

CHAPTER 8

ROLE-SET DETERMINANTS: COUNCILLORS' EXPECTATIONS

8.1 Introduction

As Chapter 5 shows, three types of role determinants are usually identified: personal, role-set, and organisational. Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with personal influences on a planner's participatory behaviour. Chapter 9 focuses on aspects of the organisational determinants of role behaviour. This chapter analyses the influence of probably the most significant members of the planner's role set, the locally elected council members.

Pfeffer and Salancik link the concepts of role behaviour and role-set expectations in the following way:

Organizations are composed of interdependent positions and interlocking behaviors. Occupants of these positions are exposed to the expectations and social pressures of other organizational members with whom they are interdependent. With experience, the expectations and demands become known, result in a collective structure of behavior, and stabilize to predictable patterns. In any given position, the occupant's behavior is influenced and constrained by the social pressures emanating from other persons in his role set. (Pfeffer and Salancik 1980a, 127)

This quotation also indicates the close relationship between role-set and organisational factors. Thus, organisational structure in large part determines role-set membership. Similarly, the position which individual role-set members occupy in the organisational hierarchy influences the degree of authority with which role-set members can support their role expectations.

Figure 5.1 shows three major groups of people comprising the local planner's role set in relation to his or her participatory role: citizens, colleagues and councillors. The identification and surveying of all three groups was beyond the scope of this project, detailed case studies being required. As is explained below, the

literature suggests that the local elected representatives are likely to have a considerable influence on the role performance of their employees, and thus it was decided in this part of the research to concentrate on local councillors. However, before looking in detail at the survey approach and results, it is pertinent to make a few general comments about the other two major groups within the local planner's role set.

Depending on the orientation of the study, citizen influence can be discussed either as a role-set or organisational determinant. Citizens who participate in local government affairs, and thus come into contact with the local planner, are obviously role-set members. As is noted in several earlier chapters, the level of participation is a function of two factors. The first is the social composition of the community, middle-class residents being much more likely to articulate their views. The second relates to the degree and type of development pressure, extensive redevelopment programmes in densely built-up areas being likely to generate the greatest reaction. Thus, it was the unprecedented property boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the associated growth-orientated policies of the State government, which helped generate the - also unprecedented - series of B.L.F. green bans and other protest activity. The 1968-74 property boom is unlikely to be repeated in the near future: Daly (1982,153) points out that the previous period of vigorous sustained growth in Sydney occurred in the 1870s and 1880s. However, participating individuals, even in periods of unusual political activity such as the early 1970s, usually form a small minority of the total client community, the latter being one of the planner's organisational role determinants (Figure 5.1). Consequently, further discussion of the public's influence is to be found in the following chapter.

A local planner's role-set colleagues are likely to include other professional planners, the engineer, council clerk, health and building inspector, and the remainder of the local authority's administrative staff. What little published evidence there is would suggest that the majority of the non-planning staff would not strongly favour public participation. Local government's relationship with the public, as outlined in Chapter 4, is in part at least a reflection of

staff values, as is Wild's (1979,26) general comment about local government bureaucracy being 'too secretive, too legalistic, too dependent on experts, too remote, too inflexible in the application of rules and regulations'. Both suggest that a more open, less formal participatory approach would not be generally welcomed.

Attitudinal survey work by Sewell (1971,39) led him to conclude that 'Public health officials seem reluctant...to establish formal links with groups in the general public', and 'engineers were even less anxious to establish direct and continuous links with the public than were the public health officials'. However, the N.S.W. planners' survey found that respondents holding engineering and health and building qualifications were generally more supportive of public participation in planning than were the full-time planners (Table 7.4).

The N.S.W. planners' survey gives more information relating to the influence of a planner's fellow professional planners. The head of the department responsible for the council's planning functions is the person on the council's administrative staff most obviously capable of influencing the way in which planning is carried out. Overall, heads of department tend to have a slightly more favourable attitude to public participation than the assistant planners (Table 7.6). However, in those departments where both heads and assistants were interviewed, there were 29 instances when the heads had higher Thurstone scores than their assistants, 31 when the heads had lower scores, and 5 when the scores were the same (paired $t=1.57$, $df=64$, $p=NS$). Overall, therefore, the results indicate that the views of the senior planners are little different from those of their departmental assistants.

Colleagues can also have an indirect influence on the local planner's participatory role, in that they can help determine the organisational structure within which the planner works, thus possibly influencing the resources that can be committed to public participation. Not surprisingly, separate planning departments tended to employ a greater number of qualified planners than those departments which combined both engineering and planning functions under the one head. Although in part a result of different workloads between councils in different areas, it also reflected the concerns

and priorities of the head of department. Thus, one metropolitan authority with a separate planning department employed 7 full-time qualified planners, whilst an adjacent authority of similar size and growth rate which had a joint engineering and planning department had only one full-time professional planner. Similarly, respondents indicated that the technical and clerical members of planning departments were encouraged to study for professional planning qualifications, whilst the same encouragement was lacking in joint departments.

The attitude of the incumbent head of the joint department was sometimes vital to the timing of the decision to establish a separate planning administration. One encouragement to a joint head to accept such a move was the very inadequate stipend usually paid for assuming responsibilities for planning. For example, an engineer-planner in a large metropolitan municipality received \$1,650 for planning out of a total salary of \$35,000, yet planning duties took up 40 per cent of his time. There were instances where the head of the joint department had agreed with the move to establish a new administrative structure. Indeed, occasionally the joint head had opted to have sole responsibility for the new planning department. But a more general comment was that a planning department had been established only after the engineer-planner had resigned or retired. Alternatively, the new department was set up without the goodwill of the incumbent engineer-planner. For example:

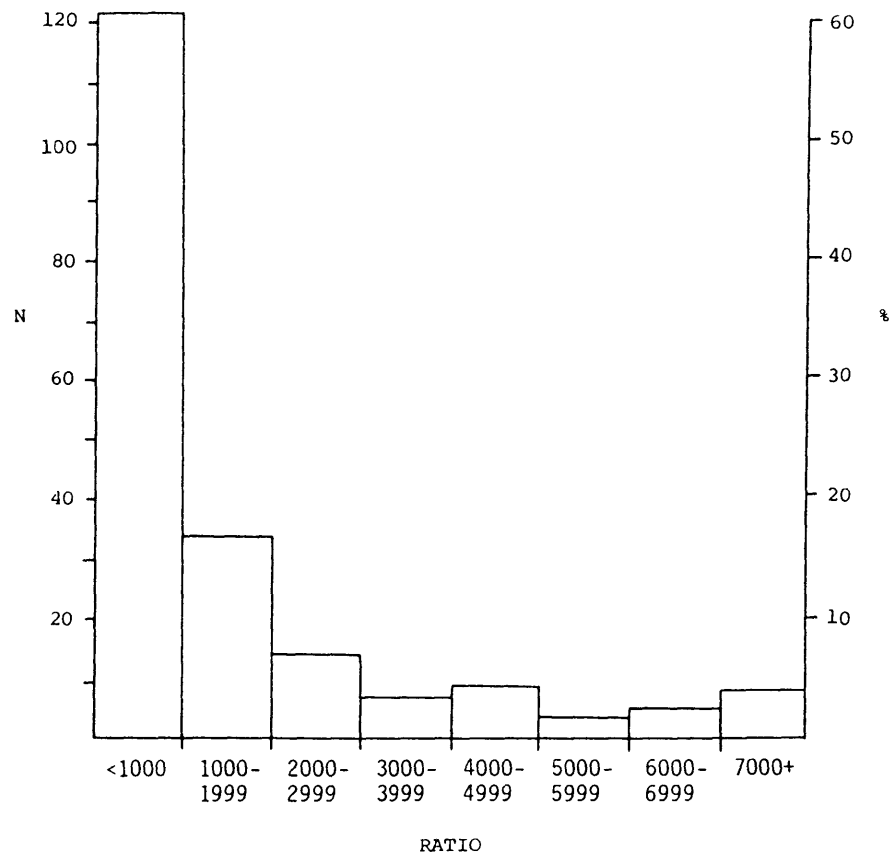
The move to establish a separate planning department caused considerable turbulence within the Council administration as the Engineer refused to accept the decision - even writing to the Local Government Association and the Institute of Engineers to try and get the decision reversed.

The third major group making up the planner's role set is the local planner's employer, the local government councillors or aldermen.⁴⁵ As the following paragraphs illustrate, the available literature indicates that, in the New South Wales context especially, councillors are likely to exert a considerable influence on the activities of their professional planners.

Despite the trend towards a smaller number of local authorities

being responsible for a larger State population,⁴⁶ the scale of local government in N.S.W. is still relatively small. For example, Figure 8.1 shows that three-fifths of local authorities had a ratio of voters per elected member of less than 1,000 to 1. Only 8 per cent of all areas had a ratio of more than 5,000 to 1. Even in the County of Cumberland only 10 of the 40 local authorities exceeded the 5,000 to 1 ratio, the maximum being 11,094 in the outer suburban area of Warringah.

Figure 8.1 Local authorities: representation ratios, 1977-78
(N = 202)



Source: calculated from Australia 1978a

The generally small constituencies of local authorities, plus their relatively limited range of functions (see Section 4.3.1), has meant that locally elected representatives have been able to maintain a tight control on local government administration. This is reflected in the findings of the two major official inquiries into local government reorganisation conducted during the 1970s (N.S.W. 1974b, Bains 1978). The 1974 report states that 'most councils retain unto themselves responsibility for a vast amount of detailed work' (p.50), whilst Bains (1978,3.3) comments that 'members are often embroiled in administrative detail and not in policy formulation'.

The formal delegation of specific powers to council staff to facilitate greater administrative efficiency was not legally recognised until 1945. It was then made possible for a local council to 'authorise an officer, or a servant, or a person, or a committee consisting either wholly or in part of officers, servants⁴⁷ or persons to exercise or perform on behalf of the council any power, authority, duty or function of the council', excepting specified matters generally concerned with the collection or payment of money (s.530A(2) of the Local Government Act). However, reporting the results of a 1976 survey of N.S.W. town and shire clerks, Halligan and Smith comment:

Initial impressions are of the rather minor nature of many delegations and of the numerous cases where councils have not been prepared formally to delegate even routine or minor functions to the clerks. (Halligan and Smith 1980,62)

Not surprisingly, the degree of delegation was positively related to the size of the local authority, the greater volume of business in the larger areas making delegation more necessary. However, even among the largest authorities there would appear to be considerable variation in the delegated powers. Thus, although Halligan and Smith (1980,67) cite the wide delegations made to staff in Warringah and Sutherland Shires, two of the largest metropolitan council areas, the chief planner at another of the largest Sydney councils complained during the interview that there was no authority delegated to the Council's senior servants. The continuing tight control of the administrative staff by the elected representatives was summarised by

one metropolitan planner who maintained that 'when the Mayor speaks, everyone jumps'.⁴⁸

The traditional tight administrative control exercised by the locally elected members is also reflected in s.87 of the Local Government Act, which designates the mayors of municipalities and cities, and the presidents of shires as 'chief executive officers' who may, if the council so resolves, 'control and direct the servants of council' and 'carry on the regular services and operations of the council'. Consequently, Ordinance 4 (clause 12 (1)) provides that the town or shire clerk 'shall be the chief administrative servant of the Council, and shall (subject to any direction given by the Council, or Mayor, or President) advise as to their duties and exercise general control over all other servants of the Council'. In practice, 13 per cent of the council clerks considered that the mayor or president was doing the work of a chief executive officer, and 50 per cent believed that the job was shared between mayor and clerk (Halligan and Smith 1980,59). Generally, the exact working relationship between mayor and clerk has 'depended very largely upon the personalities and capacities of the individuals involved' (Blackadder 1981,19) thus highlighting the inadequacy of the fixed role model. Both the Barnett and Bains reports (N.S.W. 1974b,53; Bains 1978,3.29) advocate that the council leader's formal role as chief executive should be discontinued. Thus the Barnett Committee sees the role as suited to the early part of the twentieth century, when 'there was an absence of trained and qualified personnel', but as anachronistic at a time when council staff 'have become more highly qualified and experienced and have developed an expertise in local government administration unequalled in most cases by the mayor or president or members of the council' (N.S.W. 1974b,50).

Close scrutiny of administrative decisions by elected members is also encouraged by the way in which local government income is derived. There continues to be a heavy reliance on local taxes, especially rates: in 1979 86 per cent of N.S.W. local government finances were collected locally (Australia 1982b,2). The political importance of this is that 'citizens can still perceive a connection between rates paid and services rendered' (Jones 1981,105). Such a

situation is particularly important for what one local planner referred to as 'an invisible service' such as town planning. Jones (1981,66) refers to town planners as the 'policemen' or 'regulators' of local government. He contrasts the roles of the engineer and town planner as follows:

The engineer can be called a 'benefactor'. Usually people like to receive the engineer's services ... The 'regulators' are the next important grouping in local government. Town planners, traffic controllers and health and building inspectors are the main sections ... They often produce services that are not popular and cannot produce the range of valued products at the disposal of the engineer. Many of their activities produce problems and objections that cause trouble to the local authority. While the engineer is the giver of gifts, the regulators are the local government policemen. (Jones 1981,66)

Moreover, although a local authority was legally obliged to employ a qualified engineer,⁴⁹ there was no similar obligation to appoint a qualified planner. As pointed out in Chapter 4, councils were required to appoint a qualified planner only to assist in the preparation of a planning scheme (s.342E(2)) - and subsection 2b provided for exemptions from this requirement if the scheme was of 'a restricted nature or limited extent'.

Consequently, it was considered appropriate that the second major thrust of the survey work should be towards local government councillors and aldermen. Their expectations of how the local planner fulfils his or her participatory role would appear to be of considerable importance in determining the planner's participatory role behaviour. The aim of this aspect of the research was to obtain a general overview of councillors' attitudes to compare with the opinions collected during the planners' interviews. A matching of role expectations would indicate a strong basis for the common perceived approach to public participation. A discrepancy between role expectations would indicate a high potential for role conflict, and thus much less commitment to the eventual role behaviour. An additional objective was to use the councillors' survey data to test for the occurrence of a number of associations suggested in the literature between members' attitude to public participation and a

range of personal variables. The following section details how the data were collected in relation to councillors' attitudes.

8.2 Data Collection

There was a total of 2,091 aldermen and councillors in 205 local authorities at the beginning of 1978 (N.S.W. 1978e). However, as the research was concerned with the role-set members of the local government planners, the sampling frame comprised only those 957 elected representatives in the 83 local authorities which had indicated that they employed a qualified town planner.

Time and financial constraints made it impossible to mount a second series of interview studies. Consequently, it was decided to conduct a self-administered study by means of a mailed questionnaire. As subsequent data analysis required several subgroups in the total sample, a minimum of over 100 responses was needed. Only one follow up mailing was to be used, despite the value of at least a second reminder (Scott 1961,166; Dillman, Christenson, Carpenter and Brooks 1974,744). This was because the co-operation of each local authority would be needed again when the survey of council policy was mounted in 1979. It was considered that a further reminder to councillors might result in council co-operation being withdrawn from the later survey.

Consequently, a conservatively large sample of about 400 was decided on. A total of 35 local authorities were selected at random from the 83 already included in the planners' survey. The 35 councils comprised a total of 408 elected members. A pilot study was carried out in 5 of the local authorities visited during the first series of planners' interviews. A response rate of 50 per cent was achieved with one reminder, and the returns were subsequently found to be suitable for inclusion in the main sample.

For the main sample, distribution of the covering letters (Appendix F) and questionnaires (Appendix G) continued to be carried out whilst visiting each council's administrative offices. A list of elected members' names was obtained from either the town planner or the council clerk. Each covering letter was personalised, being

addressed to the respondent by name and individually signed by the researcher. Personalisation is 'one of the central controversies in discussions of cover letters' (Bailey 1978,140). However, it was considered that it would give added prominence to the questionnaire among a group of people who regularly received large volumes of unsolicited mail.

Where possible, the envelopes containing the survey material were given to the town planner to pass on to the elected members. It was reasoned that in this way the councillors might receive some positive comments from one of their senior officers about the research and the researcher. However, if nothing else, the hand delivery of the envelopes highlighted the fact that a personal visit had been made to the council offices, a factor which may have been of particular importance in the more remote areas. Moreover, there is support in the literature for the view that an 'in-house' mailing system is helpful in boosting response rates (Veiga 1974).

Overall, after one reminder (Appendix H) 206 councillors replied, a response rate of 50.5 per cent. This is an average figure when compared to the other rates reported in the literature for mailed questionnaire studies of Australian local government representatives. They include: 24 per cent by Abelson (1980) in his survey of aldermen in Sydney; 40 per cent by Bowman (1972) in Victoria; 64 per cent by Vandelloo (1980) in Victoria; and 70.7 per cent by Robbins (1977) in South Australia.

Scott (1961,149) points out that 'the possibility that mail survey non-respondents might not be representative of the survey population has for long been one of the main worries of those who wish to use the mail survey technique'. In order to measure non-response bias, several survey results were compared with known information from the sampling frame.

Scott (1961,158) reports several studies which show variations in response rate between rural and urban areas, though the results are not consistent. Dillman et al. (1974,747) suggest that a lower response rate might be found in urban areas where residents 'are more likely to be exposed to surveys on a repeated basis'. However, they too found no consistent pattern in the results of their 5 surveys. Of

the 35 N.S.W. councils included in the sample, 15 are classified by Harris (1975,97-101) as metropolitan.⁵⁰ In total, 55 per cent of all metropolitan councillors responded to the questionnaire, compared to 47 per cent of their non-metropolitan colleagues, indicating a slight, though not statistically significant bias of responses towards the metropolitan area (chi square=2.58, df=1).

