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LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND LOCAL REPRESENTATION: Discourses and Designs in Participatory Governance¹

Marian Barnes* and Chris Skelcher**

*School of Applied Social Science,
University of Brighton, UK
and

**Institute of Local Government Studies,
School of Public Policy,
The University of Birmingham, UK

Address for correspondence:

Professor Marian Barnes
School of Applied Social Science,
University of Brighton,
Falmer, Brighton BN1 9PH, UK

marian.barnes@brighton.ac.uk

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INTRODUCTION

There has been considerable experimentation and institutionalisation of participatory forms of governance within Europe. These approaches range from direct involvement of citizens and service users in local level consultative and decision-making bodies with public managers (Barnes et al, 2007), through new forms of interactive decision-making with elected politicians (Edelenbos 2005), to the creation of new governmental bodies to which citizens are formally elected or appointed (e.g. Davies et al, 2006). Such developments have been most noticeable at the neighbourhood and city level, but there are also examples at regional, national and European level, including the European Parliament's rolling programme of citizens' forums.

Our research asks the question: how does the design of the institutions of participative governance affect their capacity to be democratic and to motivate engagement by relevant publics? We see 'democratic capacity' and 'public motivation' as the two fundamental requirements of participatory governance. Democratic capacity refers to the extent to which the design of a governance institution embodies democratic principles, while 'public motivation' refers to the extent to which individuals from the relevant publics identify and wish to pursue the opportunities for engaging in new governance spaces. The fulfilment of both conditions is necessary if such institutions are to play an effective role in the process of shaping, deciding and implementing public policy.

However, it is also necessary to consider the different aspirations and purposes that have motivated the participatory turn within systems of governance. There has been a significant growth of interest in the cultural and institutional dimensions of participative governance in recent years and this has highlighted the different and sometimes competing discourses within which such practices have been constructed (Bang, 2004; Barnes et al, 2007; Newman, 2005). This paper contributes to this emerging stream of work, and is part of a longer-term programme of research into the relationship between governance design and public engagement.

In this paper we argue that participatory institutional designs in practice can be understood as the working out of choices and contestation between at least two discourses of participatory governance – local knowledge and local representation. Both public officials and citizen participants draw on these discourses in claiming legitimacy and authority for participative institutions and practices.

The first part of the paper sets out the theoretical framework and research design. We then explore the dual discourses of local knowledge and local representation. The paper then sets out the way in which these discourses shape governance designs in practice, and the impact of the political processes of contestation and advantage on these designs over time. The paper concludes by suggesting implications for academic and practitioner audiences.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Our research interests stem from the relationship between empirical and theoretical developments in participatory governance. At the empirical level, there has been a growth in new forms of governance beyond or loosely coupled to representative government. These include multi-agency collaborations, quasi-governmental agencies, and various forms of special purpose government constituted in a variety of corporate forms (Skelcher, 2007). Such governance institutions constitute relevant publics for participation in a variety of ways – as co-decision makers, consultees, advisors, and experts (Barnes et al, 2003; Newman et al, 2004). At the theoretical level, such developments engage with debates about forms of democracy other than the dominant representative model, changes in the relationship between civil society and the state, and the discursive construction of governance institutions (Fischer 2003; Skelcher et al, 2005).

Our framework locates questions about the design of institutions within the prevailing discourse of participatory governance. A discourse is an ensemble of 'ideas, concepts and categories that are produced, reproduced and transformed to give meaning to physical and social phenomenon and relations' (Hajer, 1995, p44).² There are two important features of discourses in a policy context. The first feature is that they provide a framing of the problem, causal explanation, and prescription for action, including defining the roles of different types of actors. The second feature is that high-level hegemonic discourse (for example 'globalisation', 'partnership', or 'managerialism') contain within it contesting sub-discourses. For example, our analysis of the partnership discourse in English local governance revealed that it contained at least three sub-discourses. These offered very different ways of designing 'partnership' governance institutions, with different implications for their democratic performance (Skelcher et al, 2005).

We propose that 'participatory governance' has two main sub-discourses – local representation and local knowledge.

