials, or have semi- or fully delegated decision-making authority.

The biases inherent in each citizen participation mechanism are accounted for on the vertical axis of the matrix according to Arnstein's premise of final decision-making control, with her rungs and tiers compressed into three general categories so as to reduce redundancy. In figure 1, mechanisms that are deemed "informative" allow citizens no say over process output and merely provide different avenues through which state officials can advertise their policy decisions. "Consultative" mechanisms allow formal citizen input, but the final decision is made by state officials. Finally, mechanisms of a "delegative" nature permit citizens final, but not complete, decision-making control because government officials are still formally permitted to participate.

Still with figure 1, advertising, newsletters, and public service announcements are all categorized as "informative" because they provide no channels for citizen feedback into the decision-making process. Public meetings are also categorized as informative because they often deny citizens' objections to the normative premises of relevant public policy to be incorporated into process outcomes. Consultative mechanisms, including plebiscites, surveys, Internet chat groups, and public inquiries, provide formal avenues for citizen input with final policy decisions made by state officials. Delegative mechanisms, such as referenda, study circles, and deferral to local government, allow for input from senior levels of government, but citizens make the final policy decisions.

These three categories describe how mechanisms function when they are utilized in good faith. Nonetheless, as Arnstein indicates, it is important to stress that any mechanism can be made to function at a less than optimal level by either citizen or government players. The shading in figure 1 indicates that bolded consultative mechanisms in matrix square (2, ii) can be constructed so as to only inform—or even worse, misinform—game players. What is key here is that although mechanisms can never rise above their matrix position, there is much room for subpar performance, including what Arnstein calls "manipulation" and "therapy," indicated on the decision-making control axis as (-1) in figure 1. This lesson also holds true for agenda-setting control aspects of particular mechanisms (-i).

Agenda-Setting Control Axis

The agenda-setting control axis adds complexity to the idea of citizen control by suggesting that the public policy process involves more than decision making. Often described as a "cycle" (Howlett and Ramesh

1995), the public policy process is multistaged and, in addition to decision making (or policy formation), includes agenda setting, implementation, and evaluation. Thus, instead of exclusively focusing on which mechanisms afford citizens or state officials final decision-making control, the idea of agenda setting is included to capture what some suggest may be the key to the entire policy cycle (Cobb and Elder 1971).⁴

Hasan Ozbekhan (1969; see also Smith 1987) proposes a typology of agenda-setting control during planning processes that lends itself to evaluating citizen participation mechanisms. According to this formulation, the most bounded types of participatory processes permit only "operational" information exchange, in which policy strategies are reduced to a series of administrative tasks and schedules, providing little freedom to citizen-participants. Moving this concept from process to mechanism, advertising is categorized as an operational mechanism because it only allows citizens, for example, to view a mere 30 seconds of television commercial information or answer a single referendum question about a specific policy change. "Strategic" discussions concern distinct ways in which already established normative goals can be reached, with discussions of this type often concerning feasibility and resource availability. Such mechanisms allow broad discussion of a single issue, with citizens' assemblies, focus groups, or open-ended surveys serving as examples. Finally, exercises allowing participants to discuss "normative" issues are, according to Ozbekhan, the least bounded, with citizens free to raise any issue they see fit. Mechanisms furnishing this maximal level of agenda freedom include delegation to local government, Internet chat groups, and public meetings with question-and-answer periods.

First-Round Game Outcomes: The Importance of Leadership Capacity

In combination, the ideas of agenda-setting and decision-making control are used to form a matrix of control by which all citizen participation mechanisms listed in table 1 are situated in figure 1. The idea is not to situate particular exercises according to whether citizens or state officials might or might not have established control during the various stages of the policy process but rather how individual mechanisms are structured to advantage or disadvantage players in the second round of the citizen participation game. The matrix of control describes the set of mechanisms from which citizens and state officials must choose before anteing up in a game's first round and the advantages and disadvantages of each in terms of how they affect second-round play. In seeking to maximize their advantage, citizen players will mostly likely seek to secure mechanisms closest to matrix cell (3, iii), which affords them the greatest possible control over the agenda and final decision making. Here, citizens might wish for a local governmental arrangement or

the ability to set and answer a binding question of their choosing through an initiative exercise. State officials attempt to secure mechanisms closest to matrix cell (1, i), which affords them as much total control as possible. Advertising, newsletters, and public service announcements are the favorite mechanisms of choice. That mechanisms other than those listed in figure 1, cells (1, i) and (3, iii), are often used to facilitate interactions between citizens and state officials suggests that others factors are at play in round one of the citizen participation game, including the size and leadership qualities of citizen and state official teams.