One demographic variable which could be externally verified was the sex of each councillor, the full name of each member being available from the list of representatives supplied by the administration of each council. The literature does not indicate any consistent bias in the sex of respondents (Scott 1961,155; Kanuk and Berenson 1975,448; Crothers 1978,234). In the N.S.W. study 40 councillors, (9.8 per cent of the total sample) were women, just slightly higher than the overall state figure of 8.1 per cent (Burdess 1981,356). Twenty-two women councillors completed and returned the questionnaire, giving a female response rate of 55 per cent. This was not significantly different from the male response rate of 50 per cent (chi square=0.36, df=1).

The literature suggests that respondents tend to have a generally higher socio-economic status than non-respondents (Scott 1961,156-7; Kanuk and Berenson 1975,448). In order to test for bias in the N.S.W. councillor returns, the 13 metropolitan areas for which a social status score was available (Keech 1972,154) were ranked, and the overall response rate of the top 5 authorities was compared to that of the bottom 5. In total, 58 per cent of aldermen from upper social status areas responded, compared to 52 per cent from the lower social status suburbs, the difference not being statistically significant (chi square=0.59, df=1). This result gives some basis for assuming that, overall, the returns are not socially biased to any significant degree. However, it is possible that there was some social bias as a result of the high status members within each council having higher response rates.

The lists of the councillors provided by the local authorities also identified the mayors and presidents. In total, 51.4 per cent of council leaders responded, compared to 50.4 per cent of the remaining elected members (chi square=0.01, df=1, p=NS).

A final check on possible differences between the survey's respondents and non-respondents related to attitudes to public participation in planning - the prime concern of the questionnaire survey as councillors' attitudes were regarded as a major organisational influence on the planner's role. Scott (1961,156) reports a 'response bias in favour of interest in the subject of the survey'. Such a bias, if applicable to the councillors' responses, would throw into doubt the findings of the survey in terms of the reported influence of the elected representatives on the role of the planner.

Consequently, when it was apparent that there would be no further mailed replies, 3 of the 35 local authorities in the survey were drawn at random and the non-respondents in each of these areas - a total of 18 councillors - were contacted by telephone. They were invited to answer one question, consisting of a single item, 7-point rating scale. It asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement that 'Public participation should be seen as a very important part of the local planning process'. Unfortunately, in only one of the 3 local authorities were all initial non-respondents prepared to cooperate. With regard to this council, the mean score of the 6 initial respondents was 1.92; this compared to 1.83 for the 6 aldermen responding by telephone. Testing the results using the Wilcoxon two sample independent test showed no statistically significant difference between the two sets of results (Wilcoxon $T=0.5$, $z=0.08$, $p=0.94$), thus giving some support to the view that the councillor returns were not biased to any significant degree in terms of the respondents' attitudes to public participation in planning. A comparison of the initial 14 respondents in all 3 areas and the 13 telephone respondents showed a mean of 2.11 for the initial respondents and 1.92 for the telephone group (Wilcoxon $T=3.92$, $z=0.19$, $p=0.85$).

8.3 Councillors' Attitudes Regarding Public Participation in Planning

The councillor questionnaire included virtually the same

Thurstone attitude scale as that administered during the interviews with local government planners. The only change comprised removal of the statement that 'Public participation has been forced on planners just because a few politicians think it might get them a few more votes'. It was considered that the statement might be regarded as discourteous by some councillors, thus reducing the overall response rate. It was replaced in the list by another item having the same median score and the next smallest interquartile range. Table 8.1 compares councillors' attitudes, as measured by the Thurstone scale, with those of the interviewed local government planners. There was no statistically significant difference between the two distributions. Both sets of results had a mean value of 7.3, and the standard deviations were 1.15 for the councillors and 1.13 for the planners.⁵¹

Table 8.1 Local councillors and planners: distribution of the Thurstone attitude scale scores

Score	Councillors (%) (N = 206)	Planners (%) (N = 158)
Under 4.0	1.0	0.6
4.0 - 4.9	3.9	1.3
5.0 - 5.9	7.3	11.4
6.0 - 6.9	16.0	20.3
7.0 - 7.9	42.7	34.8
8.0 - 8.9	27.6	29.7
9.0 - 9.9	1.5	1.3
Over 9.9	-	0.6

t = 0.213
df = 362
p = NS

Source : author's 1978-79 N.S.W. surveys

As mentioned in Section 8.2, the questionnaire also included a single item, 7-point rating scale which asked respondents how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement that 'Public participation should be seen as a very important part of the local planning process'. Table 8.2 compares the results of the councillors and the planners. Although the difference in the results was not

statistically significant, councillors were more inclined to give the sentiment expressed in the statement their wholehearted support: for example, 50 per cent of councillors scored '1' compared to 40 per cent of planners. Conversely, 20 per cent of the councillors and 30 per cent of the planners scored '2' on the rating scale.

Table 8.2 Local councillors and planners: response to the statement: 'Public participation should be seen as a very important part of the local planning process'.

Response category	Councillors (%) (N = 203)	Planners (%) (N = 157)
Strongly agree = 1	49.8	39.5
2	20.2	29.9
3	16.8	15.9
4	6.9	7.0
5	2.0	3.8
6	2.0	3.2
Strongly disagree = 7	2.5	0.6

Wilcoxon T = 1226.5

z = 1.29

p = NS

Source: author's 1978-79 N.S.W. surveys.

This pattern appears more strongly in a comparison of councillors' and planners' responses when asked about the existing level of public participation in land use planning. Sixty-nine per cent of elected representatives replied that there was too little, 24 per cent said that the existing level was satisfactory, and only 7 per cent said that there was too much (Table 8.3). By comparison, local planners were much more satisfied with the existing situation, the relevant percentages being 58, 36 and 6. Comparison of the two sets of results showed a statistically significant difference, suggesting that councillors may be likely to exert a positive influence on the planner's participatory role.

Table 8.3 Local councillors and planners: perception of current level of public participation in planning.

Response category		Councillors (%) N = 194	Planners(%) N = 156
Too much	1	4.64	1.28
	2	2.58	4.49
	3	23.71	35.90
	4	38.14	44.23
Too little	5	30.93	14.10

Wilcoxon T = 2669.5
z = 2.84
p < 0.01

Source: author's 1978-79 N.S.W. surveys.

During the time that the questionnaires were distributed to the local elected representatives, the State Labor Government was reviewing the existing planning legislation. The previous Liberal Government's aborted Environmental Planning Bill of 1976 had extended the existing participation provisions (Section 4.5.1), and the current Labor Minister for Planning and Environment had already instigated more extensive participation requirements for local planning through Ministerial circulars (Section 4.5.2). Consequently, it was widely expected that the new legislation would add to the existing statutory requirements for public participation. Councillors were thus asked how they viewed the prospect of an increased statutory level of citizen involvement. Overall, 38 per cent were in favour of such legislation, 26 per cent were against, and the remaining 36 per cent either gave a non-committal response or did not answer the question.

In effect, 38 per cent responded positively to the suggestion that more detailed regulations be laid down by State Government for local government to follow. This is surprising considering the general and long-felt view of local government that it was overly constricted by the State.⁵² The explanation is perhaps indicated in the response of one Wollongong alderman who commented:

Normally, I do not encourage statutory interference at the local government level. However, in the field of planning I feel many councils are far too conservative in their outlook and some statutory compulsion is necessary.

Thus, respondents used words such as 'welcome', 'beneficial', 'tremendous', 'excellent' and 'progressive' in describing their views about increasing levels of statutory participation.

Those 26 per cent of respondents who were against such legislation based their decision on one or more of the following arguments. Some councillors were simply against further restrictions on local government activities. Others felt that such regulations would be ineffective as they could not change people's attitudes. They believed that many local government personnel would see the regulations simply as another bureaucratic hurdle rather than a means to 'fruitful discussion', and that the response of the majority of the public would remain unchanged. Surprisingly, however, there was only a relatively small degree of outright rejection of the idea of more statutory participation, few councillors using adjectives such as 'useless', 'dangerous' or 'disastrous'. In particular, there was virtually no mention of the possibility of increasing local government administration costs. This is despite the fact that the issue was regularly raised during the planners' interviews, and the fact that historically local government funding of State initiatives has proved a source of contention (Chapter 4).

The survey also included some open-ended questions which asked councillors to outline the arguments which they saw as justifying their views of public participation and, where relevant, the mechanisms by which participation might best be achieved. The following sections present these results: the first discusses the responses of those 87 per cent of councillors supporting participation; the second outlines the views of the remaining councillors who did not support participation.

8.3.1 Arguments used by supporters of public participation

Only four councillors envisaged a situation reminiscent of a participatory democracy. Two of them were from North Sydney and Leichhardt, areas where there had been significant public

participation experiments (Section 4.4.5). Thus, one North Sydney alderman, who was also a precinct committee member, referred to 'evolving political and management systems where people make their own decisions'. He envisaged:

Eliminating all existing 'non-responsible' decision making.
Eliminating all existing 'secondary representation' decision making. Recognizing that representative democracy is totally unsatisfactory and attempting to evolve democratic systems at all levels of government and decision making.

The idea of what Arnstein (1969,221) refers to as 'partnership', where 'citizens and powerholders ... agree to share planning and decision-making responsibilities', was supported to some degree by a further 14 of the respondents. So, for example, a Rockdale alderman commented that:

Community groups should have their own representatives at the local level. One, or perhaps two, from each ward could be added to the planning committee. They would take their own place with their respective ward aldermen and have full voting rights. Despite the fact that the vast majority of residents leave it to their ward aldermen to look after their interests, there are a number of people who would be interested in serving in such a capacity.

However, most of these 14 respondents were less clear about the decision-making role of the community group representatives. For example, two councillors, whilst putting forward the idea of joint committees, nevertheless were very cautious about who should be on the committee. Thus, one Fairfield alderman suggested that 'carefully selected (ie. intelligent but not extremist) citizen members might be appointed to council planning committees as well as elected representatives'.

Overall, it is clear that there was only very limited support for the ideas of citizen control, delegation or partnership, the rungs on Arnstein's conceptual ladder that could be described as including significant aspects of participatory democracy. However, there was a more positive response among councillors than planners - only one planner considered that a local community might, in some circumstances, have a direct decision-making role.

All the remaining 161 councillors who supported public participation did so essentially because they regarded it as a useful information-exchange mechanism. Thus, the major reason given by virtually all supporters of public participation revolved around the general theme that, in a democratic society, it is essential to ascertain the wishes of the community likely to be affected most by any planning proposal. The following are two of the many comments made on this theme:

Planning is no different to any other democratic process. It is for the people, therefore it should be by and of the people. A dictatorship is very efficient, but it does not necessarily go in the right direction, it only pleases the dictator. (Willoughby alderman)

We are a democracy. Local people want to be consulted, though unfortunately only on local issues. Misunderstandings arise as soon as the local people judge that a Council has ignored them in its Plans. Public participation provides an alternative link of Planners to the people beyond that provided via Aldermen. This alternative link can be very useful. (Warringah councillor)

As the above comment indicates, councillors generally did not see any great threat to their democratically-elected position by opening up this 'alternative link'. The vast majority of respondents made no direct reference to their traditional role and the concept of public participation in planning. The assumption, articulated by one Lake Macquarie alderman, was that because of public participation 'the decision makers know that they can arrive at a decision knowing that a large variety of opinions has been given'. This strengthening of the elected representative's role is described more forcefully by one North Sydney respondent who commented that:

Aldermen at election time have no real idea of all the issues confronting them in the forthcoming term of three years. Aldermen therefore need continuing feedback from the wards they serve regarding public opinion on issues. Public participation mechanisms such as a precinct committee can provide this feedback from people with a much wider variety of backgrounds than the alderman would be able to collect on his own.

This, in turn, was regarded as strengthening the hand of the

community and, consequently, their elected representatives, vis-à-vis the professional planners. Planners were regarded as liable to become 'carried away with the science of their vocation', be 'too academic', 'office dreamers' and 'typical bureaucrats, intolerant of any other viewpoint'. Some councillors commented at greater length. For example:

Planners are not always right. In my experience some tend to follow the pure theoretical tenets of planning and disregard the very essential fact that all planning is for people. Again in my experience, public participation in the debate on a proposal will often raise issues and problems overlooked by the professional planner. (Lismore alderman)

And more harshly:

Planners see themselves (generally) as great dreamers, without the practical experience. They all seem to want to create another Canberra. Public participation seems to bring them back to earth. Public participation also brings in economics. Planners don't seem to think costs mean anything, as long as it looks good. (Tamworth alderman)

Overall, therefore, councillors felt that public participation in planning would result in plans which had the support of a larger proportion of the community than might otherwise have been the case. One pithy comment was that 'Plural opinions, openly debated, will give better results and acceptance'. It was felt that such actions would also help to raise the status of local government. In the eyes of the local electorate, planning would be seen to be 'more open and less susceptible to suspicions regarding backdoor tactics'. Similarly, State government would be less inclined to interfere in local government affairs if it considered that councillors had the strong backing of the local electorate. Occasionally, the argument was extended even further, with respondents claiming that the offer to the public to participate was important, even if it was not taken by most citizens: 'I believe that whilst most people don't wish to actually participate, they nonetheless will support representatives who make the opportunity available to them as a right' (Shellharbour alderman). In other words, the Almond and Verba (1965,486) concept of the 'democratic myth' was raised, the opportunity to participate appealing

to the public's 'strong commitment to the norm of active citizenship'(p.481).

A wide variety of mechanisms were listed by councillors as suitable for the interchange of information between local government and the public. The most often cited means of information dissemination was through the use of the local news media, especially newspapers. There was virtually no indication that such publicity was regarded primarily as a manipulative tool. Respondents saw it as the beginning of a series of information exchanges. Thus, one alderman regarded press releases as a way 'to stimulate community thinking and opinion on broad planning issues', whilst another alderman referred to the need for 'controversial articles in the local media'. The practice of informing local people about development applications by advertisements in newspapers was also widely supported. Other traditional methods often mentioned included the use of displays and public meetings, which were cited by over one-third of all the respondents answering the question. The potential problems of public meetings were occasionally raised. For example, one Armidale alderman noted that

Public forums have value, but limitations must also be recognised. For example, pressure group influence may be out of proportion to their overall influence (i.e. views expressed do not necessarily reflect the majority views of the ratepayers).

Generally, however, such meetings were seen to be worthwhile. Small group meetings were regarded as particularly useful. For example, one Blue Mountains alderman suggested that the local authority

select specific project areas that residents can feel a direct relationship to, such as the place to put sports areas, neighbourhood playgrounds, shopping centres and passive recreation areas, and then call small discussion groups together through letters to households within a certain radius, depending on the scope of the project. Talk to them first, gathering opinion and giving some. Then move on to a broader management area discussion group. But always give the chance for the 'little man' to gain an understanding of what could happen and how he fits in and how he can help.

A recurring theme was the need to 'demystify' planning, with

information being 'more straightforward and less full of jargon'. Thus, one Orange alderman replied that public participation could best be achieved 'by reducing concepts and proposals to simple terms so that busy people may quickly comprehend'.

Many councillors also extended the issue of the availability of information to the workings of the council and its committees, with comments about the need for more frankness and less formality. For example, one alderman referred to the need to ensure that there were 'no confidence tricks or sham "democratic" meetings in which the public are supposed to be heard and consulted but before which pre-decided plans have already been made'. Generally, respondents favoured a more liberal approach to public access to planning data: 'councils should offer far more information to the public, rather than the public forcefully extracting information'. Thus, there was a call for the 'minimisation of closed committee proceedings', and the maximisation of the opportunity for the public 'to address the full council on any matter of concern'.

The perceived importance of a knowledgeable public is indicated in Table 8.4 which shows, for example, that 60 per cent of councillors rated it as 'Very important' on a five-point scale. Overall the councillor results were very similar to those of the interviewed planners who were asked the same question.

Table 8.4 Local councillors and planners: perceived importance of a knowledgeable public

Importance rating		Councillors (%) N=202	Planners(%) N=158
Very important	1	60.4	59.5
	2	19.8	22.2
	3	12.9	13.3
	4	1.5	4.4
Very unimportant	5	5.4	0.6

Wilcoxon T = 56
z = 0.6
p = NS

Source: author's 1978-79 N.S.W. surveys.

There is no clear-cut division between methods designed primarily for information dissemination and those which are mainly for information collection. As indicated above, much of the publicity was regarded as a stimulus for further interaction. Similarly, the traditional concept of a large, fairly formal public meeting can be seen as one end of a continuum which also includes more informal, small group meetings and, at the other extreme, personal interviews between individual citizens and local government personnel.

Fifteen per cent of respondents suggested that formal surveys might be undertaken to ascertain public opinion. One alderman illustrated their usefulness by enclosing a copy of a press release concerning the results of a survey he had carried out whilst campaigning during the 1977 pre-election period. The survey, involving 500 residents, was 'an endeavour to let ward residents, at first hand, tell him what they wanted from Fairfield Council'. In contrast to this approach, he maintained that 'Most Candidates dream of their own ideas instead of going to the people'. Generally, surveys were seen to have the advantage of providing information from the widest possible spectrum of residents, and thus to be the least biased in favour of vociferous pressure groups.

Only 3 per cent of councillors suggested that, when appropriate groups were not in existence, the council should help establish local precinct groups which could correspond directly with the council. As these groups would be directly concerned with assisting the local authority on specific planning issues, several councillors considered that they should have financial and professional support from the council. However, as one Drummoyne alderman pointed out, the funding should be 'small but adequate' because 'if the support is too great they will become lameduck organisations'.

Of crucial importance in determining the planner's participatory role is the councillor's perception as to who should be involved in public participation activities. An analysis of responses from those 179 councillors who favoured public participation showed that 65 per cent either cited no specific personnel, or included both elected members and professional planners. Of the remainder, 18 per cent

cited only planners, and 17 per cent only councillors. The following paragraphs outline the responses of each of these three groups.

