Deliberation and inclusion: vehicles for increasing trust in UK public governance?[†]

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Abstract. Arguments in favour of participative democratic practices have been promoted stridently in recent years as trust in existing political institutions has receded. These arguments assume the declining ability of elected members to represent increasingly diverse constituencies in a period of rapid change, and a sense of powerlessness among citizens in the face of distant economic and political forces. There have been few attempts to review the available empirical evidence on whether deliberative and inclusionary processes lead to 'better' decisions. For the United Kingdom, evidence is limited, except in the land-use planning field, and we argue that in present circumstances their primary role should be to stimulate wider civil engagement as a means of restoring trust. 'Better' decisions will then follow. However, barriers to their acceptance remain, not least in the need to create sufficient incentive for citizens to participate and in the requirement that established economic and political interests devote sufficient resources for them to be effective.

Introduction

Opinion increasingly favours the use of deliberative and inclusionary processes as aids to decisionmaking in public affairs. They are seen as contributing to attempts to 'democratise democracy' by encouraging civic engagement and by making the work of public governance more responsive and more legitimate. The political initiatives from which they spring are more purposeful than passive exhortations to increase public consultation; they seek to extend the political arena by engaging with voices and interests that are infrequently heard. The phrase 'deliberative and inclusionary process' contains no presumption over whose process it is, who is doing the deliberating, or who is doing the including. 'Public consultation', on the other hand, is clearly directed *from* a locus of power *to* a general citizenry.

Most academic commentators see such processes as complementing existing social and political institutions (Beetham, 1995; Stewart, 1995; Stoker, 1997). Their purpose is to enhance the functioning of representative democracy, not to replace it. How they should function alongside established representative electoral processes is more difficult to prescribe, partly because their value and purpose are strongly context dependent, except that they must be seen to be accountable and legitimate. Indeed, they will have failed if they do not contribute to a rebuilding of public trust in existing institutions.

The assumptions of representative democracy have been progressively undermined by the scale and complexity of contemporary societies and their rates of change. Elected representatives can rarely capture the diverse values and social and economic interests of their constituents, while the uncertainties generated by novel threats argue for the inclusion of a wider range of knowledges in decisionmaking (Dryzek, 1990).

These considerations are reinforced by reduced expectations of what the state can realistically deliver, but it is not enough to accept that the state has to work in partnership with other interests. We need to know how best this might be done and in what ways 'best practice' is attributable to context. There are, for example, many variants of participatory democracy (for example, Etzioni, 1993; Hirst, 1994; Mathews, 1996) even if they all rest on notions of trust and reciprocity and rely upon the existence of voluntary organisations and informal networks. Nevertheless, their perceived importance to systems of governance helps to account for the growing literature on 'social capital' and the part it is thought to play in fostering effective civil societies (for example, Szreter, 1999; Wilson, 1997).

We cannot review all these issues in this paper. Instead, we critically examine the constitutive elements of deliberative and inclusionary processes, drawing many of our examples from the United Kingdom where interest has been stimulated by the government's attempts to put flesh on its notion of 'Third Way' politics (see Giddens, 1998; Hargreaves and Christie, 1998). We commence with a discussion of these processes in the context of Habermas's theory of communicative action before briefly reviewing UK experience in the land-use planning field. We then seek to account more fully for their current salience. We maintain that deliberative and inclusionary processes should be more than mechanisms for achieving greater understanding or consensus in decisionmaking. They should have 'transformative potential' by broadening the range of respected knowledges in the public realm and by allowing those with limited voice to exert greater influence on decisionmaking outcomes. But their added value cannot be taken for granted. Their desirability and feasibility have been criticised on grounds of public apathy (Carter and Darlow, 1997), the in-built social disincentives to collective action (Olson, 1965; Pennington and Rydin, 1999), their time-consuming nature, and the impracticality of direct democracy where large numbers of people are involved. Participative processes risk special interest capture and the possibility that "participation simply results in the stronger and better organised gaining the prize" (Smith and Blanc, 1997, page 285). For progress to be made, participation has to focus on the development of policy and practice and not just on their legitimation and delivery.

Deliberation and inclusion
Deliberative decision-making processes
Claims for a more deliberative style of decisionmaking have been strongly influenced by the writings of Habermas. He emphasises that deliberation in the public sphere has benefits far beyond decisionmaking; it breathes back life into the public sphere through the generation of convictions (Habermas, 1996). By increasing our understanding of the interests of others, it allows us to appreciate our own interests better (Krebs, 1997). Deliberation is nothing less than a self-fulfilling way of generating long-lasting forms of political justification, with the integration of differing interests promoted through public debate, reasoning, and critical judgment (see Estlund, 1997).