- Local representation positions civil society actors as decision makers on behalf of their constituencies. Engagement in governance is about 'representing' the views of particular local constituencies into the decision-making process, through formal mechanisms, and as a result legitimising the decisions that are taken. Here the intended benefits and outcomes are principally focussed on the governance institution. Local representation enables the institution to make decisions that may be better informed through members speaking for constituencies, and are legitimated because of their presence.
- Local knowledge views engagement in governance as a process of creating understandings through open, informal and deliberative

² There are a number of schools of discourse analysis and theory. Our approach draws on the 'policy discourse' school associated with Fischer and Hajer and, to a lesser extent, the 'political discourse' theory proposed by Laclau and Mouffe. We do not engage with critical discourse analysis, from a linguistic perspective (e.g. Fairclough).

relationships between citizens and professionals/ managers. The normative assumptions underpinning this are that the process will have reciprocal outcomes. It enables professionals and managers to understand more about the needs, aspirations and preferences of publics, and to access lay or experiential knowledge to inform policy decisions. It also enables the public to develop a greater sense of citizenship and inclusion through the recognition given to their knowledge and expertise.

We draw this conclusion from the first stage of our research. This involved a number of elements. First, we identified a sample of nine significant and new governance systems in England and commissioned the leading academic experts on each to write an analysis of the relationship between the governance design and citizen and user engagement.³ Secondly, in 2006 we conducted repeat visits to fifteen case studies we had originally undertaken between 2000 and 2003 in a large metropolitan region as part of two ESRC projects.⁴ In the original research we interviewed key informants and employed a number of other research methods, and in the 2006 research identified wherever possible people who were still involved with each initiative or, where this was not possible, knew its history. Finally, we presented and discussed our initial findings at a seminar with the authors of the commissioned papers and other academic and policy colleagues involved in participatory governance.

An examination of the characteristics of governance designs, the way in which civil society actors are positioned within them, and the operational tensions and challenges that arise over time led us to conclude that at the heart of participatory governance was a contest between a discourse of local representation and one of local knowledge. Each discourse can be expressed in archetypical governance designs, which we set out below. The evidence base for our conclusions is then illustrated from three of our case studies.

TWO DISCOURSES OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Participatory governance is a powerful discourse globally, and is connected with fundamental changes in the political, cultural, technological and social realms (Cornwall and Coelho, 2006, Leach et al, 2005). Governments are under pressure to respond to the imperative for greater public involvement, but also stimulate such demands through initiatives arising from the need to improve the quality and legitimacy of decision-making and improve public service delivery.

³ The studies were: Sure Start (Tunstall and Allnock), New Deal for Communities (Lawless), Neighbourhood Management (White), School governing boards (Ranson), Children's Fund (Beirens and Peim), Foundation hospitals and Public and Patient Participation Forums (McIver), Local Strategic Partnerships (Geddes), Community-based housing associations (Mullins and Smith).

⁴ Power, Participation and Political Renewal (Barnes, Newman, Sullivan and Knops) and Effective Partnership and Good Governance (Skelcher, Mathur and Smith)

Participatory governance is not a unitary discourse. In this paper we explore two strands that can be discerned within this discourse and which influence the institutional designs that are created by government. These are local representation and local knowledge.

Local representation

The discourse of 'local representation' is concerned with the democratisation of public policy making in a plural and diverse society through the creation of institutions and practices that enable more complex forms of representation to be achieved than is possible through representative government. Democratic capacity is enhanced by providing new opportunities for a variety of relevant stakeholders to be a formal part of the decision-making process. Typically, this is facilitated by allocating reserved seats on the management board of the governance body to relevant sections of the community.

The case for local representation rests on several principles (Skelcher 2003). First, that public policy programmes directed at discrete localities or publics should include the affected groups in the governance of that initiative. Inclusion is taken to increase the democratic quality of the decisions that flow from the bodies concerned. Secondly, following John Stewart Mill, involvement by citizens in local governance has an educative effect and promotes good citizenship and a healthy democratic life in the society. Third, the individuals who are involved will advocate on behalf of their constituents, thus facilitating effective decision-making without the costs of direct participation.

The institutional archetype associated with this discourse is the semi-autonomous board whose seats are allocated on the basis of pre-defined constituencies (although some at-large seats may also be available). Individuals who have been elected or nominated by their constituency will fill these seats. Examples from the UK include neighbourhood regeneration partnerships, school governing boards, and foundation hospital boards.