The first group either cited no specific personnel, or included both councillors and planners. These respondents implied or outlined how both they and their planning staff might take part in public participation activities such as holding on-site meetings; 'being available to discuss planning proposals with a variety of community groups'; 'inviting various organisations in the area to send representatives to informal meetings with the senior staff and elected representatives'; or listening to the representations of individuals about planning proposals.

The second group comprised those councillors who favoured public participation as an information exercise, and who mentioned only the role of town planners in the carrying out of such an exercise. The general theme running through the responses from this group was that planning was essentially an amalgam of technical and local expertise: planners needed to inform the public of the wider technical framework, and the public needed to inform the planner of the local environmental and social details. This is illustrated at the individual development application level by one Botany alderman who commented:

The average person realises what they require, but to really put their ideas into operation, the assistance of a town planner in explaining the reasons for and against would save a lot of unnecessary work in submitting and resubmitting plans.

At the more general level, a second Botany alderman commented:

Municipalities should be divided into neighbourhood precincts and all residents encouraged to attend meetings to meet planners etc. and to discuss their area and their aspirations for their future. This should then be extended to setting goals and achieving them. Planners should help people understand the processes involved and talk with the people until they feel they are ready to decide - it should be the people's decision.

One Campbelltown alderman, although rejecting the idea of group meetings, nevertheless firmly believed in the benefits of direct contact between the citizen and the professional:

Exhibitions and the opportunity for the individual to discuss matters with the professional of senior level is needed. I have little time for mass meetings, action groups etc. for I have yet to see a meeting arrive at a reasoned conclusion. People 'en masse' don't think - they are moved by emotions. I believe the individual should have the opportunity to discuss a problem with a professional, for if he is seeking an answer he can be assumed to be thinking about it. If he is at a meeting he will likely 'follow the mob' or 'shut up' because he is unable or unwilling to try and express himself on matters he realises he doesn't understand. The professional will likely learn from reasoned discussion with a genuinely interested amateur - both may profit - but the most he will likely get from a public meeting is a headache - and no help.

The third group comprised those 17 per cent of councillors who favoured public participation and linked their comments about how it should be carried out to methods which generally excluded professional planners. Essentially, these respondents emphasised the need for more councillor-citizen contact: formally, for example through open council meetings with extensive public input, and joint planning committees; and informally, essentially through a councillor's individual contacts with his or her constituents. In other words, those whose position was closest to the ideal of a participatory democracy tended not to emphasise the role of the professional. This is not surprising when it is recalled from Chapter 3 that according to the participatory perspective 'professionals should largely disappear as executive functions are taken over by mandated delegates' (Thornley 1977,53). However, in only two instances did councillors who favoured participation specifically reject the idea of using planners in the public participation process. Thus, one metropolitan alderman saw the elected representative's role as one of 'arbitrator and mediator, carrying out personal surveys as to the reaction of the electors to schemes drawn up by the Planners'.

8.3.2 Arguments used by opponents of public participation

Of course, the one in eight councillors who regarded public participation as an unimportant part of the planning process also

rejected the idea of any general public role for the local government planner. They considered that a planner's contact with the public should largely be through their elected representatives.

Members of Councils are elected to represent local communities. Those elected people should be aware of public opinion in their area. Consequently, they should use that local knowledge to make decisions for which purpose they are also elected. Not all, of course, will in practice be correct, nor would all the decisions be correct if the opinion of a section of the community influenced the decision. (Campbelltown alderman)

The final comment in the above quotation summarises the range of disadvantages listed by those who rejected a direct public role: the interested participants who are 'merely using town planning as a tool for ulterior motives - i.e. political or monetary'; the lack of any public concern with longer-term planning; the negative views of 'fanatical environmentalists, frustrating all development'; the tendency for public participation to generate conflict as 'various groups play tug-o-war over the area, not being able to present a concise plan or even agree on a concept'; and the generally unworkable nature of a process in which the councillors have to deal with

real knockers who are not prepared to listen to reason and who waste everyone's time because, next day, after possibly thinking that you have got through to them, you get the most ridiculous questions covering exactly what was painstakingly explained the night before. (Hume councillor)

All these problems were seen to be exacerbated by an apathy among the majority of citizens towards local government planning.

8.4 Possible Attitudinal Influences

The literature suggests several personal characteristics which are likely to be associated with councillors' attitudes to public participation. Each of the following sections analyses one factor, beginning with an outline of the views presented in the literature, and then relating these views to the results of the N.S.W.

councillors' survey. The Thurstone scores are used to gauge attitude to public participation.

8.4.1 Experience

There is some evidence to support the view that the older, more experienced representatives tend to be less in favour of public involvement than their younger, more recently elected colleagues. In part, this is a reflection of the generally more conservative perspective of individuals who have had long experience of a particular system and, being aware of its nature and able to understand its operation, are reluctant to change. This idea is evident in Rothman's general comment concerning political participation:

Older people, because they have a longer history of participation in traditional political parties, are more likely to continue their support of those parties than are younger persons, who have little or no experience of traditional political participation. Conversely, young persons who are more likely than older persons to support nontraditional political movements. (Rothman 1974,328)

More specifically, it appears that as councillors become more experienced as council members, they tend to change their perceived representative role. Following Eulau, Wahlke, Buchanan and Ferguson (1959), researchers usually identify the roles of delegate, politico and trustee. Delegates place most stress on the opinions of the electorate to guide their decision making. Politicos pragmatically balance public opinion and personal judgement according to the perceived political consequences. Trustees see themselves more as free agents, independent of partisan influence and pressure. Hill (1974,141) suggests that 'there is a developmental process, from young members who act as delegates through the mid-career men in politico roles to the long-serving members relying primarily on their judgement and position of responsibility'. Thus, councillors who are primarily concerned with policy making, and who, in arriving at policy decisions, tend to believe that they already have a sound

understanding of public opinion, are unlikely to favour new participatory structures. For example, Dearlove (1971,143) suggests that policy makers are amenable to citizen involvement in helping to implement policy decisions, but are much more wary of groups attempting to influence policy making.

In the survey of N.S.W. elected representatives, the average age of respondents was 46, the youngest being 24 and the oldest 70. A more detailed breakdown is shown in Table 8.5. The results indicate that N.S.W. councillors were a relatively youthful group when compared to other elected representatives in Victoria (Bowman 1972,45) and South Australia (Robbins 1977,368). They were also considerably younger than their English counterparts (Moss and Parker 1967,16). Table 8.5 also allows a comparison to be made of the age distribution of male councillors and that of all adult males in N.S.W. The greatest contrast is in the 18-29 age group which makes up nearly one-third of all adult males in N.S.W. but only one-fifteenth of male councillors. In contrast, the 40-49 age group, is, proportionally, more than twice as important in the councillor sample as in the N.S.W. census results. Not surprisingly, the age distribution of the male councillors was significantly different from that of the adult male population in N.S.W. as a whole (Kolmogorov-Smirnov $D=0.235$; $p<0.001$). The councillors were also significantly older than the surveyed local government planners (Mann-Whitney $U=10,085$, $z= 6.22$, $p<0.001$) the two means being, respectively, 45 and 36 years of age.

Table 8.5 Local councillors, planners and N.S.W. adult males: age distribution

Age Group	Councillors Total (%) N=190	Councillors Females (%) N=22	Councillors Males (%) N=168	Adult Males (%) NSW*	Planners Total(%) N=158
Under 30	6.3	4.5	6.5	30.0	24.0
30-39	23.7	13.6	25.0	21.8	43.0
40-49	33.7	22.7	35.1	17.3	21.6
50-59	24.2	50.0	20.8	16.3	10.8
Over 59	12.1	9.1	12.5	14.6	0.6

*Percentages are based on the number of males between 18 and 74. Eighteen is the minimum age at which a person is eligible to stand for civic office (Parliamentary Electorates and Elections (Amendment) Act 1970). Males who were 75 years of age and over were also omitted from the calculations, it being surmised that the vast majority of councillors would retire before reaching 75.

Sources: Australia 1979b, Table 1; author's 1978-79 N.S.W. surveys

The length of service of N.S.W. councillors (Table 8.6) was very similar to that of their South Australian colleagues (Robbins 1977,369). Both sets of data indicate a much more rapid rate of turnover of Australian representatives compared to their English counterparts (Moss and Parker 1967,41; Jones 1969,381; Hampton 1970,185; Newton 1976,120). Table 8.6 also shows the number of years that local planners had been associated with the local authority. Overall, there was no significant difference between councillors and planners: councillors had been elected representatives for an average of 8.6 years; planners had been with their current employer for an average of 6.9 years. Moreover, this balance of experience appears likely to continue at least for the next few years with only 10.4 per cent of councillors indicating that they would definitely be standing down at the next election, whilst 41 per cent of planners said that they would still like to be working for the same local authority in five years' time.

Table 8.6 Local councillors and planners: length of service with current local authority

Length of a association (years)	Councillors (%) (N=206)	Planners (%) N = 158
Under 3	36.4	30.4
3 - 5.9	25.2	24.7
6 - 8.9	10.2	17.7
9 - 11.9	6.8	9.5
12 - 14.9	6.3	5.1
15 - 17.9	4.4	3.2
18 - 20.9	4.4	3.2
21 and over	6.3	6.3

Mann-Whitney U = 15.466
z = 0.82
p = NS

Source: author's 1978-9 N.S.W. surveys.

The hypothesis that the older and more experienced councillors would tend to be less in favour of public participation than their younger, less experienced colleagues is supported by the results of the N.S.W. survey. There was a significant negative correlation between age and attitude to public participation as measured by the Thurstone attitude scale ($r_s = -0.2564$, $n = 190$, $p < 0.001$). As expected, the older respondents tended to have had more council experience than their younger colleagues ($r_s = 0.6085$; $n = 190$, $p < 0.0001$), and thus there was also a significant negative relationship between councillors' attitude and their length of service as local government representatives ($r_s = -0.2548$; $n = 206$, $p < 0.001$).⁵³

Closely associated with experience is organisational status. Status within each council is usually associated with the holding of specific formal positions. As indicated in Section 8.1, potentially the most powerful position is that of mayor or president, the holder being both chief executive officer and also entitled to assume the chairmanship of all committees (Local Government Act, 1919, Ordinance 1, clause 44). However, a comparison of attitude scores showed very little difference between the 18 mayors or presidents who responded to the questionnaire and their council colleagues ($t = 0.54$, $df = 113$, $p = NS$). Moreover, the direction of the result was not as predicted, the council leaders having slightly higher Thurstone scores (mean = 7.4)

than the other council members (mean=7.3).

It may be that the responsibilities of council leaders are too diffuse to enable a specific commitment to one particular policy area. Consequently, a second analysis compared the Thurstone scores of the vice-chairmen of the committees most directly concerned with planning issues with those of their colleagues who were not committee members.⁵⁴ The intention of the analysis was to contrast those councillors who, from their formal committee status, were most directly concerned with policy making in the town planning area, with those of their colleagues who, by their absence from the committee, had the least direct inputs into planning. Results show a mean Thurstone score at 6.0 for committee leaders, and 7.6 for aldermen who were not committee members - a difference of great statistical significance ($t=4.27$, $df=34$, $p<0.001$).⁵⁵ When comparing the attitudes of all town planning committee members with the attitudes of the rest of their colleagues, the difference was considerably reduced ($t=1.82$, $df=48$, $p<0.1$), though it was still in the expected direction, the committee members' mean Thurstone score being 7.2 compared to the non-members' score of 7.6. Thus, those councillors who, because of their senior committee position, will have most influence both on their council colleagues and on the professional planners, tended to be significantly less in favour of public participation in town planning than their less influential colleagues.

8.4.2 Political views

In Britain, party politics traditionally has had a major influence in local government (Hill 1974,67-8). Darke and Walker believe that party politics may well have an influence on a council's approach to public participation:

A cross pressure which may roughly correspond to the major party political division are attitudes and opinions about legitimate authority and its relationship to political leadership. Labour politicians are more likely to be committed to the principle of grass roots support and influence as evidenced in the structure of the party

organization. The 'social leader' element of legitimacy is more prevalent in the political make up of Independents and Conservatives. (Darke and Walker 1977,79)

Some evidence in support of their claim is provided in studies of councillors in Glasgow (Budge, Brand, Margolis and Smith 1972,154-5), Sheffield (Hampton 1970,192-205) and Birmingham (Newton 1976, Ch.8). For example, Newton concludes that

The most striking and clear-cut contrast of all emerges from a comparison of the two parties ... the Conservatives ... mentioned the fewest sources of opinion to be sounded out on major policy matters, are the least likely to think of consulting community organisations ... and seem to have low rates of contact with individuals and their party organisations. (Newton 1976,192)

In New South Wales, however, the Australian Labor Party's local government image tends to be more authoritarian than participatory. Thus, reviewing the history of the A.L.P. in the inner city areas of Sydney, Jakubowicz (1972,342) refers to the need to 'create a defensive socio-political community', which resulted in an 'authoritarian and hierarchical' political organisation as the workers learned 'to play the game hard and for keeps'.⁵⁶ The domineering character of the A.L.P. is illustrated in a previously quoted comment of Issy Wyner, a former A.L.P. alderman on Leichhardt Council for 15 years, who concluded that 'an atmosphere of authoritarian rule surrounded the Town Hall' (Wyner 1975,52). Indeed, following reports of violence and intimidation in some inner city A.L.P. branches closely associated with local councils (Bottom 1980), the N.S.W. Labor Premier, Neville Wran, called on the A.L.P. to 'get out of local government' (Pratt 1981,37). (See also: Davidson 1974,2; Mowbray 1980,57-8.)

Nevertheless, it is pertinent to note the continuing electoral support for A.L.P. local government candidates with, for example, the lack of success of Paddington Society members when they ran against A.L.P. members in the 1971 local government elections; the return in 1974 of an A.L.P. council at Leichhardt following the defeat of the Campaign for Better Council candidates (Wyner 1975,55), despite the generally poor showing of the A.L.P. in the 1974 elections (Hennington

1975); and the 'significant gains' made by Labor at the 1980 elections 'surviving the "Baldwin affair" (the bashing of a parliamentarian) and inner city branch reconstitutions' (Pratt 1981,37).

The rejection by the Liberals and the National Party 57 of the idea of direct endorsement of local candidates has resulted in only the Australian Labor Party officially endorsing prospective councillors in N.S.W. (Bowman 1976,30). However, although they may not be officially endorsed, members of other political parties may well stand for election to council in a private capacity.

Table 8.7 shows the stated party affiliations of councillors who responded to the questionnaire. The lack of an overt party political character to N.S.W. local government is indicated by the fact that over two-thirds of councillors indicated that they had no formal party political associations. The strong feelings of some respondents against party politics in local government was apparent in some of the unsolicited comments made about the subject. For example:

I am an Independent! No party. No group. No lodge. No person to tell me which way I must vote! (Lake Macquarie alderman)

As expected, the only political party of significance in local government was the A.L.P. Over one-quarter of all respondents were formally associated with the Labor Party, most being endorsed candidates. On large city and metropolitan councils, A.L.P. members comprised nearly 38 per cent of respondents, with A.L.P. members in 6 councils constituting either half or a majority of respondents. Not surprisingly, the councils with the greatest proportion of Labor councillors were in the poorer areas. Thus, of the 13 metropolitan local authorities for which a general social status score was available (Keech 1972,154), the 4 authorities in which a half or more of respondents were A.L.P. members ranked 13 (i.e. lowest social status), 12, 11 and 8 in terms of social status. Similarly, using the more specific but more recent income data from the 1976 census (N.S.W. 1978f,55), in the 14 County of Cumberland local authorities the A.L.P. strength was concentrated in those ranked 14 (i.e. lowest average income), 13, 12 and 10.

Table 8.7 Local councillors: political party affiliations

Political party	All councillors % (N=204)	M & CL councillors* % (N=122)	Other councillors % (N=82)
None	68.7	55.7	87.8
A.L.P.	26.4	37.7	9.8
Liberal	2.9	4.9	-
N.C.P.	0.5	-	1.2
Aust. Democrats	0.5	0.8	-
Unspecified	1.0	0.8	1.2

*Councils located in urban areas with more than 100,000 population (Harris 1975,5). Details of the Harris classification are given in Endnote 50.

Source: author's 1978-79 N.S.W. survey

Table 8.8 shows the results of comparing the Thurstone attitude scores of A.L.P. members with the scores of their non-Labor Party colleagues. An overall comparison indicates a significantly more favourable attitude to public participation among A.L.P. supporters ($p < 0.001$). However, the age distributions of the two groups of councillors were also significantly different ($p < 0.01$), the Labor members being on average 42.5 years of age, and the non-Labor councillors 47.7. Consequently, the two groups were each subdivided to identify those councillors less than, and those more than the overall mean age of 45.9 years (Table 8.8 B and C). The resulting analyses continued to show a higher mean attitude score for both A.L.P. subgroups, the difference being statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) in the younger councillor subgroup.

Table 8.8 Local councillors: public participation attitude, by political party affiliation

	N	Mean	t	df	p
A. All A.L.P.	54	7.78	3.294	135	<0.001
All non-A.L.P.	83	7.14			
B. Younger A.L.P.	29	8.13	3.28	62	<0.01
Younger non-A.L.P.	35	7.45			
C. Older A.L.P.	20	7.57	1.93	65	<0.1
Older non-A.L.P.	47	6.94			

'Younger' includes those less than the mean age. 'Older' includes those more the the mean age. Six councillors did not give their age and thus are omitted from sections B & C.