Teams and Size

Citizen participation games take place between teams of citizens and government officials; when the stakes are consequential, both teams usually are large. Teams of government officials, however, are always large because they have the benefit of public resources. Citizen teams can be either large or small, but government teams are more likely to engage large citizen teams because they have more political capital than smaller ones. Consequently, citizen participation games will almost always include only large government teams and large citizen teams of perhaps hundreds of individual members or 10 or more representatives from well-established organizations.

Despite the advantage of extra political capital, as explained by Olson (1971), large teams typically experience collective action problems because their efforts are undermined by free-riding individuals who benefit without contributing to the endeavor. Collective action problems are often solved by using one of three strategies. In the first, incentives are offered only to those who actively participate in the group (Rydin and Pennington 2000, 157). In the second, a “size manipulation” strategy is used to convince potentially inactive participants that the larger group is “both viable and yet dependent on their personal contribution” (Dunleavy 1988, 49). In the third, a “signal manipulation” strategy is used to increase the apparent benefits of participating to “enhance the intrinsic value of identity with the process of collective action” (Jones 2004, 463).

All three strategies require team leaders with the experience and resources to overcome the collective action problem. However, even those with a cursory knowledge of collective action will know that such efforts often fail, indicating that some leaders are more successful than others at implementing these strategies. Thus, it would appear that, as other scholars have found (Downs 1967; Dunleavy 1985, 1992; Niskanen 1971), variation in leadership capacity is a key factor to consider when crafting a model to explain when and under what circumstances differ-

ent citizen participation mechanisms should be employed.

Leadership Capacity: Rookies, Novices, and Experts

There are three types of leaders that head teams of citizens or government officials: rookies, novices, and experts. “Rookie” leaders are playing the game for the first time and have no experience with the rules of the game or their opponents’ preferred mechanisms. Neither do they understand the collective action problem or its solutions. Citizens involved in their first public participation exercise or recently hired government officials working for a new agency are rookies, with the former being much more common than the latter.

“Novice” group leaders have in the past engaged in citizen participation games and acquired knowledge about how to make a large group work. Proficiency takes time to acquire because it requires knowledge about both agenda-setting and decision-making biases inherent in various mechanisms. Although novices have gained knowledge about how they may fare under different mechanisms, they have none regarding their current opponents’ strategies. Even novice citizen leaders who have participated in many past citizen participation games may suddenly find themselves in an unfamiliar sphere or sector (e.g., experience with environmental reforms may not transfer readily to welfare reform). The same might be said for government officials moving from, say, a department of the environment to a department of social services.

“Expert” government officials and citizen leaders have “perfect information” in that they are aware of the rules of the game, the strategies of their opponents, and how to overcome collective action problems. These leaders have long experience with citizen participation games, have an intimate knowledge of their opponents’ strategies, and employ size manipulation or signaling strategies to make full use of their available political capital. Expert citizen leaders may be community members long engaged in attempting to secure concessions from government, such as longtime area residents, indigenous peoples, or sovereigntists. Expert government leaders include high-ranking civil servants, such as department heads, deputy ministers, or permanent secretaries.

Modeling Mechanism Selection: Leadership Capacity and the Matrix of Control

How well citizen and government leaders are matched in terms of their capacity serves as the basis of the model designed to estimate when a particular citizen participation mechanism will be used. For example, expert leaders would appear to have an advantage in the first round of citizen participation

games if they are matched against rookies. Experts know which mechanisms provide the greatest benefit, which provide their opponents the least, and which mechanisms their opponents prefer. Additionally, they can coordinate their teams to make full use of their political capital during negotiations. Rookie leaders do not know which mechanisms are more or less advantageous or their opponents' preferences and will most likely have a hard time convincing their teams to work toward a single goal. From this description, it is likely that experts will win the first round of the citizen participation game and convince the rookie-led team to ante up and play using mechanisms that cede maximal control to their opponents. The interpretations of such pairings form the basis of a model used to more exactly estimate when and why different citizen participation mechanisms may be used in different situations.

Figure 2 presents 26 mechanisms as they are placed on the matrix of control in figure 1, with horizontal and vertical axes altered to reflect the leadership capacity of citizen and government official team leaders. Here, it is proposed that if the leaders of the government official team are experts and the citizen leaders are rookies, citizens can be expected to ante up and complete the citizen participation games using mechanisms offering them the least amount of control, such as advertising, public service announcements, and newsletters (1, i). On the other hand, if rookie citizen players are matched against rookie government officials, citizens may secure a less constrictive mechanism, such as a public meeting, in which citizens

control the agenda and can raise normative questions (1, iii).

When faced with citizen groups with novice leaders, expert government officials will likely offer to employ mechanisms that allow citizens input into the final decision but maintain full control of the agenda through the use of plebiscites, close-ended surveys, or telepolling in which they set the questions (2, i). Novice-versus-novice matches bring more concessions from government officials who, in an effort to maintain at least some control over the process, allow citizens input into the final decision and consider strategic aspects of particular policy issues but still employ mechanisms that allow them the final say over the process output (2, ii). Outmatched rookie government leaders offer novice citizen leaders input into the final decisions and agenda-setting control by, for example, endorsing and funding a report by a state-sponsored lobby group (2, iii).