Concern for process is foremost in Habermas's theory of communicative action, but his call for a more widely deployed 'discourse ethics' has sometimes been misunderstood. It is usually, and quite rightly, taken as a normative demand for situations in which public debate leads to the critical reconstruction of values (O'Hara, 1996). But Habermas himself (1987, pages 110–111) describes this idealism as limited. He insists that the "communicative model of action does not equate action with communication" (1984, page 101), and in volume 2 of *The Theory of Communicative Action* goes on to explain that society understood as communicatively constructed is dangerously incomplete. One simply cannot ignore economics, war or the struggle for political power. Instead, his practical purpose is to see communicatively generated power bolstered so

as to complement administratively employed power. Moreover, although the normative dimension of his theory rests upon orientating language towards mutual understanding rather than a primary concern for political results, this is not the whole story because those engaged in communication "refer simultaneously to things in the objective, social and subjective worlds in order to negotiate common definitions of the situation" (Habermas, 1984, page 95). In other words, participants do not leave out of their contributions other forms of social action, some of which can and do undermine the communicative ideal (Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones, 1999).

At a less abstract level, deliberation is defined as 'careful consideration' or 'the discussion of reasons for and against'. It follows that deliberation is not necessarily inclusive and Fishkin (1991) for one would subordinate the benefits of wide inclusion to the gains from 'effective' deliberation. Deliberation is less likely to be effective in large groups because individuals would have less time to express themselves and learn from others. Although we regard both deliberation and inclusion as key principles in any attempt to widen and deepen participation, we recognise that tensions exist in this relationship and that particular practices can only be evaluated within specific circumstances in terms of the trust and legitimacy they bestow.

The almost universal presence of deliberation in decisionmaking makes defining deliberative processes very difficult. It is easier to identify a series of characteristics associated with them. First, a deliberative process demands social interaction normally incorporating face-to-face meetings, not least because trust is still most easily engendered by regular face-to-face discussions over an extended period. This does not mean that various forms of information technology (for example, telephone, e-mail, television conferencing) cannot be used as a partial substitute or complementary activity, but it is the sense that it is conversation rather than written text which assumes considerable significance. Second, a deliberative process is also partly identified through its dependence on language. Language is neither neutral nor passive but constitutive of the process. It is reflexively constructed in relation to the contributions made by other participants, emphasising interpretation, feedback, and revision (for examples see Innes, 1998; Myerson and Rydin, 1994; Rydin, 1998).

Third, a deliberative process requires participants to value and respect the positions of others within 'morally reflective communities' (Parker, 1995) without necessarily conceding their own. It constitutes an engagement which "involves not simply having good intentions and hearing words, but also embodying respect, paying attention, employing critical judgement, and building relationships" (Forester, 1989, page 9). It emphasises the importance of learning by drawing upon the knowledges of all members of a community, even if consensus is neither sought nor achieved (Healey, 1992). The intention should be to search for values that can be respected rather than values that can necessarily be agreed upon, using the process to raise the level of trust between those involved. Trust is crucial to agreeing *workable* outcomes under conditions of disagreement. This may seem a modest objective because the intransigence of powerful participants may ensure that workable outcomes do not rise above a low common denominator. But even then, the process exposes the politics of the possible which can be used subsequently to confront entrenched ideas, self-deception and manipulation by established interests.

This is an important point because it is possible to place consensus as a defining goal in Habermas's theory of communicative action (see also Innes, 1996; Innes and Booher, 1999). To us, this is unrealistic because the notion of consensus can create a false sense of closure and the illusion of stability. When wide disparities exist between deeply held, value-laden positions, no amount of communication will resolve the differences (Moote et al, 1997). As Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger say "The development

of an open inclusionary discourse on its own will not guarantee an open and fairer collaborative process, as groups of stakeholders will form natural pacts because either they assign themselves to particular norms and conventions or else will want to ensure that their viewpoints win over other participants" (1998, page 1981).

Collectively, these traits are suggestive of an unhurried approach. They pragmatically acknowledge the reflective and recursive nature of decisionmaking in complex situations where 'alternatives' as much as 'priorities' drive the debate. It is also a learning process, the extended time-frame providing opportunities for the participants to weigh up and integrate different kinds of knowledge, to mix 'values' with 'evidence', and to link together concerns that lie outside the functional domains of particular institutions. Finally, deliberative processes are less prone to strategic voting as those present have to account for their preferences (Miller, 1992). Participants have to be persuasive and make their arguments, however technical, accessible to others.