Source: author's 1978-79 N.S.W. survey

8.4.3 Socio-economic status

There is some evidence to suggest that councillors' views of their constituency role may vary with socio-economic status. Moss and Parker's (1967) survey of English councillors indicated that white-collar workers have a lower opinion of the general public than their blue-collar colleagues (p.232). Moreover, the more educated councillors were more inclined to believe that the public was 'not interested' in council affairs (p.217). And the frequency of contact between elected representatives and their constituents tended to decrease as the socio-economic status of councillors increased (p.226). (See also Hampton 1970,192-3; Darke and Walker 1977,53.) However, this view is not supported by Newton's findings about Birmingham councillors. He concludes that there is 'no clear relationship' between councillors' level of education and their chosen representative role: delegate, trustee or politico (Newton 1976,120).

A positive relationship between socio-economic status and political participation has been identified both in general studies (Milbrath and Goel 1977,92), and also in those relating specifically to local council representatives. (See, for example,

studies by: Moss and Parker (1967,7) in England; Bowman (1972,46) in Victoria; Bowman (1976,51 and 63) in Australia generally; Robbins (1977,368) in South Australia; and Verba, Nie and Kim (1978,298-301) who conducted a study of political participation across seven nations.)

Consequently, the details of the occupational status (Table 8.9) and occupational group (Table 8.10) of N.S.W. councillors are not unexpected in that they also show the high status groups to be heavily represented. For example, 44 per cent of male councillors were employers or self-employed, whilst in the 1976 Census results only 13 per cent of the N.S.W. male population in general were classified as employers or self-employed (Table 8.10).⁵⁸

Table 8.9 Local councillors in the labour force: occupational status

Occupational status	Total (%) N=178	Female (%) N=13	Male (%) N=165	Male (%) N.S.W.
Employed:				
Employer	28.7	46.2	27.3	13.1
Self-employed	15.7	-	17.0	
Employee/unpaid helper	54.5	46.2	55.2	81.8
Unemployed	1.1	7.7	0.6	5.1

In addition there were 22 councillors who reported that they were not in the labour force. They included: 13 who had retired; 8 who were engaged on home duties; and 1 student.

Sources: Australia 1981c,274 (N.S.W. males), and author's 1978-79 N.S.W. survey

Table 8.10 Local councillors in employment : occupational group

Occupational group	Total (%) N=171	Female (%) N=13	Male (%) N=158	Male (%) N.S.W.
Professional etc.	68.6	64.3	69.0	19.3
Clerical & Sales	8.1	28.6	6.3	14.2
Farmers	10.5	-	11.4	6.9
Tradesmen etc.	6.4	-	7.0	40.4
Others	6.4	7.1	6.3	19.2

Sources: Australia 1979d,16 (N.S.W. males) and author's 1978-79 N.S.W. survey

The fact that councillors do not mirror the social characteristics of the general population may be regarded as a drawback to effective representation (see Hill 1974,137). However, the large proportion of high status, white-collar workers on local councils in N.S.W. also implies a general absence of the large social differences that often produce 'obstacles' to co-operation between bureaucrats and elected members (Clavel 1968,132). (See also: Bolan 1971,390; Burke 1980,280.) For example 'status inequalities' were found by Clavel (1968,130) to be critical in determining the extent to which experts' views are rationally considered by citizen boards. In N.S.W. such inequalities are minimised by, on the one hand, the number of councillors with professional, executive and administrative expertise and, on the other hand, the large proportion (47.5 per cent) of local planners holding only the minimum professional qualification, the Ordinance 4 planning certificate.

The relationship between the councillors' socio-economic status and their attitude to public participation in planning was tested using both the occupational status and the occupational group of respondents. Those councillors employed in the labour force were dichotomised into those who were employers or self-employed, and those who were employees (Table 8.11A). The significant difference in the Thurstone scores of the two groups ($p < 0.001$) supports the hypothesis outlined earlier that individuals of a higher socio-economic status tend to be the least inclined to adopt a delegate role in their relationship with their constituents. The higher attitude scores of the employee group was in no way a reflection of the differences in age distributions of the two groups: the mean age of the employee group (44.7) was in fact slightly higher than the mean of the employer/self-employed respondents (44.3).

The same clear picture did not emerge when the analysis of attitude scores was carried out using occupational groups (Table 8.11B). To simplify the analysis, the farming and clerical/sales groups were ignored and only the professional and blue-collar categories compared. Table 8.11B shows that the attitude scores were not different to any statistically significant degree and, in contrast to the previous analysis, it was the higher status group

which had the higher attitude scores. However, analysis of the age distributions of the two groups showed that the respondents in the higher status occupation group, who had an average age of 42.9 years, were significantly younger than their colleagues in the lower status, group who had a mean age of 48.8. ($p < 0.02$) In addition, the tradesmen group had a higher percentage of employers and self-employed (56.5%) than the professional group (48.2%).

Table 8.11 Local councillors: public participation attitude and socio-economic status

A. Using occupational status

	Councillors N	Thurstone mean	t	df	p
Employer/self-employed	79	6.95	3.41	174	<0.001
Employee	97	7.54			

B. Using occupational group

Professionals etc.	117	7.40	1.79	137	<0.1
Farmers	18	7.36			
Clerical & Sales	14	7.53			
Tradesmen etc.	11	6.75			
Others	11	7.04			
Professionals etc.	117	7.40			
Tradesmen & Others	22	6.90			

Source: author's 1978-79 N.S.W. survey.

8.5 Summary

There are three main types of role determinants: personal, role-set and organisational. This chapter concentrates on the most important group making up the local planner's role set, the local government representatives. It is based on an analysis of 206 responses from a mailed questionnaire survey of councillors in 35

randomly selected local authorities employing professional planners. There are two basic aims. The first is to describe councillors' expectations of public participation programmes, thus allowing comparison with local planners' own expectations. Matching expectations would indicate a strong basis for participatory behaviour; a discrepancy between role expectations would indicate a high potential for role conflict. A second aim is to use the councillors' survey data to test for the occurrence of a number of suggested associations between elected members' attitudes to public participation and a range of personal variables.

Comparison of the Thurstone attitude scale results showed that there was virtually no difference in the overall distribution of scores of councillors and planners. However, two other numerical scales did indicate a slight tendency for councillors to be more in favour of public participation than their professional planners. For example, councillors were much less inclined to be satisfied with the current levels of planning participation than were the professional planners. Generally, therefore, the responses suggested that councillors would tend to support the idea of a participatory role for local planners.

Of the 87 per cent of councillors supporting participation, the vast majority regarded such activity essentially as an information-exchange mechanism. These findings are very similar to those from the planners' survey, suggesting a democratic elitist approach to participation. Participation was seen to strengthen the role of the local member, making him or her less susceptible to the unsupported wishes of the professional planner, encouraging public support of local government, and thus in turn making State interference in local affairs more difficult to justify. A wide variety of mechanisms were listed by councillors as suitable for the interchange of information between local government and the public, including the use of newspapers, displays, public meetings, special interest groups and more open council meetings. Generally, councillors appeared to regard such contacts as the responsibility of both the elected representatives and the professional planners.

Only one in eight respondents regarded public participation as an

unimportant part of the local planning process. They cited many of the practical problems raised in earlier chapters, including self-interest, conservative bias and the generation of conflict.

The remainder of the chapter discusses several factors which, according to the literature, are likely to be associated with councillors' attitudes to participation. They are: experience; political party; and socio-economic class.

The results give support to the hypothesis that the younger, less experienced members tend to see themselves as delegates for constituents, and that the older, more experienced councillors tend to assume a more independent representative role. Similarly, those councillors who had the greatest specific responsibility for planning were much less inclined to support planning participation than their colleagues who had no special planning responsibilities. These results are significant in that they show that these councillors who have most influence on the local planner - and probably the council in general - tended to be significantly less in favour of public participation in planning than their less influential colleagues.

There is some evidence from British research to suggest that Labour Party councillors are those most in favour of public involvement. Despite the generally authoritarian image of the Australian Labor Party in N.S.W. local government, a comparison of the Thurstone scores of A.L.P. members and their non-A.L.P. colleagues showed that Labor councillors, and particularly the younger ones, were more inclined to favour public participation than their independent council colleagues.

A related contention reported in the literature is that councillors' views of their constituency role may vary with socio-economic status: that the higher a councillor's status the less inclined he or she will be to seek out and take notice of constituents' opinions. This view was partly supported by the N.S.W. survey results. Those representatives who were employers or self-employed had attitude scores which were significantly lower than their colleagues who were employees. However, the same clear picture did not emerge when the analysis was carried out using occupational groups.

Following the discussion of personal and role-set role influences, the next chapter focuses on aspects of the organisational determinants of the local planner's participatory role behaviour. It discusses the results of a third survey, which was mailed to N.S.W. council clerks. The survey was designed to determine the extent to which council policies allowed the general public to become involved in local government affairs. Such policies are regarded as indicating the overall character of the organisational influences on the planner's participatory role.

CHAPTER 9

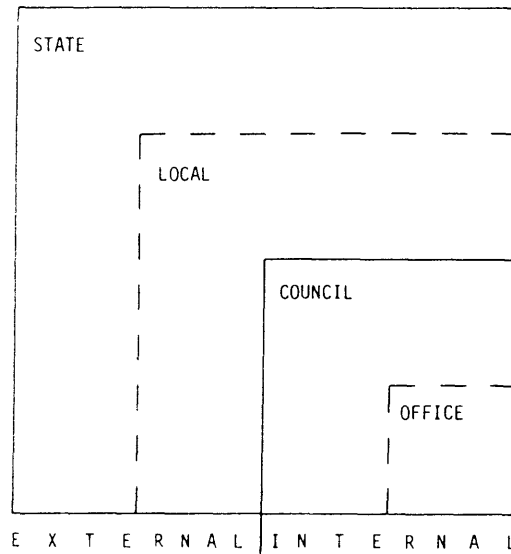
ORGANISATIONAL ROLE DETERMINANTS

9.1 Introduction

As Chapter 5 shows, three types of role determinants are usually identified: personal, role-set, and organisational. Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with personal influences on a local planner's participatory behaviour. Chapter 8 analyses the influence of probably the most significant members of the planner's role set, the locally elected council members. This chapter focuses on aspects of the organisational determinants of role behaviour.

Following the discussion of organisational role determinants in Chapter 5, three different organisational levels of influence on a local planner's role behaviour can be distinguished. They relate to the fact that the planner holds a specific position which is within a local authority's administrative hierarchy, the local authority itself being part of a more general social environment. Separate treatment of each level in this introductory section is hindered by the fact that often it is the relationships between levels that result in consequences which are important to the local planner's role. However, it is possible to discuss those organisational factors which mainly concern relationships within the local authority; and those organisational factors which mainly concern relationships between the local authority and its external environment - particularly the local community and the State government (Figure 9.1). The first part of the following discussion thus focuses primarily on internal organisational factors that have an influence on the local planner's participatory role. Similarly, the second part considers external organisational factors.

Figure 9.1 Levels of organisational role determinants



The boundaries within which the local authority's jurisdiction applies are an obvious structural constraint on the planner's role. In 1979 (the year in which the fieldwork for this part of the research was conducted) there was a total of 202 local authorities. This represents a reduction from 320 in 1914 and 292 in 1944 (Halligan and Power 1976,318). Amalgamations generally tend to be supported by State governments, using the basic argument that there are 'too many local authorities to provide efficient and economic local government services' (N.S.W. 1978a,10). In contrast, local government has opposed amalgamations, maintaining that there is a 'need to keep local government local' (N.S.W. 1974b,19). This opposition seems to be supported by the general public. For example, 74 per cent in a N.S.W. Gallup Poll directly opposed amalgamations (McNair 1977). Similarly, of community groups participating in public enquiries held by the Local Government Boundaries Commission in the late 1970s, 80 per cent were opposed to proposed amalgamations (Sant and Oatley 1983,397). Nevertheless, as Sant and Oatley (1983,399) show, the activities of the Local Government Boundaries Commission since the mid-1970s have resulted in amalgamations affecting 85 per cent of the State's non-

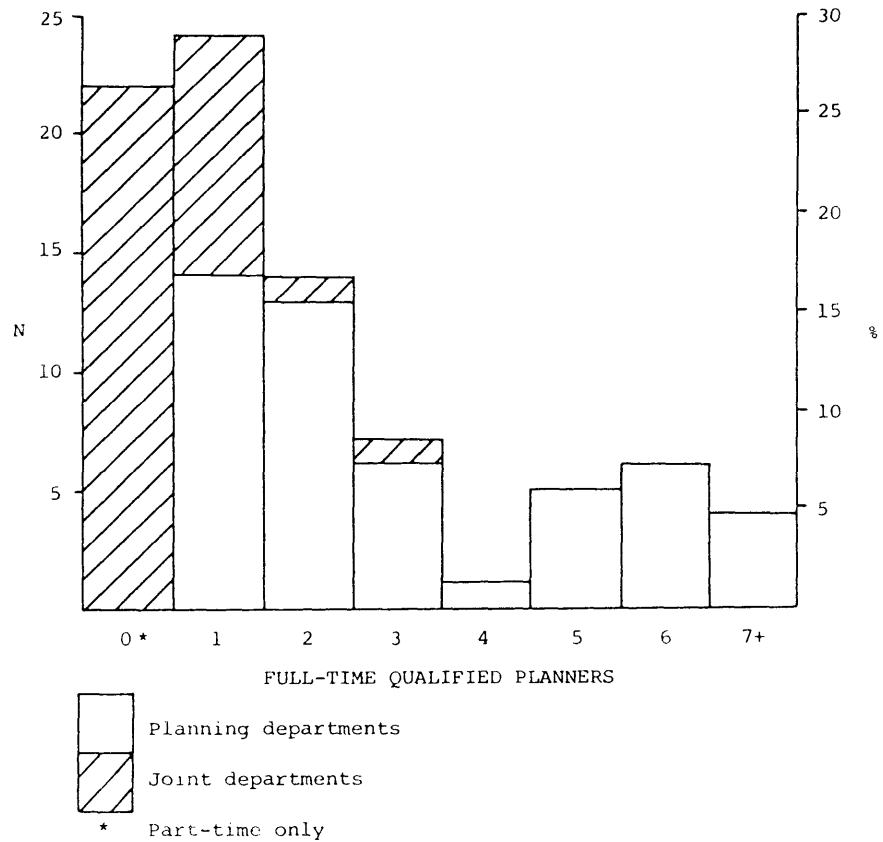
metropolitan population. And Pratt (1981,37) suggests that the ultimate intention of the A.L.P. State government is 'to amalgamate the forty-one metropolitan councils into ten city councils'.

As well as resulting in larger areas and larger client communities, the trend towards fewer local authorities will undoubtedly result in the taking on of more full-time professional planners as the larger organisational structure allows more specialised services to be supported. Indeed, Jones (1981,107) refers to 'the spread of professional empires' that followed the comprehensive amalgamation of local authorities in Britain. Amalgamations have virtually always resulted in a decline in the number of local government elected representatives in N.S.W. (Burdess 1980,283). For example, the number of councillors declined from 2,428 in 1944 to 2,091 in 1979, whilst the number of staff increased from 15,000 to over 36,000 (Halligan and Power 1976,318; N.S.W. 1979e; Bains 1978,6). Thus, the general trend is for senior staff to have fewer organisational constraints on their role behaviour as 'councillors in the small authority are much better able to monitor professional performance than in the large authority' (Jones 1981,107).

This general trend towards more professional staff has been most evident in the area of town planning, the general interest in environmental issues which developed during the early 1970s encouraging many councils to give more emphasis to their planning function (Section 4.5.3). Thus, the survey of local planners showed a doubling of local authorities employing a full-time planner, and an even greater increase in the number of councils with a separate planning department in the period between 1969 and 1979 (Table 7.2).

However, despite the fairly rapid growth of local government town planning in N.S.W., the total number of local planners employed by each authority is still very small (Figure 9.2). Thus, one quarter of the local authorities visited by the researcher in 1978-79 had no full-time professional planner. Less than one-fifth of all departments employed more than 3 full-time planners. Of course, these figures refer only to those 40 per cent of authorities which employed a qualified planner and were included in the survey.

Figure 9.2 Local authorities: number of qualified planners
(N = 83)



Source: author's 1978-79 N.S.W. survey

Generally, the personnel handling planning matters were involved predominantly with the administrative duties associated with development control, and had little time for any forward planning. This was most obviously the case in the one-man sections or departments. For example, one planner, whose recently established department consisted of himself and a part-time clerical assistant commented:

I can handle the day to day work OK, but there's no way that I can do any forward planning. At the very least we need a town planning assistant to carry out the routine work - but that's not very likely in the foreseeable future!

A similar comment was made by an inner city engineer whose department included one full-time planner:

What we're sadly lacking is any research back up. I initially thought that this was the role of the State Planning Authority, but it's now obvious that we will have to do it ourselves. For example, we really need an in-depth study of retailing in the municipality. It's the sort of job that only a small research team with no other routine administrative duties could handle effectively.

Similarly, a department's actual support of public participation may also be influenced by the number of planning staff available. As respondents pointed out, public participation is a relatively labour-intensive activity, and planning staff cannot adequately mount a participation programme without that work detracting from their usual duties. It might be expected, therefore, that given equal workloads per planner, the administration of any programme would be carried out with the least disruption in the large departments where the usual duties of those conducting the programme could be divided out between several competent colleagues. In smaller departments the load would tend to fall on fewer shoulders, indicating a greater potential for disruption - and thus a greater incentive not to embark on such a programme.

All the larger departments had established sections to deal with forward planning, though in only two authorities were forward planning and development control functions carried out in formally separated council departments. Generally, however, very few authorities had the planning personnel to sustain any extensive participation programme. This was highlighted by the stress which planners placed on staff time when asked for their reaction to a request from their employer to mount a participation campaign. For example:

I would say it was a very good thing. After all, advertising isn't very satisfactory. It needs somebody to go and explain it to the public. But when I think of the amount of staff time needed, as well as the other costs . . .! (Planner

shakes his head and has a look of resignation.)

