

# Democratic innovations in the 'end times'

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PEP – Public Engagement Projects

<https://pep.org.nz>

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# About PEP

- 2-person partnership
- Building 'architectures of listening' and deliberative engagement
- Building trust, better decisions, stronger relationships



# Democracy: yes, no, but!

- ‘One of the main obstructions to meaningful action is "modern democracy....Even the best democracies agree that when a major war approaches, democracy must be put on hold for the time being. I have a feeling that climate change may be an issue as severe as a war. It may be necessary to put democracy on hold for a while’.

James Lovelock

- ‘Democracy is not elections, even though every manual on the subject tells us otherwise. Campaigning and electioneering now are so synonymous with democracy, we can't imagine anything else. We've lost sight of how democracy was originally conceived’.

Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, Founder, NewDemocracy

- ‘The cure for ailments of democracy is more democracy’

John Dewey

# Democratic innovations

- No doubt we live in a world of where technological, social, cultural and economic innovations are required to meet global climate change challenges. Changes in societal functions such as mobility, energy, agriculture, construction etc and the institutions that enable current unsustainable practices to continue
- Democratic innovations may also be necessary because of changing circumstances. Liberal representative democracy and its institutions may need revising and updating
- Beginning in the 1970s and an upsurge the 1990's of democratic innovations e.g. citizens' jury and planning cells
- 'Democratic innovations as processes or institutions developed to reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes by increasing opportunities for participation, deliberation and influence. It entails alternative imaginaries of citizens as co-producers and problem solvers'.  
Elstub and Escobar, 2017.
- Democratic innovations participatory and deliberative democratic theory emerged in response to empirical democratic theory.



# Vote centric v talk centric

## Vote centric views of democracy

- Fixed preferences and interests compete via fair mechanisms of aggregation e.g. voting

## Talk-centric views of democracy

- Deliberative democracy focuses on the communication processes of interests, preferences and opinion formation – precedes voting
- Accountability replaces consent as the core of legitimacy
- Communication at the heart of politics

# Principles of deliberation: From individual preferences to public judgment

- Listen and consider the arguments of others
- Find common ground
- Accept Disagreement
- Open to revising values, interests, preferences

# Deliberative democracy

- Based on the premise that collective decisions should be made through reasoned public discussion rather than the sum of individual private preferences
- Political decision-making should be 'talk-centric' not 'vote centric'
- To help citizens better understand the issues, their own interests, and the interests of others, forge agreement where possible and where not possible both structure and clarify the questions behind the conflict
- Deliberative democracy is where people come together on the basis of equal standing and mutual respect to discuss the political issues they face, and on the basis of those discussion decide on policies that will affect their lives

# Why deliberation?

- Can lead to new solutions for the most challenging problems we face ('wicked' problems)
- Collective intelligence leads to improved policy outcomes that are more likely to stick
- Engender trust between citizens and government
- Less adversarial. Can take the 'politics' out of an issue

# ‘Mini publics’

- The principles of deliberation can be applied to a range of contexts and formats. ‘Mini-publics’ include:
- Citizens’ juries
- E- democracy
- Deliberative polling
- Consensus conferences
- Planning cells
- Citizens’ assemblies

# Mini-publics: Key features

Two core features:

1. It is deliberative: participants reach their conclusions or recommendations after receiving information and engaging in careful discussion about the issue or issues
2. It is a mini-public: its members constitute as far as possible, a representative subset of the population

Facilitation: fostering deliberative dynamics and communication

Learning phase: participants calling witnesses to present evidence; activists, stakeholders, experts, politicians, civil society, business

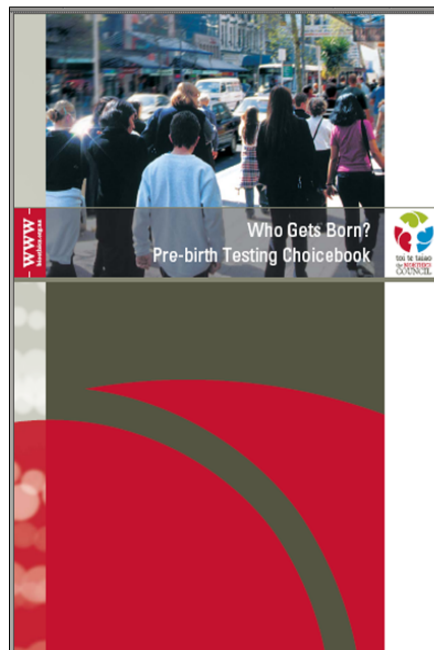
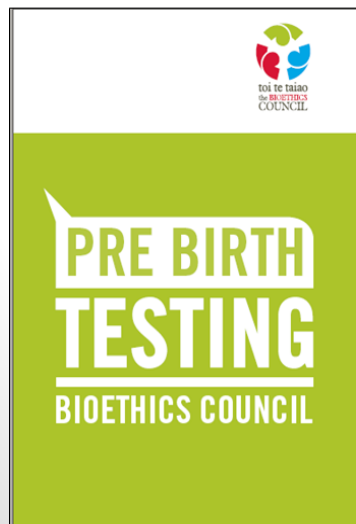
Deliberative phase: deliberate in the light of evidence and testimonies: re-examining own values, interests, preferences