However local representation has other features that are less desirable from the normative perspective of this discourse. First, engagement in governance lends local legitimisation to decisions that may be the outcome of significant influence by non-local actors (e.g. city or national government, or business). In this situation, co-option of local actors provides an appearance of legitimacy. Secondly, devolving decisions from city or national government to such governance institutions creates a relationship of managed dependency. These bodies have to manage within constraints set at higher levels of government (e.g. systems of targets and performance management), and thus disadvantaged communities may be faced with managing their own dependence. Third, effective local representation assumes that relevant local actors are motivated and have the skills to participate in this form of governance, can sustain involvement over time and are in a position formally to 'represent' the constituency that legitimates their presence. There are other possibilities and issues. Bang and Sørensen (1999) identify civic activists ('everyday makers') who explicitly decide to operate outside rather

than within governance structures, and capacity issues may or may not be harnessed to support such engagement (Sullivan, Barnes and Makta, 2006). Fourth, a formal requirement to act as a mandated representative can conflict with the encouragement of more deliberative forms of decision-making. It pre-defines the role of that actor. They are there to represent a particular interest (neighbourhood, ethnic group, religion, age-group, etc.) rather than to contribute their local knowledge. Finally, local representation creates a new political opportunity structure for activists that can accentuate cleavages within particular communities through the struggle between factions to gain seats on the board and questions about the legitimacy with which representatives speak on behalf of their constituency (Smith and Stevenson, 2005).

Local knowledge

The 'local knowledge' discourse emerges from the critique of the role of state-sponsored experts in the policy making process, and promotes and validates knowledge held by actors who thus far have had a marginal role – citizens, service users, and groups organised around various identities and interests. Participatory practices in governance focus attention on the type of knowledge that is necessary for and recognised as legitimate in reaching policy decisions, who has access to such knowledge, and how it can be utilised in democratic debate (Fischer 2006).

There are different positions taken in this respect. One argument for deliberative democracy is its capacity to open up expert knowledge to lay scrutiny – for example in the process of witness questioning that takes place in citizens' juries. But such practices are also designed to enable lay citizens to access knowledge that has previously been accessible only within professional knowledge communities, or bureaucratic systems. Key aims are to educate citizens in order to enable informed contributions to policy deliberations and the assumption is that the useful knowledge is expert knowledge to which citizens need to be exposed. However, some have seen this process of creating more informed citizens, of transforming lay people into knowledgeable actors, as generating skewed results precisely because 'the general public' are not so informed and the positions they take on policy matters will be different as a consequence (see e.g. Parkinson, 2006, p.82).

A rather different perspective on the objectives of participatory modes of governance stresses not the necessity to expose citizens to expert knowledge, but to expose experts to what has variously been referred to as lay, experiential or local knowledge. We adopt the term local knowledge, as this is most often the term used within public policy analysis.

This perspective is based in political science perspectives on democratic theory and practice, and also in the sociology of science. The case for citizen participation in governance rests on the basis of enhancing democracy, and is also grounded in epistemological assumptions about the type of knowledge necessary for good decision-making (Fischer, 2000). Yanow (2003) defines local knowledge as: 'the very mundane, but still expert, understanding of and

practical reasoning about local conditions derived from lived experience' (p.236). Lack of attention to such knowledge has led to negative consequences. For example, Visvanathan (2005) identifies a number of disasters resulting from scientific driven development in India that failed to recognise and take note of local understandings.

Many of the recent and contemporary struggles around public policy issues can be understood as struggles between expert and local knowledge. For example:

1. The environment is a key site of such disputes, at local, national and global levels (Fischer, 2000).
2. AIDS activism in both the North and the South is characterised by competing understandings and explanations (Altman, 1994, Robins, 2005).
3. Debates about genetic technologies, GM crops and bioethics all generate competing views based on competing knowledge (e.g. Shakespeare, 2006, Tutton et al, 2005, Jasanoff, 2005)
4. Many of the claims made by disabled people, mental health service users and other who live with long term medical conditions are based in experiential knowledge which challenges professionalized explanations and characterisations of their problems (e.g. Barnes and Bowl, 2001; Campbell and Oliver, 1996).

Local knowledge has two key characteristics:

1. It is situated and contextual. Science is depersonalised, technocratic and claims to be capable of generating universal explanations and solutions through the application of methodological and theoretical rigour. In contrast local knowledge is particular, embedded in understandings of how things work in specific contexts, and based in practical reasoning.
2. It encompasses meanings, values and beliefs as well as cognition. Rational actor theories and purely technical solutions fail because they do not recognise the significance of meanings and values in affecting social behaviour. Yanow (2003) gives an example of this: digging more wells failed to solve drought problems in a context where the size of a herd enhanced reputations. Thus more wells led to an increase in herd size, which used up the additional water.