Deliberative processes thus seek to build a more participative democracy beyond the confines of 'instrumental reason' by developing a sense of 'public reason' (Bohman and Rehg, 1997). Reason is retained as a guiding principle because of the emphasis placed upon the value of exchange and mutual respect. This is not a value-free position, as the weight given to the reasoning of individuals will not be divorced from their 'status' and the trust in which they are held. Moreover, communicative rationality as an ideal embodies a particular notion of society which articulates its collective basis. This does not imply, however, as has been suggested (for example, Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998), that those committed to deliberative practice are disinterested in outcomes or, for that matter, are naive about the uneven distribution of power in society. Power may sometimes be dispersed among interests who have no immediate interest in seeking compromise. But individual positions change and decisions can be reversed.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the act of including others in the processes of consideration, decision, and implementation. Inclusion goes beyond debate over who should be involved; it is also concerned with the means by which participants can take part, the agendas they are permitted to discuss, and the arrangements they make for those who cannot be present. An inclusionary process sets out to create the widest practicable range of stakeholders or 'publics' on the principle that this will increase the sense of ownership, the legitimacy of the outcomes, and extend what counts as valid knowledge (see, for example, O'Hara, 1996; Petts, 1995). But there is an important distinction to be made between processes involving 'stakeholders', who may be seen as representing social interests, and a public consisting of numerous individuals holding widely varying values and wishes (see Renn et al, 1993).

Inclusion raises legitimacy even if the outcome of the deliberation is unacceptable to some of the participants. They have at least engaged in the process. They will have a sense of how best to reformulate their opposing views, and to whom these should be addressed at the next stage. This is why such processes should not be seen as linear and closed. Taken to its logical conclusion, inclusion requires the interests of nonhuman nature and future generations to be considered (see Eckersley, 1996). These particular requirements and the difficulties they create remind us of the more general issues of *how* to identify the full range of stakeholders, especially when their interests cross geographical scales and jurisdictions; *who* should be responsible, if anyone, for identifying potential participants; and *how* such interests can best be represented (see Laws, 1996).

Not all interested parties can, or want, to attend all of the time, while the ideal notion of deliberation creates discourses that hinder the participation of some while helping others. Thus how participants (and the excluded) feel about the process is very important. Using the metacriteria fairness and competence to evaluate citizen participation, Webler (1995) emphasises the importance of the participants' ability to determine rules and procedures as well as agendas, to decide who are appropriate participants at what stages, and crucially to establish who or what constitutes a representative forum. These practices can also provide modest defences against charges of co-option and clientelism (for examples, see Goodwin, 1998; Skillington, 1997). But there is a huge difference between inclusionary processes that are tacked on to unchanged systems of decisionmaking, and those that contribute to a comprehensive renewal of democracy. These whole system changes attend to structure, processes, and values (see Wilkinson and Applebee, 1999).

Public participation and land-use planning

Although there are many instances of participative practices worldwide, they have only been modestly exploited in Britain. British governments have retained a strong commitment to representative democracy and the 'mother of parliaments'. The main exception lies in the area of land-use planning with its links to local government, and we briefly describe the historical evolution of public participation in this field as an illustration of the changing nature of the debate in the United Kingdom.

Simmie (1994) suggests that the promotion of public participation is one of three broad ideologies of British planning, the other two being the protection of private property and the advancement of the public interest. The relative weight attributed to each ideology has fluctuated since the introduction of comprehensive land-use planning under the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. Initially, participation consisted mainly of information provision and a limited degree of consultation, with activity centred around planning inquiries and public meetings. Its role was most fully explored in official terms in the Skeffington Report of the Committee on Public Participation in Planning in 1969 (MHLG, 1969). The Report framed participation largely in terms of increased communication in order to improve public relations and to make planning more efficient, while the planning process itself remained firmly within the tradition of representative democracy. Consultation was tokenistic, occurred late in the planning process, was the preserve of the articulate, and was typified by one-way communication conducted through public meetings and written comments. It did not build the capacity to participate and was characteristic of the lower rungs of Arnstein's (1969) much-cited 'ladder' of participation.