In the rare case in which expert citizen leaders head citizen groups, state officials are liable to begin by making major agenda-setting and decision-making mechanism concessions. When experts play against experts, government teams might allow policy referenda (3, i). In the case in which expert citizen leaders are matched against novice government leaders, such mechanisms as participatory budgets or citizens' assemblies may be required to entice citizen leaders to ante up (3, ii). Finally, when rookie government officials are paired against teams with expert citizen leaders, the process may be fully decentralized through the use of sublevel governments or initiatives (3, iii),

CITIZEN LEADERSHIP QUALITY	(3) Veteran	17. Referendum	3. Citizens' Assembly 12. Participatory Budget 21. Study Circle	7. Initiative 10. Local government
	(2) Novice	13. Plebiscite 22. Survey (closed-ended) 25. Telepolling/televoting	2. Citizen Advisory Board 4. Citizens' Jury 5. Focus Group 6. Green Paper 8. Interactive Website 14. Public Inquiry 18. Research Panel 20. Stakeholder Forum 24. Survey (open-ended)	9. Internet Chat Group 19. Sponsored lobby group 23. Survey (deliberative)
	(1) Rookie	1. Advertising 11. Newsletter 16. PSA 26. White Paper		15. Public Meeting (with Q&A)
		(i) Veteran	(ii) Novice	(iii) Rookie
		STATE OFFICIAL LEADERSHIP QUALITY		

Figure 2 Leadership Quality and Citizen Participation Game First-Round Outcomes

with citizens not only having final say but also asking whatever questions they wish.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to move beyond normative-based evaluations and descriptive accounts of mechanisms through which citizen participation is facilitated by presenting such exercises as two-round citizen participation games in which citizens and government officials compete to secure the political capital of the other. In the game's first round, citizens and government officials decide whether to ante up their political capital and endorse the game, with their choice based on the mechanism by which the final competition will be facilitated. As mechanisms afford different agenda-setting and decision-making control, each side attempts to secure the most favorable mechanism without scaring their opponents into withholding their ante. Because team leaders have difficulty harnessing their team's full potential and often lack knowledge of the rules of the game and opponent preferences, rookie leaders can generally be expected to lose to novices or experts. While securing more favorable terms of engagement from rookies, novice leaders can be expected to lose first-round match-ups to experts.

The game metaphor and the placement of the 26 mechanisms on a matrix prompts additional ideas on this topic. First, the exercise suggests that there is no escape from the matrix and that even the most newly implemented citizen participation mechanisms, such as citizen juries or participatory budgeting, have their biases. This statement holds true for yet to be invented mechanisms, no matter how creative. Second, mechanisms affording government officials more control can be expected to be more common than those that afford more control to citizen teams because government teams are more often led by expert leaders. However, as citizen teams develop expert leadership, it is likely that citizen participation mechanisms offering citizens increased agenda-setting and decision-making control will be more frequently used. Finally, it would seem possible to move this informal model toward a more formal configuration and precise empirical testing by, for example, examining a variety of instruments and the level of experience of players involved in particular participation games (for an example of such testing, see Halvorsen 2003). Such tests would help clarify why, for example, some jurisdictions use citizens' assemblies, some referenda, and some commissions to alter or maintain their electoral system arrangements or why public meetings are so often used by municipal governments to interact with local publics.

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of London; Paddy Smith of Simon Fraser University; and Vancouver's Think City Society.

Notes

1. See Dowding (2001) for a good discussion of the value of informal and formal modeling.
2. This article follows Sørensen and Torfing's general definition of political capital as the power to act as "generated through participation in interactive political processes linking civil society to the political system" (2003, 610).
3. A number of the 26 listed mechanisms are often permanently mandated by government. For example, almost all countries have local governments that exercise delegated authority in delineated geographic areas. Permanent initiative legislation exists in a number of U.S., Canadian, and European jurisdictions. However, this article concerns situations in which mechanisms are established to engage citizens on a particular policy issue, such as when state officials establish a new local governmental body or promise an initiative to entice citizens to participate. It does not attempt to address situations involving citizen participation through mechanisms of an already established, permanent nature.
4. Some may argue that other stages of the policy cycle (Howlett and Ramesh 1995), such as implementation and evaluation, should be included in any analysis of citizen control. But this article relies on Hood's (1976) construct of "perfect administration" to maintain focus on arguably the two most important stages of the policy cycle. In the same way that "economists employ the model of perfect competition" (6), Hood assumes that civil servants administer policies without flaw in order to more sharply focus examination on other stages of the policy cycle.

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