The rapid growth of town planning that took place during the 1970s is unlikely to continue. Generally, local government rates almost tripled during the 1970s compared to a 242 per cent rate of increase in the Consumer Price Index (Jones 1981,138). Rapid rate increases during the mid-1970s - the then-Leader of the Opposition, Neville Wran (1975,1) noted that some councils had increased rates by up to 75 per cent - led to the Wran Labor government legislating to ensure that rate increases would not exceed a stipulated maximum percentage of the previous year's rate: 12 per cent in 1977, 9.5 per cent in 1978, and 8 per cent in 1979 (N.S.W. 1982a,36). Not surprisingly, this financial imposition by the State government is described by the Shires Association (1978,14) as 'fundamentally unsound' and 'at worst is a totally unwarranted assault on democratically elected local authorities'.

These financial constraints are particularly likely to affect the regulatory type of activities carried out by local government. Thus, Jones (1981,145) notes that 'Higher rates to enlarge unpopular policeman activities in times of serious recession are likely to increase ratepayer resistance, and possibly a ratepayer revolt'. Moreover, just as the boom period of the early 1970s stimulated a concern for environmental issues and, consequently, the expansion of local planning staff numbers, so the economic recession of the late 1970s is likely to result in a lessening of the perceived need for local planners for, as noted in Section 5.2.3, traditionally the local planner's function has been seen to be to resolve the 'basic conflict between the single minded pursuit of economic growth. . . and its unpleasant urban consequences and social effects' (Sandercock 1983,36).

The remainder of these introductory comments are concerned with organisational role determinants that result from the relationship of the local planner and the rest of the local authority bureaucracy with the wider social environment. The client community is considered first, followed by an examination of the influence of State government.

The published evidence generally suggests that the N.S.W. public does not want to participate in local political life. Indeed, Larcombe (1978,456) points out that 'The biggest problem which has dogged local government from its conception is the deepening public apathy'. As is noted in Chapter 4, local government in N.S.W. was initiated 'not to meet the wishes of a young and vigorous community', but as the result of the determined actions of a State government 'which strove to impose a system of self-government upon a reluctant community' (Blackadder 1981,17). Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, under a system of voluntary voting, the turn-out 'was seldom more than 30 per cent' (Larcombe 1978,400). Between 1947 and 1965 there was compulsory voting for all resident electors, and turn-outs averaged 72 per cent (Bains and Miles 1981,145). However, commentators during this period continued to stress the general public apathy towards local government (e.g. Geyer 1958,71; Dunton 1962,110). This is also reflected in the 1968, 1971 and 1974 local government elections when, under a reintroduced system of voluntary voting, turn-out figures averaged only 31 per cent, and, on average between one-fifth and one-quarter of councillors were returned unopposed, the proportion increasing to two-fifths in the rural shires (calculated from Australia 1969, 1972 and 1975a). The return of a State Labor government in 1976 resulted in the reintroduction of compulsory voting in local government elections. The turn-out for the 1977 election rose to 67.5 per cent (Australia 1978a). Lapsley makes the following comment about the number of people voting:

Spurred on by the knowledge that they faced fines of up to \$10 if they failed to vote, 2.6 million people in NSW went to the polls this weekend in the State's first compulsory local government elections since 1965. But - fine or no fine - another 1.4 million did not bother to disturb their weekend. . . Given the usual public indifference about who makes the decisions which affect the quality of life at neighborhood level it was a reasonable turn-out. . . A tour of polling booths on Saturday disclosed many people voting simply because they had to, rather than because they supported any particular candidate - and many voters were unaware of which ward they lived in until they went through the electoral guides. (Lapsley 1977,4)

The low turn-out figures and the high proportion of uncontested

seats might reflect a high degree of satisfaction among local government electors. However, a 1977 Gallup Poll indicates a considerable degree of dissatisfaction. In Sydney, 57 per cent of respondents felt that local government 'does a good job', compared to 35 per cent who thought that it 'doesn't do such a good job', and 7 per cent who were undecided. The level of dissatisfaction was significantly greater in Sydney than in the other mainland state capitals.⁵⁹ The non-metropolitan results showed a higher level of dissatisfaction: only 49 per cent were satisfied, 43 per cent dissatisfied, and 7 per cent undecided. Again, these data indicate a significantly lower level of satisfaction among non-metropolitan N.S.W. respondents than among non-metropolitan respondents in the other mainland states.⁶⁰

One explanation for the public's apparent lack of interest in municipal affairs concerns local government's relationship with State government, the general argument being that the apathy reflects the public's perception that local government has little real effective power. Amalgamations and rate pegging are mentioned above. However, State involvement in local government affairs is not confined to these issues. Traditionally, State government has regarded local government 'as an "administrative" rather than as a "self-governing" unit' (Powell 1970,7.17). This tradition has persisted into the 1970s, and is reflected in two main ways. First, it is apparent in the desire of State governments to restrict the variety of services provided by local government. Thus, Larcombe (1978, Ch.9) refers to the 'ad hoc invasion', meaning the gradual takeover of local government functions by especially established State authorities. The result is that 'Local Government Authorities are primarily concerned with the three R's: Roads, Rates and Rubbish' (Rannard 1981,77). Secondly, State governments have attempted to restrict the ways in which local authorities fulfil their delegated functions. Indeed,

the Local Government Act and its Ordinances virtually serve as a role specification for all local councils, outlining in detail what they may or may not do, how they should be administered, how the finances should be organised, what staff are required, what qualifications are necessary and so on (Bains and Miles 1981,2.7.1). (See also : Bains

1978,2.18; and Local Government and Shires Associations 1978b,12.)

Purdie (1976,18) suggests that the legal doctrine of ultra vires (i.e. ensuring that nothing is done which is beyond specific legal powers) 'applies with great force to local councils' and 'is an inhibiting restraint which tends to sap their enterprise' and 'diminishes the capacity of councils to innovate and experiment'.

However, the legislative framework still allows scope for considerable variation in local interpretations. Thus, on a general level, Bains and Miles give the following interpretation of ultra vires:

this doctrine has often not stopped councils using staff beyond the requirements of the Act in such a way as to demand levels of performance far in excess of the minimum standards prescribed. It has not stopped councils liberally interpreting the Act by using the escape clauses such as 'if Council so directs' which abound in some sections; and it has not prevented some councils responding to community demands completely beyond the terms of the Act. For example, in the 1960s many councils, particularly in the inner metropolitan areas of Sydney, could see that the provision of reasonable but properly-run child-care centres was at crisis point. The Act gave them no authority to enter into this field, largely because it was unknown in 1919. The councils established and staffed such centres using general-purpose funds and later attracted special-purpose grants from Commonwealth sources. Only in 1976 did the State Government legitimise this role by amending the Act (Bains and Miles 1981,2.7.2). (See also Larcombe 1978,441-5.)

The conclusion is that, despite the legal constraints and blocking relationships with State agencies (Bains and Miles 1981,5.1.8), it is still possible for sufficiently enterprising local authorities to perform an innovative and important role. The implication for the planner's participatory role is that the more progressive and innovative the local authority, the more likely will be the feeling among members of the client community that local government is sufficiently important to warrant investing their time and effort in participating in municipal affairs.

As explained in Section 3.3.2, another explanation of the apparent lack of public interest in local government affairs relates

to the public's perceived powerlessness to influence local council decision making (see also Sections 4.4.3 and 4.5.3). Some statistical evidence to support this view is contained in a 1978 Herald Survey which found that '62 per cent of respondents gave themselves little or no chance of stopping the local councils carrying out policies they considered harmful' (Anon. 1978e). By comparison, '27 per cent gave themselves some chance of reversing local council policy, but only 9 per cent thought they would have a good chance of doing so'. One alderman considers the public's influence to be even less than these survey results indicate. He describes the relationship between his council and the public saying:

rarely was information available to the ordinary citizen. Senior servants were not permitted to make public statements explaining policies. The climate was one of frustration for the average citizen. People were discouraged from attending Council meetings or taking any interest in Municipal affairs. Few in the community knew when the Council met. An atmosphere of authoritarian rule surrounded the Town Hall. (Wyner 1975,52)

He suggests that this situation 'was probably typical of what occurred in all other municipalities and shires with perhaps some minor variations on the main theme' (p.52). In a generally sympathetic review, Jones (1981,201) suggests that the many regulatory activities for which local authorities are responsible 'can create a bossy and authoritative image', but attributes 'authoritarian and coercive decisions' by councils to a belief that 'they are crusading for the "public interest"'.

However, this authoritarian image is primarily a reflection of the institutional traditions of local government (Section 5.2.2), rather than of any legal restrictions placed on local authorities. Indeed, in the same way as it gives councils considerable freedom to decide on what activities are undertaken, the legislative framework also often allows local authorities a great deal of discretion on how activities are carried out. This is shown in Section 4.4.5 in relation to the extensive public participation programmes undertaken by Leichhardt and North Sydney councils during the early 1970s, compared to the much more restricted avenues for public participation

available in other municipalities. The same degree of latitude is available to councils in many of their other activities; that is, the extent to which the public is able to become involved in the affairs of the local authority is left largely to the discretion of each council. The Local Government Act includes several sections which specifically allow councils to set up a variety of formal mechanisms for public participation. In addition, councils are able to establish more informal participation avenues. For example, probably the fundamental difference between the Leichhardt and North Sydney programmes was that while North Sydney concentrated exclusively on town planning issues, the Leichhardt experiment attempted to involve the public not only in planning, but also in all the other council activities. Thus, as one member of the 1971-74 Leichhardt Council notes: 'From its inception in September, 1971, the Council sought to involve the people of the Municipality to the widest extent possible in Municipal affairs' (Wyner 1975,54). The importance to the planner of the overall participation environment is highlighted by Damer and Hague:

Planning does not exist in an administrative vacuum, it is firmly enmeshed in the organizational framework of local government. There is no reason why citizens should be especially motivated to participate in planning as opposed to other local government matters - except when their own immediate interests are directly threatened, as by compulsory purchase orders. Citizens will have to be motivated to participate generally in local political life before they can be expected to participate in decisions affecting solely matters to do with the physical environment. (Damer and Hague 1971,226)

The activities comprising the general participatory environment are, therefore, an important organisational factor in determining the local planner's participatory role. Their importance can be seen from two perspectives. First, they are the outcome of previous rounds of decision making. Thus, they reflect the explicit role behaviour of the majority of the formal decision makers, the local government representatives. Consequently, they also reflect the councillors' role determinants - organisational, role-set and personal. In reflecting the past, the extent of such activities also provides

indications for the future - the organisational structure and individuals within it changing relatively slowly. (Indeed, the attention that was focused on Leichhardt Municipal Council during the early 1970s, for example, can be attributed partly to the novelty of such rapid organisational and personnel changes.) Secondly, existing general participative structures can have an educative influence; that is, if the experience of participating is regarded as worthwhile, both to the actual participants and to non-participating observers, any attempt by the planner to establish new, additional participation programmes will be regarded favourably. To paraphrase Damer and Hague (1971,226), because citizens have been motivated to participate generally in local political life, they can also be expected to participate in decisions relating to town planning.

Thus, it has been shown that the general participatory environment is likely to be a major element in the organisational determinants of the local planner's participatory role. Unfortunately, there were no empirical data from which to gauge the nature of the local participatory environment. Consequently, the third major survey in the research project concentrated on ascertaining local councils' use of the formal and informal avenues to encourage citizen participation generally in local political life. The purpose of the remainder of this chapter is to present the results of the survey and then to discuss their implications for the local planner's participatory role. The following short section outlines how the data were collected.

9.2 Data Collection

A mailed questionnaire was chosen as the survey medium. Time and financial restraints were important, but it was also considered that there would be few disadvantages in using a self-administered study. The survey was essentially what Oppenheim (1968,8) terms 'the descriptive, enumerative, census type', with factual rather than abstract questions. Moreover, the questions related to information of a non-personal, non-confidential nature, so that the respondent would

not be likely to feel any embarrassment or disloyalty when answering. In addition, the use of a mailed questionnaire meant that the schedule could be completed at the respondents' convenience - thus allowing them to consult their records and confer with colleagues.

The most suitable person to contact in each local authority was the council clerk. As the chief administrative officer, the council clerk is the main advisor to the elected representatives and, as pointed out in Section 8.1, is also able to 'exercise general control over all other servants of the Council' (Local Government Act, Ordinance 4, clause 12(1)). Consequently, the town or shire clerk is the 'constant focal point for council activities' (Halligan and Smith 1980,60). The council clerk was thus considered to be the individual most likely to be aware of the full range of participatory activities.

The extent and timing of the survey were the two remaining factors to be determined. A State-wide survey was chosen, comprising all local authorities in N.S.W. This comprehensive approach was based on the fact that each council is just one part of a mosaic of local government areas covering virtually all areas of the State. Legally, at least, all have equal status. Thus, in addition to the vertical relationships with the State government through agencies such as the Department of Local Government, each local authority also has a series of horizontal relationships with other councils. These can be specialised functional arrangements such as the creation of formally-constituted county councils, for example electricity supply councils (Larcombe 1978,253-4); or they can be more informal cooperative ventures, such as regional libraries (Bains and Miles 1981,2.1.10). More generally, each local authority is a member of either the Local Government Association or the Shires Association, their main purpose being 'to exchange ideas, to formulate standard policies and to combine to provide various services to member councils' (Bains and Miles 1981,5.4.1). In addition, all senior servants within local government have their own professional associations to carry out the same type of functions.

Consequently, as a result of contacts made with other council representatives, councillors and staff can identify various behavioural norms operating within local government. It was hoped

that a comprehensive survey of the extent of the use of the various avenues of participation would help to identify those behavioural norms applying to public participation. In essence, individually each council's participatory activities reflect the outcomes of role expectations and role behaviours at the local level. Together, councils' participatory activities reflect the role expectations of local government as a State-wide organisation with numerous formal and informal interrelationships.

A final consideration was the timing of the survey. Council clerks were to be asked to report on the policies of the incumbent council, and to indicate whether any changes had occurred in relation to public participation. Thus, it was considered necessary to allow time for the 1977-80 councils to establish themselves and to initiate new policies. Accordingly, the council clerks' survey was delayed until 1979. A draft copy of the questionnaire was discussed in detail with a local town clerk, and in April 1979 a pilot survey of 20 councils was conducted. With two follow-up letters, 19 replies were obtained. Following minor amendments to the structure of the questionnaire, it was mailed to the remaining 182 local authorities in July 1979 (Appendices I and J). With two follow-up letters (Appendix K) another 166 completed questionnaires were received. In total, therefore, of the 202 local authorities contacted, 185 replied, a response rate of 91.6 per cent.

A breakdown of the types of responding and non-responding local authorities is given in Table 9.1. There was a slight tendency for councils in the more urbanised areas to show a higher rate of return, though the differences were not statistically significant.

Table 9.1 Council clerks' questionnaire: response rates

	Local authority type (Harris 1975*)								Total
	M	CL	CM	CS	TL	TM	TS	R	
Respondents (N)	35	3	3	18	24	24	41	34	185
Non-respondents (N)	1	1	1	0	2	4	3	5	17
Total (N)	36	4	4	18	26	28	44	39	202

Local authority types required combining to allow chi square analysis. Three groups were used: M+CL+CM, CS+TL+TM, and TS+R.

Chi square = 0.30
df = 2
p = NS

* Details of the Harris classification are given in Endnote 50
Source: author's 1979 N.S.W. survey

9.3 Avenues for participation

The following sections outline the extent to which councils used these formal and informal avenues to involve the community in local government affairs. When appropriate, the section begins by outlining the relevant legislation, after which the results of the council clerks' returns are presented.

9.3.1 Citizen committees

Undoubtedly, the most far-reaching section of the Local Government Act, insofar as public participation is concerned, relates to the establishment of small area committees to which a local council may delegate a wide variety of its powers. Thus, Part XXVII of the Local Government Act allows the creation of urban areas within shires following an application by the shire council, or possibly after a poll of electors (s.543). Following the election of an urban committee of three or more persons (none of whom may be a councillor in the shire), the council 'may delegate and confer upon the committee any

power of the council which it may exercise in the urban area' (s.552(1)). Moreover, the urban committee can 'make a written request to the shire council for such sum or sums to be raised by a local rate upon lands within the urban area' (s.550(1)).

The concept of an urban area was included in the local government legislation at the beginning of the twentieth century, a time when it was very difficult to provide effective local government services, especially to a sparsely distributed population which relied on horse transport and poorly constructed roads. Consequently, urban committees were widely established, being responsible for many of the essential services in their urban area, such as maintenance and improvement of streets, parks and community halls. Many committees operated their own works organisations to carry out these tasks. (See, for example, N.S.W. (1976d,5) which outlines the functions carried out by urban committees in Lake Macquarie Shire.)

The legal provision for municipalities to establish similar committees was delayed until 1948, when Part XXIVA of the Local Government Act empowered municipalities to create local district committees. These new legislative provisions were added at the same time as the Local Government (Areas) Act 1948 was passed. This Act reduced the number of local authorities in the County of Cumberland from 68 to 39 (N.S.W. 1974b,17). The concept of local committees was designed to placate the feelings of local government, there being a reduction in the number of aldermen in the 17 authorities created by amalgamation from 457 to 301 (N.S.W. 1955,121). Councils have more direct control of local district than urban committees. Thus a local authority is the only body able to establish a local district committee, and it is also empowered to determine the size of the committee and appoint aldermen as committee members (s.530C(5)). As with urban committees, the council is able to 'authorise the district committee to exercise or perform on behalf of the council any power, duty or function of the council for or in relation to the local district and to expend such moneys as the council may vote' (s.530D(1)).

