Citizens’ Juries: an innovative tool for public participation in River Basin Management

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Outline of this presentation

I. What is a citizens’ jury?
II. The Dutch citizens’ jury on water
III. Empirical observations
IV. Propositions for debate
Part I: origins of the citizens’ jury

- Juries in court cases
- The US and Germany: planning cells and citizens’ juries (1970s)
- Later (1990s) also in the UK, Australia and other countries
- Guidance under the Water Framework Directive
Part I: jury characteristics

- 12 to 18 randomly selected citizens to form a microcosm of the community
- Who attend a series of meetings (3 - 5 days)
- Who hear evidence, question witnesses, discuss a specific issue as suggested by the authorities
- Who make an informed judgment and recommendations
Part I: who wants to organize one?

- Deliberative democrats - desire more inclusiveness, more discussion and real citizenship
- Juries as a supplement to ‘ordinary’ decision making
- For complex decisions that are socially controversial
- Here: River Dialogue and a Dutch province
Part II: the IJsselmeer
Part II: the Dutch citizens’ jury

- Jurors: 14 citizens from a town at the lake
- Witnesses: User groups of the lake
- Charge: Priorities for water quality policy
- The jury: Three days and three evenings
- Moderator: Strong role
- Decisions: No consensus necessary
Part II: Selection of jurors

- 2,000 invitations sent to random people
- Gender, age, education level and ethnicity
- Profession as a ‘negative’ criterion
Part III: empirical observations, response

- Positive response first 3%, second 6% (internet panel 20%)
- Many men, 40+ years, and highly educated
- Adjustment through selection -> avoidance of ‘professional’ public participants
Part III: representativeness

Gender

Right proportion of men and women

The group was a bit too old..

Education

...and a bit too smart
Part III: representativeness

Provincial election

- citizens’ jury
- non-respondents
- province

Percentage of parties:

- SP
- GL
- PVDA
- D66
- CDA
- VVD
- LPF
- CU
- SGP
Part III: empirical observations, learning

- Interaction with witnesses enriches the process
- Jurors able to handle complex information
- High learning effect
Part III: cognitive maps

Fish yield, increase or decrease

"the quality of the water in the IJsselmeer"

pH Value

Metals
Mercury
Aluminium
Lead

"The quality of the water of the IJsselmeer"

More sand extraction
More fish
More sludge

More birds
No professional fisheries

Clear water
More birds

Water level down; water warmer
Water level up; water colder

<- before the jury

after the jury->
Part III: empirical observations, policy

- Link with policy process is a difficult matter
- Cost effectiveness? 30,000-40,000 Euros
- Citizens’ jury does increase political involvement
Part III: empirical observations
Part IV: proposition 1

“Jurors should be educated in the technical issues that are relevant for the matter at hand”
“Public authorities should be bound by the recommendations from citizens' juries”
“Jurors should be allowed to choose witnesses they want to hear during the jury themselves”
“The deliberative capacity of jurors should be the basis for their selection, rather than criteria like age, gender and education level”