Decision-making phase: reasoned conclusion or recommendations made after considered judgement

# Deliberation in Aotearoa

## Toi te Taio: the Bioethics Council

### Who gets born? Pre-birth testing



Who gets born? Pre-birth testing

deliberation home

- Deliberation home
- How to participate
- Shared area
- About this initiative
- Reading room
- Help/FAQs
- Keep me informed!
- Paper version
- Tell a friend
- Contact us
- Bioethics Council home

Click here to learn how to participate

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Who gets born? Now that's a tough one...

Today, fetuses can be tested for all sorts of possible illnesses, diseases and physical disorders such as cystic fibrosis, Down syndrome and HIV. And most babies in New Zealand do get tested before they are born. However, the pace of scientific and technological progress is such that the range of things we can test for is expanding.

How far should we go with pre-birth testing? Who has the right to decide? What might be the consequences of testing too much or too little?

These are the types of questions tackled by participants in the Bioethics Council's online deliberation. Participants were asked to consider 4 approaches to pre-birth testing that were developed by New Zealanders like you during a [public issue framing exercise](#). Some explored these further in online conversations with people.

1. Public framing – 56 people, 6 events, 1 Māori, 1 Pacifica
2. Public deliberation
  - 256 people, 18 in-person events, 4 Māori, 1 Pacific Island
  - Interactive website
3. Independent evaluation
4. Report



1. 406 choicebooks started, 69% completed
2. 64 stories & ideas
3. Three deliberation groups
  - 58 participants (>40% active, 2 groups)
  - 3 weeks each
  - moderated

# G1000 (Belgium)

Also used in the Netherlands and the UK

- The G1000 attempted to deal with Belgium's recent "democratic crisis"
- G1000 organizers financed the project through [crowdfunding](#)

Three phases

- 1. *public agenda setting* through a large scale [online consultation](#). (6000 participated)
- 2. 704 citizens were gathered (of 1,000 people who had accepted an invitation) at a '[Citizens' Summit](#)'
- 3. The event was live-streamed and two side projects enabled the organization of a simultaneous [online discussion](#) (G-Home) as well as the gathering of citizens in smaller groups all across the country (G-Off).

# South Australia's Citizens' Jury on Nuclear Waste 2016

“Under what circumstances, if any, could South Australia pursue the opportunity to store and dispose of nuclear waste from other countries?”

## **Stage 1 - Be informed**

- Two weekends a randomly selected Citizens' Jury of 50 everyday South Australians came together to identify '*What are the parts of the Royal Commission's Report that everyone needs to discuss?*'.
- The jury produced a simple report identifying key issues that need to be considered and discussed during the state-wide consultation program.

## **Stage 2 - Be involved**

- State-wide community program commenced. Over 100 sites across South Australia Aboriginal communities were visited during an extensive three-month consultation.
- South Australians were also invited to share their perspectives online via social media and at hosted community events across the state.

## **Stage 3 - Be clear**

- Following the state-wide program, the 50 members of Citizens' Jury One reconvened and were joined by an additional group of randomly selected South Australians. This larger Jury of more than 300 people assembled across three weekends in October and November for Citizens' Jury Two.

## **Stage 4 - Government's response**

# BC Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform

- Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform in British Columbia
- That assembly, composed of 160 randomly selected citizens, charged with the task of recommending an electoral system for the province.
- If it recommended changed arrangements, the provincial government committed itself to putting that proposal to the electorate at large in a referendum at the next year's elections. After an initial set of weekend meetings to inform members concerning alternative electoral systems, the assembly held fifty public hearings (attended by 3,000 citizens and receiving 1,600 written submissions) and then spent six weekends deliberating. In December 2004, it recommended a version of single transferable vote which was put to referendum the next May.

# Considerations

- Who will commission a citizen's assembly and what role will they play?
- Would a citizen's assembly be a one off?
- How to ensure legitimation

# Your questions