However, Parts XXVII and XXIVA of the Local Government Act have not been widely utilised. Larcombe (1978,446) reports that only two

local district committees had been established, whilst a 1979 Department of Local Government listing of urban areas (N.S.W. 1979e,21-22) indicates that there remained only 19 urban committees. The questionnaire returns showed that of the 75 municipalities which responded (from a total of 79) none had a local district committee functioning. Only 8 of the 110 shires which responded (from a total of 123) reported active urban committees, there being a total of 13. Most of the committees still had some of the traditional delegated functions. For example, the Yamba Urban Committee controlled the 'maintenance of roads, streets, parks and public reserves, and operation of the garbage service'.

There is no doubt that the decline of urban committees is largely the result of their being disliked by local councils. Larcombe (1978,448) refers to urban committees being 'unpopular with shire councillors because of the additional administrative work involved and their tendency to be demanding and parochial'. Bentley (1962,32) suggests that the issue may not be between efficiency and inefficiency, 'but between management on the lines desired by the urban committee and management on the lines desired by the shire council'. Thus, one shire in which urban committees ceased to function during the 1970s enclosed with the questionnaire a 1970 report from the Shire Clerk which recommended that the urban committees be dissolved and reconstituted under s.530A of the Local Government Act:

Under this method the Committees would work with Council - not against it - and individual Councillors would become members of the Committees and so provide an effective liaison between the Committees and the Council...

At present each Urban Committee is naturally concerned only with its own urban area, and is not in a position to obtain an overall picture of the needs of the other Shire Towns and Rural Areas. This tends to lead to conflict between the interests of the Committees and the Shire, and creates problems in coping with the demands of the Committees for engineering services whilst at the same time endeavouring to do justice to those of Council.

Other sections of the Local Government Act allow committees of citizens or joint committees of citizens and council personnel to be established more informally without there being any general

territorial character to the subsequent delegation of power. Consequently, it is apparent that the council is not establishing a body which, in a limited area, might eventually be seen as a rival to the council itself. Thus, a section headed 'Local committees' allows the council to appoint 'a committee of local citizens and delegate to the committee the care control and management (subject to the council and the ordinances) of the work park reserve cemetery or undertaking, and the expenditure of such moneys as the council may vote' (s.527(1)). Similarly, s.530A, mentioned earlier in relation to the delegation of duties to council staff, can also be used to establish citizen committees. A council is able to authorise 'a committee consisting either wholly or in part of officers, servants or persons to exercise or perform on behalf of the council any power authority duty or function of the council', other than those related to such matters as fixing charges and borrowing money. Consequently, the s.530A committee is potentially more powerful than the s.527 local committee, the former not being restricted to the care of council facilities, and possibly including influential elected members and council staff.

Table 9.2 shows that the majority of local authorities had used s.527 to establish a local committee. They were increasing in number with 38 councils reporting that new committees had been established since the 1977 elections, whilst only one authority reported a decrease. As indicated by the wording of the Act, these committees are what Dearlove (1971,146) terms 'output groups', that is 'groups which are not really involved in the making of demands on the councils, but are rather assisting the council in the provision of some service'. A large variety of facilities were operated by local committees, most numerous being community halls, parks and recreation grounds.

The potentially more powerful s.530A committees were much less common, only 26 per cent of councils having established such a committee which included citizen members. Fourteen local authorities reported that the number of such committees had increased since the 1977 elections. Although it was often difficult to define the exact functions of the committees from the brief titles supplied by most councils, it was apparent that in most cases the functions of the

s.530A committees were the same as those of local committees elsewhere, such as responsibility for parks and playing-fields. Indeed, several replies indicated that the two sections of the Act were used almost interchangeably. Only 10 committees obviously had some input into policy making, these being concerned with street beautification, industrial development, traffic issues and town planning - the last one being composed of 6 citizen members representing a cross-section of the general public, 6 aldermen, and planning staff, and operating in the same way as other committees of council, submitting recommendations to the full council.

Table 9.2 Local authorities: establishment of s.527 and s.530A citizen committees

Number of committees established by the local authority	Number of local authorities establishing committees under			
	Section 527		Section 530A	
	N	%	N	%
Nil	90	48.6	137	74.1
1 - 5	57	30.8	39	21.1
6 - 10	11	5.9	4	2.2
11 - 15	6	3.2	1	0.5
16 - 20	4	2.2	1	0.5
Over 20	8	4.3	2	1.1
Unspecified	9	4.9	1	0.5
	185		185	

Source: author's 1979 N.S.W. survey

In addition to those committees established under specific sections of the Local Government Act, it was reported by 26 councils that they had been instrumental in establishing more informally constituted committees. Indeed, 9 local authorities mentioned only the existence of informally constituted committees.

9.3.2 Conduct of council and committee meetings

Town and shire clerks were also asked about council policy

regarding the conduct of meetings of the full council and of the various council committees. With regard to meetings of the full council, Ordinance No. 1, clause 50 of the Local Government Act requires that the public and the press be able to attend. However, it is up to each individual council to decide whether those attending remain simply spectators, or whether they can in some way take part in the debating of issues.

The questionnaire returns showed that the public played a very small role in most council chamber discussions (Table 9.3). Thus, in one-quarter of local authorities the public is forbidden to address a meeting of the full council. Even in areas where the public is allowed to speak, the privilege is very seldom used, over two-fifths of all clerks reporting that an address from the public gallery was given on 5 or fewer occasions throughout 1978. Thus, even if the council had a monthly cycle of meetings,⁶¹ a public address would occur, on average, less than once every 2 meetings.

Table 9.3 Local authorities: number of occasions during 1978 when a citizen addressed a meeting of the full council

Number of addresses	Local authorities	
	N	%
Nil: council policy	47	25.4
Nil: did not arise	12	6.5
1-5	65	35.1
6-10	32	17.3
Over 10	7	3.8
Unspecified number	22	11.9
	185	

Source: author's 1979 N.S.W. survey

However, 14 (7.6%) local authorities reported more regular, specific public participation mechanisms which, in 6 councils, had been (or were about to be) introduced by the 1977-80 council. No local authority had emulated the approach of the 1971-74 Leichhardt Council and endorsed on-going contributions from the public gallery throughout the course of the ordinary council meetings (see Hampton and Pike

1974,41). However, these 14 councils devoted a specific amount of time for public comments and questions, either immediately before or after the formal meeting, or as one item on each meeting's agenda. A related development, reported by 13 clerks (7%), was the rotating of the venue for council meetings, so that occasionally the council held its meetings away from the council chamber in the shire or town hall. Not surprisingly, 10 of the 13 areas were large and generally sparsely populated shires.

Although council meetings are required to be open to the public, there is no similar constraint on council committee meetings (Ordinance 1, clause 48), regardless of the number of councillors constituting the committee (clause 39). Bains (1978,426) is critical of councils passing resolutions going into 'committees of the whole'. He cites the English Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 which requires that when a council proposes to go into a committee of the whole they must pass a resolution specifying the reason why it was contrary to the public interest for the press and public to be allowed to remain. In addition to the statutory works and finance committees, councils can establish any other discretionary committees that it considers necessary (clause 40). As pointed out above, these may, under s.530A, include citizens and/or staff members, but generally comprise only elected members.

The questionnaire responses showed that 58.5 per cent of councils held all their committee meetings in private, occasionally inviting individuals or representatives of specific groups to address the meeting before the committee debated the issue. (Many councils indicated that members of the public who made a request to address the full council meeting were usually persuaded to state their case before the appropriate council committee.) In contrast, only 23.0 per cent of councils indicated that all committees were open, excepting those concerned with staff and legal matters.

However there appeared to be a movement to open up the committee system to greater public scrutiny. Thus, 13 clerks reported that since the 1977 elections there had been a complete reappraisal of committee confidentiality, resulting in virtually all committees being opened to the public. In addition, 3 councils, whilst still excluding the

general public from the meetings, had taken steps to improve the flow of information from the committees to the press. Generally, there appeared to be a stronger trend in the metropolitan area to open up committee meetings. Thus, 6 of the 16 (38%) authorities referred to above are in the County of Cumberland, whilst in the survey as a whole only 21 per cent of councils are located in the County.

9.3.3. Group and individual meetings

On a rather more informal level of information exchange, each council clerk was asked whether during 1978 the council had arranged any public meetings. Of the 179 replies, 51 per cent reported holding at least one meeting, the maximum being 27. Half (54%) of the meetings were called to discuss land development issues, such as proposed alterations to a shopping centre, traffic and parking, and extensions to sewage and water lines. One-quarter of meetings (28%) were concerned with the management of a large variety of services, including kindergartens and hospitals. The remaining meetings related to the internal administration of local government and included issues such as rating and amalgamations. Most meetings were single, ad hoc arrangements, though occasionally a more integrated programme of meetings was held. Thus, most of the 27 meetings in South Sydney were related to the planning of areas formerly in the route of an abandoned freeway.

Contacts between individual councillors and the public are usually the result of individual initiatives rather than a policy decision of the full council - although one metropolitan municipality did report that one alderman was rostered on duty every Saturday morning to deal with individuals' queries and complaints. The holding of regular 'surgeries' or 'advice bureaux' by individual councillors was reported by only 18 (10%) of the 180 clerks responding to the question. Not surprisingly, 12 of the 18 councils were situated in the County of Cumberland, the greater number of electors represented by each metropolitan alderman resulting in a greater need for more formalised opportunities for representatives to contact their

constituents. Indeed, the ratio of aldermen to electors in Sydney is more than four times the non-metropolitan average (Australia 1978a). However, even in those local authorities where advice bureaux were conducted, only one-fifth of representatives were involved. The limited use of advice bureaux, even in the metropolitan area, contrasts markedly with the findings of Newton (1973,294) on the large Birmingham City Council in England, where fewer than 1 in every 7 councillors did not run an advice bureau. The difference is undoubtedly in part explained by the smaller geographical scale of N.S.W. metropolitan councils. Similarly, in the provincial areas of N.S.W., where advice bureaux were very uncommon, several council clerks noted that such formal arrangements were not necessary in small, closely-knit rural communities. Indeed, in 3 rural areas advice bureaux had closed because of the lack of public response.

9.3.4 Schools contacts

The questionnaire also referred to council links with local schools - a topic virtually ignored by the councillor respondents. Surprisingly, therefore, 72 per cent of clerks reported that council personnel had, during 1978, addressed groups of school children about local government functions. There was a trend towards greater council-school contact, one-third (33%) of clerks reporting that the number of talks was increasing, whilst only 5 per cent reported a decrease. The vast majority of such talks were given by staff: 85 per cent of councils mentioning only staff; 12 per cent mentioned both staff and elected representatives; and only 3 per cent cited only councillors.

Another important link between councils and schools came through work experience programmes. Two-thirds (68%) of councils participated in such programmes in 1978, only 3 of the 128 local authorities approached having declined the invitation. Once again, this contact appears to have developed rapidly in the last few years. Only 11 councils were involved in such a programme prior to 1975. However, by 1978, the number had risen to 99, and an additional 11 councils indicated that they would begin a work experience programme during

1979.⁶²

More limited contact between councils and schools was provided by careers guidance and work experience programmes. One-third (32%) of local authorities had had a representative at a school careers evening during 1978. Only one council reported declining such a request. Again, the trend was towards greater council involvement, more than half (55%) of councils having first attended a careers night during the 1977-78-79 period. Not surprisingly, virtually all visits were made by council staff rather than elected representatives.

Junior councils are of potentially great educational and instrumental value. The Chairman of the Association of Junior and Youth Councils of N.S.W. describes the Association as being based on the belief that 'all sections of the community, not just those of voting age, should be able to provide responsible opinions in respect of their own interests when local government is planning things for the community as a whole' (Maddick 1977,5). Consequently, the aim is 'to develop a responsible voice of youth by way of junior and youth councils...with the support of the respective local government bodies' (p.5). However, the existence of such councils was reported by only 7 authorities. In addition, 2 councils had the formation of junior councils 'under consideration'. Two clerks reported that their attempts to establish junior councils had failed, and a third commented that 'the council sponsored a junior council but this ceased functioning late in 1978 due to the lack of members of the junior council'.

9.3.5 Public opinion polls

Section 81(1) of the Local Government Act allows councils the option of taking a poll of electors for their 'information and guidance on any matter'. Council clerks were asked whether any optional polls had been conducted since the 1974 ordinary election. Forty-nine clerks (26%) indicated that there had been such a poll, with a total of 56 questions being asked. The majority of the polls were held in conjunction with the 1977 ordinary local government

elections. In 29 of the 49 local authorities a question was asked about amalgamation with neighbouring areas, many councils believing that, with the election of a Labor State Government in 1976, a more concerted attempt would be made to enlarge local government areas.⁶³ In addition, 7 polls were held to determine the preferred method of electing local government representatives: preferential or proportional representation. The remaining polls covered a wide range of topics including controversial land development proposals, fluoridisation of water, and the creation of wards and ridings.

Table 9.4 gives a breakdown of how councils reacted to the public opinion as expressed in the poll results. Overall, in 85 per cent of cases for which information was provided, the council acted in accordance with the opinion of the majority of those polled. On the issue of amalgamation, council action usually involved passing on the result to the Local Government Boundaries Commission or the Minister for Local Government. Other polls resulted in more obvious policy decisions, such as approval of the construction of a new town hall, joining a regional library service and adding fluoride to a town's drinking water. There were 7 cases where councils subsequently went against the poll results. In 2 of these the public referenda each showed an absolute majority of only one vote, and in a third poll, the majority was only 6. In a fourth poll, on an amalgamation issue, two proposals were put forward, one of which was agreed to by the voting public, though the council was against both. In a fifth poll, a proposal to extend the sewer network to areas was agreed to by the residents of one area, but rejected by the residents of the second area. In the sixth poll, despite a 7,863 to 4,742 vote in favour of a mall, the council, under pressure from the Chamber of Commerce, decided not to proceed with the development. And, finally, in contrast to the usual reaction, one shire did not support a poll result which was heavily against amalgamation, considering it politically inopportune to do so.

Table 9.4 Local authorities: response to poll result

	Acted in accordance	Acted against	No data	Total
Amalgamation	24	3	2	29
Other issues	16	4	7	27
Total	40	7	9	56

Source: author's 1979 N.S.W. survey

Overall, the use of optional polls by councils has been primarily to highlight the public's preference for the existing local government system rather than the enlarged areas favoured by State Government. However, some use has been made of polls to guide councils' internal policy formulation. The value of such referenda is of course limited by the need for issues that can be presented so as to allow a simple 'Yes/No' response. Moreover, N.S.W. local government elections are ordinarily held every 3 years, thus resulting in a rather irregular use of optional polls, as to ensure the maximum turnout at the minimum cost, polls are usually held in conjunction with the triennial elections.

In addition to formal polls of electors, more informal surveys were reported by 5 authorities, one town clerk noting that the council had 'subsidised an A.N.O.P. survey of the Citizens of Camden seeking their views as to the future of the area'. However, much more widespread was the use of advertising to obtain public comment about specific development applications. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of councils had no legal requirement to advertise any development applications other than those for residential flats under s.342ZA (see Section 4.4.2). However, only 13 per cent of councils reported that they did no voluntary advertising of development applications. Eight per cent of councils advertised virtually all developments except for individual houses, whilst 36 per cent advertised if they considered the proposal 'out of character', or 'likely to have an impact', or

'likely to affect the amenity of the area', or, more directly, likely to be 'politically sensitive' or 'controversial'. Eight clerks reported a change in policy during the term of the 1977-80 council, in all cases resulting in a more extensive advertising of development proposals.

9.3.6 Local news media and council literature

Town and shire clerks were also asked about their councils' use of the local news media. When giving details of the arrangements made for the press and radio to cover council affairs, 42 per cent referred to press releases, and 21 per cent to the fact that a general invitation to attend council meetings was sent to the local media together with copies of the business paper for the meeting. Nearly half (48%) the responses specifically commented on there being a regular press representative at the council meetings. At Lismore, a radio broadcast of meetings had been initiated, but discontinued by the radio station because of a 'lack of public appeal'. More generally, in 9 per cent of local authorities, a weekly radio broadcast was prepared, usually by the mayor or president, with in one instance the programme having a 'talk-back' format. In all cases except one, the radio shows were broadcast in areas outside the County of Cumberland, usually in the larger provincial towns, this reflecting the greater local bias of the smaller non-metropolitan radio stations.

More common were regular newspaper columns written by council personnel. These were reported by 18 per cent of all authorities and by 46 per cent of metropolitan authorities. In three-quarters of cases the column was written by the mayor or president, and the majority of the columns appeared weekly. Information as to when the column was first started was provided by only 21 of the 33 councils. In 9 areas the column had been started during the term of office of the 1977-80 council. In two metropolitan councils, the preparation of a column for a commercial newspaper had ended with the introduction of the councils' own newspapers.

With regard to council-funded literature, three-quarters (74%) of

authorities reported that they issued an annual brochure or booklet which provided ratepayers with information on council personnel, services and finances. The practice has gone on for many years in several areas. For example, 11 per cent of the 99 councils providing information reported that they had issued their first brochure in the 1950s or earlier, and 48 per cent had started in the 1960s.⁶⁴ Only 5 councils reported that the production of a newsletter had been discontinued by the current council, and in 2 cases this was simply because it had been replaced by a more frequently issued publication. Altogether, only 8 councils (all but one being in Sydney) indicated that they issued their own quarterly or half-yearly newsletter or newspaper, all but one being initiated during the 1970s. In addition, nearly two-thirds (63%) of councils had issued more specialised literature, most being concerned with local history, employment promotion, school project material, and guides to specific council facilities.

9.3.7 Public relations officers and committees

Twelve per cent of councils reported that they employed a public relations officer. However, in half of these areas the position was primarily concerned with the promotion of tourism and other types of economic development. In the remaining 6 per cent of areas, local community liaison was the prime, or sole responsibility. However, the role of the officer tended to be interpreted in different ways. For example, the objectives of one public relations officer were:

1. To achieve maximum community benefit by promoting the City of Liverpool and the Council through sound public relations and publicity practices.
2. To project Council's image as dignified, courteous and efficient.