All writers in this tradition identify deliberative policy making as essential to accessing local knowledge. The institutional archetypes associated with the local knowledge discourse are deliberative forums, citizens' juries and community conferences that bring together individuals from a range of relevant publics to discuss and debate their needs and possible policy options. These are often face-to-face, but can also be undertaken remotely using web technology. Beyond this framework, there are a number of practices designed to enable access to local knowledge within governance processes. Fischer (2000) emphasises the value of participatory enquiry and 'civic discovery'. This involves citizens in conducting their own research

focussing on policy issues. Yanow (2003) discusses the importance of 'meaning audits': to address the questions 'what does this policy mean and for whom does it have meaning?' Citizens move from being 'targets' of policies and instead become deliberative partners in generating the knowledge necessary for decision-making, whilst policy analysts shift from being technical experts to facilitators of deliberative processes.

DISCOURSE, DESIGN AND DYNAMICS: LONGITUDINAL CASE STUDIES

We illustrate the value of our framework by applying it to the interpretation of three of our longitudinal case studies. Longitudinal analysis is necessary in order to establish why particular governance designs arise and change, and how this relates to discursive contestation in a particular historical context. We present case studies of a neighbourhood-based citizen advisory board, a youth forum in a regeneration area, and a Sure Start programme for young children and their parents.⁵

Case study 1: the Ward Advisory Board

In this local authority, ward committees had been created to act as a focus for local government decision-making. The ward committees were composed of the councillors for that area, meeting in public. In parallel, there were non-statutory Ward Advisory Boards (WAB) of the ward councillors, local community groups and public service organisations. The WABs each had a community grants budget of approximately £80,000 per annum to spend on local organisations and activities. Their role was to consider applications from local organisations for grants and make recommendations to the ward committee who decided on the final allocation of the budget.

The implicit discourse informing the design of the ward advisory boards was local knowledge. The boards were intended to gather a range of local views and opinions on matters affecting people in the ward and thus their composition was broadly inclusive. This inclusiveness was intended to enable understanding of the needs of different communities and groups to inform the decisions of the ward committee – especially regarding the allocation of resources.

We examined the process in one ward. In 2001 the ward committee had a majority of Labour Party members and a ward advisory board containing a large and diverse range of community organisations, including older people's groups, residents' groups, church groups, youth groups, and others. The WAB also included the chairs of 4 neighbourhood forums, voluntarily created community based arenas for discussing more localised issues. Becoming a member of the WAB was a very informal process. There were no selection criteria other than residence in the ward, and no election procedure. People who came from the local area and showed an interest in the WAB became members. Citizens were encouraged to join the WAB through local advertising, contact with council officials and other WAB members, and

⁵ The research is ongoing and our interpretations may be subject to change

sometimes the prospect of gaining funding for their organisation or community activity.

The model, therefore, was one in which the ward advisory board reflected a local knowledge governance perspective. It was open, flexible and sought to inform the decision-making knowledge through information sharing and debate about priorities.

When we revisited the case study in 2006 a number of changes had taken place. The most noticeable was the redesign of the ward advisory boards to a model of local representation and away from local knowledge. This was stimulated by two factors. First, the local authority had become eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) – a government grant targeted on disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The local authority we were studying decided to devolve decisions on the allocation of the grant to the ward committees, advised by the WABs. In our case study ward, this meant that the budget for local disbursement increased from £80,000 to £300,000 per annum. This decision considerably increased the political salience of the WABs in relation to the ward committee of councillors, who consequently became more concerned that the WAB's recommendations would reflect their political priorities. Secondly, electoral changes meant that the political complexion of the ward committee changed from three Labour members to two Conservative and one Labour.

The new Conservative chair of the ward committee decided to reduce the size of the WAB from the 40 or so current members to the three councillors and the three chairs of the neighbourhood forums (there had been four, but one ceased operation). Subsequently, a representative from the local further education college and a representative of local schools were added to the WAB.

The chair's strategy was to channel community involvement through the neighbourhood forums, which would therefore take on the local knowledge function. The new design of the WAB, and particularly its high level of overlapping membership with the ward committee, thus reflected a local representation model. These changes provoked considerable local opposition.

Citizens had two concerns. The first was that the representational model was not adequate. The ward was not completely covered by neighbourhood forums, leaving two large areas without direct representation on the WAB. The second matter of contention was that the NRF resources available to the ward were divided so that each neighbourhood forum had £8,000 per annum to spend on local issues, while the balance of approximately £265,000 was retained by the ward committee to spend against particular targets agreed between the local authority and national government. This not only disenfranchised those areas without neighbourhood forums, but also made it difficult for neighbourhood forums to put forward projects to be supported by the ward committee's funds given they already had an allocation.