In contrast, other authorities reported that their officers had a role similar to that of an ombudsman. For example, Shellharbour Town Clerk commented that the public relations officer 'takes matters up to

Council on behalf of ratepayers'. In all but two instances the position of public relations officer had been created during the 1970s.

Eight per cent of authorities had a council committee dealing exclusively with public relations. One-third of these were basically concerned with the development of the local tourist industry, the others being more concerned with the local community. Again, there was a range of emphases, including responsibility for media reports and council publicity, supervision of the public relations officer, and, in Port Macquarie, 'dealing with any complaints where citizens have not received satisfaction from the staff and/or Council'. Overall, such committees were usually recent additions to each council's committee structure. Eleven of the 13 local authorities which gave a date of establishment reported that the committee had been set up during the term of office of the current council.

9.3.8 Other participatory activities

Finally, a wide range of activities were listed by councils in response to a concluding question asking about other attempts to involve the public in the affairs of local government. For example, 12 per cent of councils reported running competitions, particularly garden competitions. Several events were aimed specifically at school children. For example, the Blue Mountains City Council gave 'efficiency prizes for the "most civic minded students" in schools'. Four councils extended these citizenship schemes to include adults. Other activities included assisting local festivals, supporting art exhibitions, holding Christmas festivities, establishing a community information centre and supporting the Australian Travelling Museum.

9.4 The Participatory Environment and the Local Planner's Role

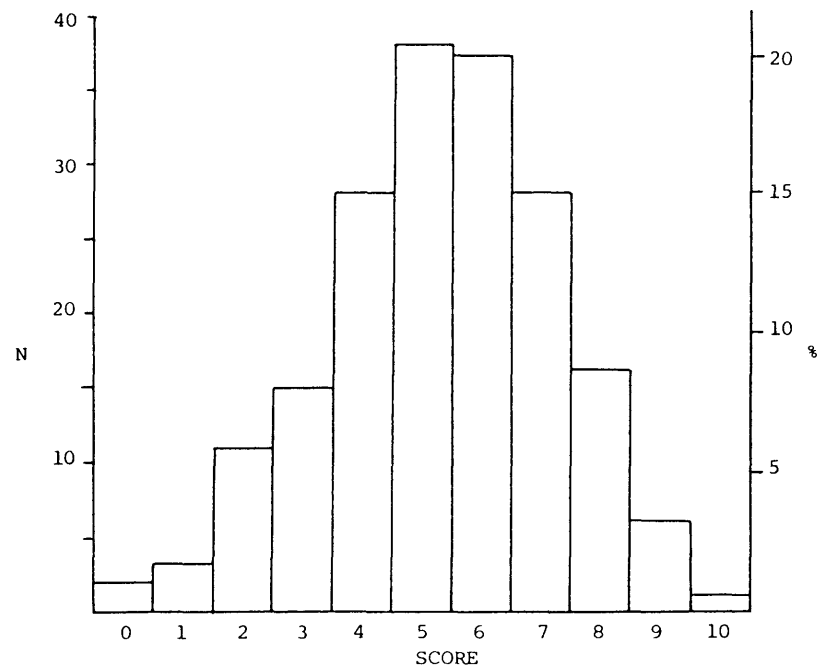
To allow statistical analysis of the council clerks' survey results, a numerical measure of each local authority's participatory

environment was required. As is noted in Chapter 2, Cole (1974,24) uses two dimensions in constructing his participation index: 'one indicating the variety of citizen programs adopted; the other measuring the intensity of citizen influence'. The variety dimension is self-explanatory. The intensity dimension is based on Arnstein's (1969) concept of a ladder of citizen participation, and is measured by Cole using four indices: whether citizen participants were elected or appointed, and whether they had responsibilities for approving programme plans, reviewing the budget, and hiring professional staff. The Cole intensity scale is thus obviously unsuitable for the N.S.W. local government situation where, apart from the few remaining urban committees, most participatory activity is related to informing and consulting rather than some form of power sharing. Consequently, only the variety dimension was employed when constructing the N.S.W. participation index.

Construction of the index comprised the same type of procedure as that used by Cole (1974,24). It involved noting for each council area the presence or absence of 11 selected participation mechanisms. Each activity recorded as being used by the local authority was given a score of 1. The sum of scores for all 11 activities was used as a measure of the council's overall policy on public participation. The 11 activities included in the index were: regular publication of an information brochure; establishment of a public relations committee; contributing a regular newspaper column; speaking to school groups; holding public meetings; voluntary advertising of development applications; allowing citizens to address a full council meeting; allowing general public access to council committee meetings; setting up either urban committees, or s.527, or s.530A citizen committees; and indicating that one or more of a variety of more specific participation mechanisms were used (e.g. rotating council venues, and junior councils). Activities were omitted from the index if they might have been beyond the financial resources of the smaller councils (e.g. employing a public relations officer). Similarly, activities which relied largely on the initiative of other groups were not included (e.g. council attendance at a careers meeting). The distribution of scores from this participation index is shown in Figure 9.3. The

minimum score was 0 and the maximum was 10. The mean was 5.3, or less than half the highest possible score of 11.⁶⁵

Figure 9.3 Local authorities: participation index scores
(N=185)



Source: author's 1979 N.S.W. survey

There was a general tendency for local authorities associated with larger urban centres to have higher scores on the participation index than councils in less urbanised areas (Table 9.5). A one-way analysis of variance test using the 8 Harris groups produced an F value of 5.33 (df1=7, df2=77, $p < 0.001$). The participation index scores of metropolitan local authorities were then found to be significantly greater than those of rural councils ($t=4.50$, $df=71$, $p < 0.001$), small town councils ($t=3.85$, $df=77$, $p < 0.001$), and medium town councils ($t=2.18$, $df=59$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 9.5 Local authorities: participation index scores by type of local authority
(N = 185)

	Local authority type (after Harris 1975*)							
	R	TS	TM	TL	CS	CM	CL	M
Local authorities (N)	35	41	23	24	18	3	3	38
Participation score (mean)	4.3	4.6	5.2	6.1	5.7	5.7	7.7	6.2

* Details of the Harris classification are given in Endnote 50

Source: author's 1979 N.S.W. survey

This trend may well reflect the relatively rapidly changing and diverse constituencies of the larger urban centres as opposed to the more homogeneous and stable situation in most rural constituencies. Elected members in the larger cities thus require more avenues of information exchange than their rural colleagues.

The results of the council clerks' survey indicates that, overall, behavioural norms are very much in accordance with the modern democratic elitism model: virtually all avenues of participation were directed towards information exchange, or the integration of groups through their involvement in the implementation of council policy. Thus, there was widespread use of information dissemination and collection techniques, the majority of councils distributing information brochures, advertising development applications, holding public meetings and talking with school groups. Similarly, virtually all the citizen committees which had been formally or informally established by local authorities were concerned with assisting the council in the provision of services, such as the maintenance of public halls and sports grounds.

There had been virtually no delegation of decision-making powers. Indeed, the main avenue of delegation available to municipal and city councils, the local district committee, was completely absent - only two having been established in the 30 years since the enabling

legislation was introduced.⁶⁶ The equivalent citizen body in shires, the urban committee, was still operating in a few areas, but was generally regarded as anachronistic and in need of phasing out. Thus, the number of urban committees declined from 38 in 1953 to 19 at the time of the 1979 survey. The determination of local authorities to keep tight control over decision-making powers is also indicated by the fact that the majority of local councils still excluded members of the public (even as non-voting, non-participating observers) from meetings of the key decision-making bodies, the council committees.

The development of a more open, consultative local government system began during the early 1970s, a period of considerable social instability. This corresponds to the more general trend from the traditional to the modern style of democratic elitism outlined in Section 3.2. It has continued throughout the 1970s, with the 1977-80 councils accelerating the moves towards a less secretive, more consultative style of government. This is in line with the responses to the councillors' attitude survey, which also indicated an increased willingness to establish more extensive networks of information exchange. Indeed, there are indications that even the council committee system is starting to become open to public scrutiny.

The role expectations imposed by these general organisational norms are clear. In line with the general trend, local planners will be expected to maintain or develop a consultative approach to the public, employing a variety of information giving and collection techniques. However, any attempt on the part of the planner to extend the public's role into the decision-making arena would be definitely out of step with overall trends which, if anything, indicate a greater centralisation of such power.

The marked urban-rural difference in the use of participation avenues is also of significance to the planner's participatory role, as planning staff, and particularly full-time planners, were located predominantly in the larger urban centres. Consequently, there was a significant statistical difference ($t=5.71$, $df=183$, $p<0.001$) in the overall participation score of those local authorities included in the planners' interview survey (mean=6.2) and the remaining local authorities (mean=4.7). Councils employing professional planners can

thus be regarded as in the vanguard of the movement towards more open government. The influence of the more conservative councils will be directed towards ensuring that the progressive authorities refrain from more radical policies. In other words, they will act as a brake on change, thus suggesting that a local planner's participatory role expectations are also likely to change relatively slowly. The more general applicability of this comment is highlighted by Halligan and Paris (1984,66) who point to the 'stultifying effect on innovation' of non-metropolitan councils who 'constitute the majority and exercise a conservative influence'.

Further statistical analysis of the participation policy index supports this view. Thus, Table 9.6 shows that even when councils are subdivided into different categories, ranging from small rural authorities to those in the metropolitan area, the councils employing professional planners consistently had participation scores higher than the same type of councils which did not employ a local planner. It is possible that the planner could have exerted a sufficient influence to change the local authority's overall policy. But it is much more likely that the association is because progressive administrations see the need both for a more open approach to government, and also for the services of a professional planner - who, in turn, will help to implement the more general participation policy.

Table 9.6 Local authorities: participation index scores by type of authority and employment of qualified planners

A. Councils included in planners' survey										
	Local authority type (after Harris 1975*)									
	R	TS	TM	TL	CS	CM	CL	M		
Councils (N)	6	5	3	12	13	2	3		32	
Participation score (mean)	6.0	5.2	6.0	6.3	6.0	6.0	7.3		6.4	
B. Councils not included in planners' survey										
	Local authority type (after Harris 1975*)									
	R	TS	TM	TL	CS	CM	CL	M		
Councils (N)	29	36	20	12	5	1	0		6	
Participation score (mean)	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.9	4.6	5.0	-		5.3	
C. Comparison of participatory index scores (A v. B)										
	Local authority type (after Harris 1975*)									
	R	TS	TM	TL	CS	CM	CL	M	R-TL	CS-M
t	2.46	0.77	0.87	0.45	1.52	-	-	1.29	3.25	2.43
df	33	39	21	22	16	-	-	36	121	60
p	<0.02	NS	NS	NS	NS	-	-	NS	<0.01	<0.02

* Details of the Harris classification are given in Endnote 50

Source: author's 1978-79 and 1979 N.S.W. surveys

9.5 Summary

This chapter focuses on aspects of the organisational determinants of role behaviour. Generally, the planner's role is constrained by the jurisdictional boundaries of the local authority, the work-load, the close supervision of local government affairs by State governments, and the overall local participatory environment. The last factor is especially important as 'Citizens will have to be motivated to participate generally in local political life before they can be expected to participate in decisions affecting solely matters to do with the physical environment' (Damer and Hague 1971,226).

However, the published evidence suggests that the public is generally apathetic about local government affairs, an apathy which is usually attributed to the general perception that either local government has little real power, or that the public is powerless to influence local government decision making. However, State

legislation does permit councils considerable flexibility both to become involved in a large range of activities, and to involve the public extensively in its affairs. The importance of the general local participatory environment in determining the local planner's participatory role, and the lack of relevant published empirical data, led to the decision to survey all N.S.W. council clerks to ascertain local councils' use of formal and informal avenues to encourage participation generally in local political life.

Urban and local committees, which could be used to effect extensive decentralisation of council administration, were of minor importance, and were declining in number. However, the delegation to citizen committees of more specific, minor functions, such as the maintenance of council facilities, was widespread and increasing. With regard to the conduct of formal council meetings, one-quarter of authorities did not allow a member of the public to address the meeting, and in most of the remaining areas such an address occurred infrequently. Moreover, the majority of councils still held all their committee meetings in private, though there was a trend towards fewer restrictions on public access. Optional polls had recently been conducted in one-quarter of the responding local authorities. More widespread, and increasing, was the voluntary advertising of certain development applications. More informal methods of information exchange included the following public meetings, which had been called by one-half of the councils during 1978; regular councillor advice bureaux or surgeries which were confined mainly to a small number of metropolitan authorities; regular news media items, prepared by one-quarter of councils; a high and increasing level of contact with local schools, reported by two-thirds of councils; and a regular brochure to ratepayers, issued by three-quarters of local authorities. Use of a participation policy index showed a tendency for greater use of formal participation mechanisms in local authorities associated with the larger urban areas.

The results of the council clerks' survey indicate that, overall, behavioural norms are very much in accordance with the modern democratic elitism model: virtually all avenues of participation were directed towards information exchange, or the integration of groups

through their involvement in the implementation of council policy. There was virtually no delegation of decision-making powers. Consequently, in line with the general trend, local planners will be expected to maintain or develop a consultative approach to the public. However, any attempt by the planner to extend the public's role into the decision-making arena would be definitely out of step with overall trends which, if anything, indicate a greater centralisation of such power. The rural-urban difference in participation levels, and the fact that planners tend to be employed predominantly by urban authorities, suggest that further movement towards more open government by the planners' employers may be relatively slow as the more conservative councils will act as a brake on change.

The following, and final chapter attempts to relate the practitioners' perspectives and the theoretical perspectives, highlighting the limited but important role that local planners can be expected to play in the process of public participation in planning.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Various political viewpoints about public participation in general and planning participation in particular are presented at the beginning of the thesis. The empirical work relates to the various factors helping to determine the local planner's actual role in public participation. This final chapter attempts to integrate the findings of each into a pragmatic or practical approach to the issue of planning participation. Thus, for the first time, the thesis moves away from an objective, even-handed style and deliberately seeks to promote a particular role for the local planner, termed 'compensatory participation'. The proposal will obviously not meet with unanimous approval - this would be impossible given the nature of the problem. However, it is considered that the compensatory approach to public participation in planning can, in part, be supported by everyone, regardless of their political views.

There are a variety of ways by which the public can participate in decision making in a democracy. From the continuum of philosophical views, three basic models of participation are identified in Chapter 2: democratic elitism, pluralism and participatory democracy. Thus, there are individuals representing mass constituencies, individuals representing smaller group constituencies, and individuals representing themselves. The likelihood of an individual becoming personally involved in politics thus runs from low in the elitist framework to high in the participationist framework.

In practice, however, the distinction between the democratic elitist and pluralist models has narrowed considerably since the 1940s and 1950s when Schumpeter and Truman were writing their influential elitist and pluralist texts. Thus, Schumpeter's hard line approach to the idea of mass participation exclusively through elections was

softened by Almond and Verba in the early 1960s, and developments since then have led to politicians becoming increasingly accessible and thus open to the influence of their constituents, particularly those able to organise effective group pressure. So, for example, a report in the Age newspaper (2 January 1982, p.6) comments: 'Traditionally it has been big and powerful interests which have been able to shift government decisions, and this still happens, but now less powerful groups are learning how to exercise clout too'. This change can be traced back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Green Ban movement and related environmental protests being a major catalyst (Section 4.4.5).

These developments indicate, on the one hand, a realisation by many people that concerted group effort is required to effectively bring their particular points of view to the attention of the decision makers. On the other hand, they engender an awareness among decision makers that in a pluralist society there may be many different perspectives, not all of which may have been fully appreciated. Acknowledgement of the fact that more information was needed in the policy making process was clearly demonstrated in both the local planner and local councillor responses, where there was considerable support for the concept of public participation as an information-exchange process.

However, movement towards the community control perspective of participatory democrats is not a part of the decision makers' view of public participation. Indeed, at all government levels there has continued to be a determination not to lose power to other levels in the political hierarchy. Thus, the concept of states' rights is advanced each time there appears to be the likelihood of federal intervention into areas traditionally regarded as within the jurisdiction of state governments. Similarly, there was considerable state resistance to the attempts by the Whitlam Government to improve the financial and general status of local government. At the local government level, there have been similar attempts to preserve decision-making powers from encroachment by adjacent levels in the political hierarchy. As indicated in Chapters 4 and 9, local government has traditionally been very suspicious of what it sees as

state interference in local government affairs.

Local government authorities also show a marked disinclination to give up any of their decision-making powers to smaller bodies. Chapter 9 shows that although there has been a marked increase in the number of avenues for information exchange, actual decision-making powers had not been delegated. So, for example, the use of urban committees continues to decline; there are no local district committees in existence, and even the movement towards making the councils' committee meetings open to the public has been very slow - the majority of local authorities still conducting all their committee meetings in private. Support for the idea of retaining decision-making power within the elected council was also evident in both the councillors' and planners' survey responses. Only 4 per cent of planners made any firm link between the views of the public expressed during the plan preparation stage, and the actual policies embodied in the final scheme. Only one planner was prepared to suggest that in some circumstances the local community could have a direct decision-making role. Similarly, only 4 of the 206 councillors in the survey supported extensive delegation of council powers.