This longitudinal case study shows how changing patterns of political and financial resources motivated the redesign of the governance arrangements for public involvement in the ward. There were two changes. First, the ward advisory board changed from a local knowledge model to a local representation model. Second, the local knowledge function was devolved to a lower level institution (the neighbourhood forums). However this disenfranchised two neighbourhoods within the ward.

Case study 2: The Youth Forum

This case study was undertaken in an inner city area where considerable sums of money were available for regeneration, and there was a complex set of partnership bodies set up to manage the process. The area had a high proportion of South Asian population. Young people in the area were aware that resources for regeneration had been gained in part because of the disadvantage young people faced, but they found that they had little voice in the partnership bodies and were unable to contribute their local knowledge on issues affecting their constituency or influence spending decisions.

A Youth Forum comprising Pakistani Muslim young people had been established by a local young man in order to get them involved in sports and other activities, and to support them in representing their interests to official bodies. Separately, the local Youth Service ran a youth project in the locality. A conference was held as part of the consultation process on plans for the area. A large number of Youth Forum representatives attended, as did young people involved in other projects. At the conference it was agreed that a further conference, dedicated solely to young people's issues, should be held later in the year, organised by young people themselves with the assistance of the Youth Service.

The Council's youth workers, who invited representatives from all youth organisations to attend, created a conference-planning group. Again, Youth Forum members were involved and sought to make a substantial input. However the Youth Workers sought to expand involvement, not least to include young people from other ethnic groups in the area. Meetings were held at Council premises, and chaired by youth workers. The Youth Service decided that the meeting should be divided into two: one section for the young people themselves to plan the conference, and another for youth workers, apart from those chairing the young people's meeting, to develop a drug survey. It was anticipated that the youth workers would oversee the survey design, while the young people would advise on its administration, and the results would form a central feature of the conference.

Subsequent planning meetings continued to be split between youth workers and young people involved in the Forum. Friction between the groups developed. This frustration stemmed from a sense that the significant role of the Youth Forum was not being sufficiently acknowledged. Forum members claimed a particular legitimacy to speak on behalf of the young people in the area because of their local knowledge and the demonstrable commitment that they had made to their support. Youth workers appealed to a discourse of

'representativeness' to support wider involvement and not to privilege the Forum over other groups. These frictions escalated. Eventually the Youth Forum representatives walked out. They continued to try to organise a Youth Conference, but were struggling to secure funding for this and even a place in which they could hold planning meetings at the time the research ended.

In this example applying a framework of 'local knowledge' and 'local representation' highlights the ambiguity and frustrations that can arise when the purposes of participation are not explicit or not shared. The Youth Forum members claimed a strong local knowledge that legitimated their claims to represent young people in emergent processes of local governance and become co-decision makers in shaping regeneration spend in their neighbourhood. They pointed to limited evidence of commitment from other groups to support their claims. In contrast the youth workers were influenced firstly by an understanding of 'representation' as requiring the involvement of a diversity of groups, and secondly by an objective of creating responsible and effective citizens. Thus, although the initial purpose of the Youth Conference can be understood to have been to access the local knowledge of young people in the area, they adopted an 'educative' stance in relation to Youth Forum members which appeared to prioritise informing them about official procedures and encouraging them to express their claims in ways that would not threaten local officials, rather than giving recognition to their local knowledge of local conditions and the sense of injustice that this generated. Thus both groups drew on the discourses of both local representation and local knowledge but applied these in different ways because they sought rather different objectives from participation.

The consequences of this were indicated by data collected when we revisited the case in 2006. We found that there were no on-going initiatives to engage young people in the area because, in the view of our informant within the Youth Service, the youth workers had successfully responded to what young people wanted. Indeed, the young man who had been the initiator of the Youth Forum was now working for the Youth Service. In other words, the local knowledge requirements for informed policy making had been fulfilled and there was no continuing motivation to secure local representation.

Case study 3: the Sure Start agency

Our third example is a local case study of a national initiative. Thus developments and dynamics were in part influenced by policy decisions being made elsewhere. Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) were introduced in 1999 to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. They were located in some of the most deprived areas of the country and aimed to promote child, family and community development through cross agency activity and new service development. Programmes were deliberately located outwith local authorities and were based on individual partnerships that could choose whether to be incorporated in not for profit companies or to become management boards for the SSLP. Parental involvement in the governance arrangements was expected and programmes were also expected to implement other ways of engaging children, families and communities. It is hard to draw a firm line

between parental involvement in governance arrangements and broader parental engagement in projects and services developed as part of the programmes. Parents and carers have been involved in some aspect of the management in the vast majority of programme and the majority of partnerships included parent representatives (Tunstall and Allnock, 2006).