As is pointed out in Chapters 8 and 9, there is some evidence that overall there is little general community interest in extensively participating in local government affairs. However, empirical evidence regarding low participation rates is open to various interpretations, such as that it reflects apathy, satisfaction or a sense of powerlessness. Similarly, attitudinal surveys showing the general public's desire to become involved can be regarded either as supporting the views of participatory democrats, or reflecting the democratic myth concept of Almond and Verba (1965,486). Such uncertainties can only be clarified by detailed empirical research.⁶⁷

The situation, therefore, is one where there is a marked reluctance on the part of politicians to delegate power, and a doubt about the willingness of the 'silent majority' of the general community to accept such a delegation. Consequently, it would appear that, at least for the foreseeable future, participatory democracy will not be the mode of democracy practised by local authorities in New South Wales. At best, individual areas might, at a time of

general political volatility and unusual local discontent, return a majority of representatives dedicated to a major opening up of local government decision making - as occurred in Leichhardt in 1971, for example. However, given the general stability of the local government system, it would seem that public participation will continue to conform to the democratic elitist model and be concentrated on developing an effective interchange of information between the community and local government decision makers. Three major participation modes can be identified: developing traditional councillor-constituent contacts; establishing more formal consultative structures; and using more informal procedures involving both elected and appointed officials.

First, the traditional process of councillor-constituent contact could be maintained or intensified - though exclusive use of such contacts was supported by only a small minority of councillors and a handful of planners. A major difficulty concerns the increasing burden placed on elected members through their constituency role. The numbers of electors per councillor - the representation ratio - has steadily grown as the population of N.S.W. has increased and the number of local government areas has decreased (Section 9.1).⁶⁸ Although legally permissible, single-member constituencies are not present in N.S.W. local government. Indeed, nearly two-fifths (38.7%) of the municipalities and cities are completely undivided. (N.S.W. 1982b). The majority of wards are represented by 3 members. This size is likely to become more prevalent, it being the minimum needed to allow the proportional representation method of election introduced by the State Labor Government. However, as the Royal Commission on Local Government in England points out:

The direct relationship that ought to exist between electors and representatives is blurred when. . .there are three members for each ward. With single-member constituencies each elected representative will have a clear personal responsibility to his constituents. (G.B. 1969b, para.463)

Consequently, the development of close ties between members and constituents is likely to become more difficult, particularly as few councillors have the support of organised ward or shire committees.

As pointed out in Section 8.4.2., the rejection of direct endorsement of local government candidates by the Liberal Party and National Party in N.S.W. has meant that most local government members have had to rely on their own organising abilities.⁶⁹ Consequently, the vociferous members of the public are likely to have a greater impact on members' opinions for, with access to fewer alternative sources of information, the independent members are more likely to believe that such groups are reflecting general community opinion. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the vociferous element of the public is likely to have the same socio-economic background as the elected members: middle-class dominance in participatory activities is extensively documented in earlier chapters; and the majority of N.S.W. councillors were found to have a similar middle-class background (Section 8.4.3).

A second option available to try and ensure that there is an effective interchange of information between the general public and local government personnel is to establish more formal consultation structures. For example, formal channels of representation such as community councils could be set up at a level below that of local government. However, the community council concept is undoubtedly treated with suspicion by many councillors. Community councils require the formal definition of constituency boundaries and the election of councillors. Consequently, this new tier in the political hierarchy could be seen as a potential rival to the local government council. Regardless of the initial charter under which the new community councils are created, there is a possibility that the new councillors will try to exceed their statutory duties. This contention is supported by the general lack of enthusiasm shown by N.S.W. local government for the idea of community councils. For example, as pointed out in Section 9.2.1, the concept of local district committees was introduced into the Local Government Act in 1948 to coincide with widespread amalgamation of councils in the metropolitan area. The aim of the local district committee was to 'assist in preserving a personal contact between council and electors' (N.S.W. 1952,62). However, only one authority subsequently established such a committee. Despite its lack of success, the idea

was revived by the Barnett Committee of Inquiry into Local Government Areas and Administration. It suggested that a proposed reduction of more than one-half in the number of local authorities be accompanied by the voluntary setting up of 'community councils' whose main purpose was to be 'the gathering and marshalling of information and opinion relevant to the problems of the local community as a basis for representation to other levels of government' (N.S.W. 1974b,45). As expected, the recommendations of the Barnett Committee - including those concerning community councils - were rejected by the Local Government and Shires Associations (Larcombe 1978,422).

The closest that N.S.W. has come to establishing community councils was in 1974 and early 1975 when North Sydney Municipal Council authorised the establishment of precinct committees in 56 residential areas (Section 4.4.5). The aim was 'to give every resident and ratepayer ... an opportunity to have a say in the planning review process' (Pickles 1976,119). However, as Jones (1981,244) points out, some precincts 'demanded more than merely an advisory role in town planning'. As a result, they were seen by some aldermen as being in 'competition with their own role'. Consequently, residents' interest waned as the council attempted to restrain their precinct committees' role, and council enthusiasm waned as the committees continued to try and exceed their designated functions. Eventually, in 1977 the precinct committees were formally dissolved.

This lack of enthusiasm for community councils is also evident in the council clerk and councillor surveys associated with the current research. As well as an absence of local district committees, town and shire clerks also reported very few urban committees - statutory bodies of elected citizens which can carry out an extensive range of delegated functions. Instead, councils tended to establish citizen committees which were responsible for assisting with the implementation of specific policy decisions. So, for example, there was a large variety of facilities such as community halls, parks and recreation grounds operated by local citizen committees. Similarly only 3 per cent of councillors in the survey suggested the setting up of community councils or neighbourhood committees, the majority instead favouring more informal meetings with members of the general

public or specific interest groups.⁷⁰

The third option available to try and ensure that there is an effective interchange of information between the general public and local government is to employ a variety of more informal participation procedures involving both local government professional staff and elected representatives. The attitudinal surveys showed that this option was the one favoured by a majority of both local planners and councillors.

Such an approach is characteristic of the new elitist mode of planning (Section 3.2.2). The emergence of this perspective largely signalled the end of the traditional professional concept of a unitary public interest. In its place there developed a utilitarian view of the public interest, requiring the professional to determine for each alternative scheme the gains and losses of affected community groups. However, this new method still retains the element of rationality which traditionally has dominated the practitioner's thinking about planning. Thus, to be practised effectively the model demands that all views be available before any judgement can be made as to an appropriate course of action.

However, as indicated in the survey interviews, most attempts by planners to implement participation programmes have resulted in public responses which are not representative of the full spectrum of community views. There are two overlapping aspects to the problem. The first relates to the self-serving character of the vast majority of the participants - the views expressed being parochial, protectionist and conservative in nature. Secondly, the responses tend to be socially biased, it being those with the greatest resources who have the ability to present effectively their views in the policy-making process. Consequently, such public participation programmes tend to emphasise further the predominantly middle-class input in the political arena (Section 6.3). It is not surprising, therefore, that informal participation mechanisms, with their associated biased responses, have been only reluctantly initiated by planners.

In order that the element of rationality in planning be maintained, there is a need for professional planners to collect information from those sections of the community which otherwise would

not be heard in the decision-making process. One mechanism by which the existing unequal distribution of planning resources between social groups can be better balanced is through advocate planners providing assistance to disadvantaged groups. A major difficulty with this approach concerns the funding of advocates. The inability of many residents to afford to engage private planning consultants⁷¹ means that advocacy has to rely on either part-time voluntary work, or funding from government or charitable sources. Although these initiatives may prove to be very valuable in individual projects, it is unlikely that they will ever attain the scale necessary to cater effectively for the potential need (Section 3.5).

As local planners cannot rely on advocacy to ensure that the views of the inarticulate are presented in the decision-making process, they must attempt to do the job themselves. This requires them openly adopting what Gans (1972,382) terms a 'compensatory' stance. As this idea is the focus of the remainder of the chapter,⁷² it is pertinent to quote at length an explanation of the compensatory approach. Referring to the area in which he worked, Krumholz comments that:

Influence, like wealth, was unevenly distributed in the population. When goals conflicted, groups with wealth and influence were likely to win every time, although it is hard to see how such winning contributed either to democracy or to the public good ... Within the context of this contending but unequal power and influence, placing priority attention on the needs of the poor would tend to provide them with countervailing power and, like universal suffrage and majority rule, would help strengthen democracy. (Krumholz 1982,165)

As most N.S.W. planners and councillors used what might generally be termed the democratic argument to justify their support of public participation, the Krumholz approach might be expected to receive considerable backing. However, the use of participation as a compensatory mechanism was not specifically raised in either the planner or councillor responses - the closest argument being that a local authority's social workers should organise the poorer sections of the community to ensure them a voice in the planning process.

The compensatory participation process can be simplified into two stages, information dissemination and information collection, each of which may be repeated several times. The information dissemination programme is directed to all sections of the community. A major development assisting this stage is the requirement that the objectives of any proposed policy are detailed. In N.S.W. this was first specified in the Ministerial circular letter of 7 September 1977 and was carried into the 1979 legislation. For example, s.61(c) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act obliges a local council to 'give public notice ... of the aims, objectives, policies and strategies' when preparing the local draft plan (Section 4.5.2).

At the information collection stage, the role of the local authority personnel in a compensatory participation programme would be to concentrate on the disadvantaged sections of the population - responses from other groups coming largely without the need for any formal structures. Such programmes would require meetings either with individuals or, at the most, small groups. Conduct of public opinion polls of the disadvantaged groups of the client community would often be aided by their geographical concentration. Nevertheless, such work would undoubtedly stretch the very limited resources of many small local planning departments. Therefore, this would be an occasion on which local planners might call for assistance from both their colleagues at the Department of Environment and Planning, and also academics and students at tertiary education institutions. They could assist with carrying out the survey work or, preferably, in relieving local planners of some of the more routine office tasks.

An alternative source of help with polling, potentially available to virtually every local planner, is the local high school. School surveys were dismissed by a few local planners as too prone to inaccuracies. However, Bishop (1976,19) suggests that the value of the students' work might well be greater than that of the local authority's own employees as 'there are reasons to suppose that a group of kids who are clearly not "from the council" will get better answers and information than the planners or architects'. This argument would seem to be especially strong in surveys aimed

specifically at disadvantaged groups - and particularly when young people are likely to be the sole or major users of facilities.

A second means of data collection is through the use of small group discussions. Although conventional public meetings may be held as part of the information-giving phase, it is generally agreed that group meetings are needed to solicit information. This is particularly important when attempting to elicit the views of the normally inarticulate members of the community. Organisation of such meetings is undoubtedly easier where the disadvantaged group is geographically defined. Most people recognise a relatively small area to which they have an attachment and in which they have an interest. Individuals might thus be more likely to attend such a neighbourhood meeting, and be more inclined to air their views during group discussion as they will know other participants and be familiar with local issues. However, members of more geographically dispersed groups may have to be more actively sought out by planners. For example, Cramphorn (1976,29) reports on the holding of 'focussed group discussions', each comprising approximately 10 members, and each consisting of one of 'a range of different types of people in the community ... e.g. pensioners, young marrieds, schoolgirls, and delinquent boys'. He points out that 'organisations and clubs were avoided in making up the groups as it was felt that their ideas had already been expressed'.

In effect, a compensatory approach by local planners combines the new democratic elitist emphasis on rationality through more comprehensive data collection programmes (Section 3.2.2) with the technical pluralist emphasis on making the political process more equitable by providing additional resources to otherwise disadvantaged groups (Section 3.4). This fusion of planning approaches is in line with developments in political participation in general, the difference being a greater institutional emphasis on encouraging largely unrepresented groups to participate.

Such a fusion of elitist and pluralist approaches means, of course, that compensatory planning is also likely to face a combination of arguments from elitist and pluralist critics (Sections 3.3 and 3.5). However, it is suggested that many of the arguments are

related less to intrinsic difficulties and more to extrinsic problems which can be overcome, or at least alleviated, through experience. Thus, the importance of not considering planning participation in an administrative vacuum is highlighted in Chapter 9. Similarly the use of public participation as a technique designed primarily to dissolve opposition or legitimise the planning process (and its practitioners) will, in the medium term at least, decline as all planners come to realise the ineffectiveness of such practices. This trend will, hopefully, be accelerated as local planners' training becomes less technical and more attuned to their social and political professional environment.

The problems relating to the loyalties of neighbourhood-based community planners being divided between their local client communities and their employers are likely to be minimised in N.S.W. by the simple fact that it is unlikely that many local authorities in the foreseeable future will be large enough to be able to support full-time community planners. More basically, however, the problems outlined in Section 3.5.2, concerning community planners' frustrations and subsequent adoption of a bureaucratic guerrilla role, essentially are initiated by their perception that they are seen by their employers as one element in a participation programme designed primarily to dissolve opposition and legitimise the planning process. Consequently, the arguments that are outlined in the previous paragraph concerning the decline in use of strictly manipulative techniques again have relevance.

Participationists criticise compensatory planning for failing to promote community development so that, in the future, such disadvantaged groups still do not have the capacity to present their own case. Ideally, local planners should combine their existing, predominantly technical role with this socio-political activity. However, from the N.S.W. surveys and the professional literature, it would appear that local planners have neither the resources, nor inclination, nor political support to take on the additional role of community development officer.

However, it may not be correct to claim that a compensatory role for local planners contains no element of community development. It

can be argued that the planners' information exchange activities act as a catalyst to greater community consciousness. For example, group meetings encourage the articulation and subsequent development of views through social interaction. And planner-school contacts help to highlight not only the importance of the planning process as a determinant of land use, but also the highly political nature of planning. In the longer term, this realisation will help stimulate the development of a more participatory society, as young people begin to appreciate that they will have to be involved in the political process if their views are to be heard.⁷³

The means of effectively representing the views of disadvantaged groups to the local politicians will depend on the planner's perception of his or her professional role. This may vary from simply ensuring that the elected members are aware of the ramifications of planning policies on all social groups, through to trying to steer policy decisions in specific directions. This latter approach is already employed by some local planners in N.S.W. (though not necessarily with compensatory objectives in mind), and the continuing trend towards larger council areas and larger, more professionalised planning staffs will assist planners in adopting such an approach. For example, when interviewed, a local planner with one of the largest local authorities in N.S.W. commented:

To be honest, most councillors are grossly ill-informed about what is actually carried out under their name. For example, the Shire President got the Community Services Planner to write a weekly newspaper column for him about what's happening in the area. The President's reaction on seeing the first report was an almost disbelieving: 'Christ, do we do all that!'⁷⁴

It may be that individual planners feel a social obligation to contribute more towards the welfare of disadvantaged groups. There is no doubt that a local planner advocating a conflict-orientated approach would be very unlikely to survive long with his or her employer council. Such an approach would go against the expectations of institutional role-set members - both political and professional. Should the role behaviour not be changed, organisational factors would be brought to bear to ensure the planner's eventual dismissal (the

usual fate of the more covert bureaucratic guerrillas). Consequently, if a planner wishes to go beyond the technical pluralism character of his or her official compensatory role, the only long-term solution is private advocacy work in another local government area. This will allow the planner to play a more overt political activist role as well as a technical role without jeopardising his or her current professional position (though career development in local government may prove more difficult as a result of such activities).

Certainly, the criticisms concerning a continuing uneven distribution of resources between groups will still apply in a situation where compensatory planning is practised. The local planner's role will simply make political competition less uneven. Even within the local community his or her maximum contribution will be small compared to the overall magnitude of the problem. At a larger geographical scale, the local planner's contribution, relatively speaking, is even less significant. However, the local planner's participatory role needs to be considered alongside other continuing community development activities sponsored by a large variety of groups. All three levels of government - local, state and federal - have initiated programmes⁷⁵ and, in addition, there is a huge number of voluntary organisations concerned with community development. Indeed, Scott (1981,123) suggests that there are about 20,000 voluntary agencies in Australia. Although many of these regard themselves simply as meeting a particular immediate need, others consider that they have a responsibility for generating what Scott (1981,113) terms 'social action for social change'.⁷⁶ Overall, therefore, the compensatory role of local planners may be seen as complementing the efforts of other workers whose role definition, as determined by both internal and environmental factors, may be more suited to the community development 'activist role'.

There is no doubt that local government planning in N.S.W. will continue to become more professionalised during the 1980s.⁷⁷ However, the impact of these professional developments on public participation practices is difficult to assess. As is pointed out in Section 5.4.1, the relationship between professionalism and public participation can be viewed from two conflicting perspectives. First, it can be seen as

a counteracting relationship, the professionals' claim to possess specialised knowledge being contrasted with the need to draw on the specialised knowledge of the public. Secondly, the relationship can be seen as a complementary one, public participation being viewed as one element in the planner's legitimate array of data collection techniques. The N.S.W. planners' survey results (Section 7.2.2) provided no firm evidence for either argument, though the consistency, if not the strength, of the statistical results indicated some support for the 'counteracting developments' thesis. Considering the problems related to achieving a representative cross-section of views using conventional participation programmes, the relative lack of support for the view that participation is a legitimate data collection technique is not surprising.

The adoption of a compensatory planning style would help ensure that this elusive cross-section of views is achieved. Encouraging the normally inarticulate to participate can therefore be regarded as a thoroughly professional objective as it is essential for the maintenance of the rationality of the system. Incidentally, it is likely that such an approach will enhance the profession's prestige in comparison to the other local government professional groups as local politicians strongly supported the concept of public participation as an unbiased exchange of information (Section 8.3).

Overall, therefore, it is suggested that a compensatory role for the local planner is both progressive and achievable given the existing personal and environmental role determinants. It reflects the support given by local government personnel to the concept of participation, and minimises the major practical difficulties generated by more general participation programmes. Moreover, it provides the planning profession as a whole with an orientation which individuals can support regardless of whether they have an elitist, pluralist or participationist view of planning and democracy. Thus, from the elitist standpoint the compensatory role can be seen as one which makes the planning process more rational - participation providing a large quantity of otherwise unavailable information. Using a pluralist perspective, the aim of local planner's compensatory role can be regarded as very similar to that of the traditional

advocate - creating a more equitable political framework by providing assistance to disadvantaged groups. And from the participationist point of view, the compensatory role has a long-term social change function, and also allows an individual to pursue a more active private role.