In our case study, in common with many other Sure Start initiatives, the programme built on already existing activity. In this instance a local children and families centre had a very successful track record in engaging parents who, along with other local residents, were key decision makers on the management committee. When the Sure Start programme was launched the governance of the initiative was initially the responsibility of an Interim Advisory Board (IAB) with the local authority retaining financial accountability. However, following the departure of the first manager it was decided to give the project a legal identity by establishing it as a company limited by guarantee. The introduction of formal representation from partner agencies (e.g. social services and health agencies) when the project moved from a local centre with services provided by a voluntary agency to a SSLP created anxieties from parents that 'men in suits' would take over. There were also concerns that the area was being publicly identified as a 'poor area'. There was a view that the creation of Sure Start had fundamentally affected the identity of the programme in the eyes of parents who were involved.

Membership of the IAB was of three types:

1. Based on service delivery i.e. representatives of those delivering the programme
2. Based on accountability – the HA as the 'accountable body' and LA councillors as local elected representatives.
3. Based on local knowledge and experience – parental involvement from the local communities to 'ground' the programme. Eight places were reserved for parents.

Most of the parents who put themselves up for election for the board were already involved in the previous project, but many had to be encouraged to put themselves forward. During the first period of research, three resigned, citing pressure of other commitments and feeling unable to contribute to the work of the board.

The nature of the IAB meetings changed during this first research period. Early on parents rarely spoke (and sometimes apologised for doing so), exchanges were dominated by a small number of experienced participants and the atmosphere was rather formal. However, great effort was made to change the nature of meetings to ensure participation and to facilitate exchanges. Parents exhibited growing confidence and their input demonstrated the value of local and experiential knowledge in the contributions they made. For example, parents were able use their knowledge of the importance of the toy library to ensure that ways would be found to keep this open during the summer when the host school was closed.

This experience of seeking ways to ensure that parental input went beyond a representative presence within the IAB and that their involvement ensured an

effective contribution of local knowledge to the programme was considered likely to survive the shift from advisory board to the company limited by guarantee structure. When we returned to review the development of the initiative in 2006 the Chair said:

It doesn't matter if it is a management committee, or a board, that structure of itself is not an important thing. It is about me and others working together so they see themselves as valued and see their opinions as being valued

A range of methods had been adopted that were designed to ensure that governance processes were not overly formal and that aspects of governance that would be likely to 'turn off' parents was dealt with elsewhere. Thus, for example, a sub-committee was set up to deal with financial planning and business management issues. This could be interpreted as excluding parents from decision-making about such matters. But, in combination with other ways of ensuring engagement, this enabled parents to draw on their local knowledge and to contribute on issues that are important to them. A more formal representative role may have undermined their willingness and capacity to take part.

We will be continuing to review developments in this case study which are likely to be affected by further changes in the policy environment. The Sure Start programme is coming to an end and the work they have been doing is expected to be taken within the remit of Children's Centres that will be managed from within local authorities. Whilst parental involvement remains a commitment it is not yet clear how this will be enabled in practice.

CONCLUSION

The concept of 'representation' is frequently invoked in discussions of the theory and practice of public participation – particularly in order to assert or question the legitimacy of particular participants. The power of the representation discourse comes from its strong association with representative democracy, but this arguably also generates difficulties when it is applied in the context of participatory and deliberative practices. The concept of 'local knowledge' is less evident within official discourses of participatory governance, although is implicit within the claims from local citizens and service users for a role within governance. The multiple purposes and claims made for participation (Barnes et al, 2004) encompass (amongst other things) confusion about these two rather different principles which can contribute to frustration and sometimes conflict amongst official and citizen participants.

We are developing this analysis in the context of a research project that looks across participatory governance processes in different policy areas in order to learn about 'good practice'. Our argument is that it is not possible to address this issue without unpicking the different strands that are evident within such practices and to consider the way in which they interact with the institutional arrangements of governance to create a context in which citizens and service users take part. A focus solely on the 'hardware' of institutional design is

inadequate as a means of determining how new governance processes can be both democratic and motivate citizen participation. Drawing on insights from a 'local knowledge' perspective suggests that principles based in epistemology as well as political theory are important in understanding how the potential of participatory governance might be realised.

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