The Conservative administrations of the 1980s viewed participation as dampening the entrepreneurial spirit and causing unnecessary bureaucratic delays. Public expenditure cuts reduced resources for statutory participation while a neoliberal ideology encouraged NIMBYist protests linked to the protection of private property (Carter and Darlow, 1997). This in turn led to growing public disillusionment with the planning process and encouraged cynicism among planners. Whilst legally required to conduct public participation exercises as part of plan preparation, they recognised that the opportunities to go beyond 'consultation' were quite restricted once the draft plan with its agendas, policies and programmes had been prepared in the form expected of them by the Department of the Environment (Thomas, 1996).

The planning styles of the 1990s indicate a move back towards the political centre. Today's dominant styles have been termed 'responsive' planning, which is far less regulatory than state imposed strategies but nonetheless still accords importance to public policy goals, and 'partnership' planning which combines the inclusionary aspects

of popular planning with local economic interests. The DETR publication "Guidance on enhancing public participation in local government" (1998) advocates capacity building at the local level. It discusses the value of citizens' juries, focus groups, visioning exercises, issue forums, and even interactive websites (see also Stoker, 1997), arguing that choice of technique depends upon purpose and resources. The report also documents the steady growth in the use of these techniques alongside the increased use of 'stakeholder' and 'partnership' practices (see Cartwright, 1997; Davoudi et al, 1997; Hastings, 1996).

Central government advice on enhancing public participation stops short of advocating practices that would see local authorities handing over the management of services to local citizens (DETR, 1998). It is very sensitive to any compromise over the state's control over statutory matters. The risk is that participation will raise expectations only for stakeholders to experience 'regulatory capture', in the way that public consultation is vulnerable to business capture; while the need to leave an audit trail to demonstrate procedural probity has tended to relegate participation to the rigidity and relative safety of the bureaucratic realm rather than locating it in the more complex and uncertain arena of local capacity building (Rydin, 1999). Moreover, despite statements of principle in favour of local engagement under the government's modernising local government agenda, elected councillors are prone to query the representativeness and legitimacy of active citizen groups (see Stoker, 1997).

The current range of participative practices in use in local government permit two observations. First, they have been encouraged by central government's attempt to diffuse the conflictual nature of much public participation by reasserting the public-good role of planning, largely in terms of tackling social exclusion and sustainable development, whilst maintaining the principle of partnership arrangements between public and private interests. But dramatically new outcomes cannot be expected because of the statutory restrictions placed on what issues the public may be consulted over and the wide range of issues regarded as essentially nonnegotiable at local or regional level by any means (Cowell and Murdoch, 1999; Murdoch and Abram, 1998; Tewdwr-Jones and Thomas, 1998). Nonetheless, the shift in outlook recognises some of the strengths of Healey's (1998a; 1998b) demand for a more collaborative approach to planning that is sensitive to the needs and sensibilities of particular places. Second, 'Third Way' politics should lead central government to encourage civic engagement as an end in itself but it has yet to provide practical guidance on how it wishes the relationship between civic engagement and the institutions of local representative democracy to evolve. New Labour is torn between its rhetorical commitment to civic engagement and community planning, loyalty to its local activists in representative politics, and its concern not to lose control.

Accounting for current interest
There are no singular explanations for the current interest in deliberative and inclusionary processes. We can, however, point to a number of prompts to debate and to calls for action. There are arguments surrounding *sociocultural pluralism*, in the sense of an increasing awareness of greater complexity and variety in citizens' lifestyles, an appreciation of the breadth and depth of lay knowledges, and the need to uncover a greater number of previously hidden values. In part, this awareness arises from the senescence of a politics based on class, and its replacement by a politics linked to gender, ethnicity and age. There are also personal dimensions as to what it means to live a civil existence. Many individuals feel powerless in the face of complex, global problems. Individual actions are thought to be meaningless or of limited worth when combined with a sense of detachment from the formal institutions of government.

And then there is the *unreflexive* nature of our formal institutions of governance. The need to amend cherished democratic practices is only slowly being accepted, alongside the active search for more apposite geographical scales of public decision-making ranging from the regional to the European. We address these prompts in turn.

Social and political processes
The widely reported processes of globalisation are having a profoundly unsettling effect on individual identity, and individual and collective security. As Giddens (1991) argues, no one can opt out of the transformation being wrought by modernity. This is contributing to a loss of trust in established sources of authority, in turn leading to a reduced sense of personal identity or 'ontological security'. The question becomes to what extent can deliberative and inclusionary processes provide an opportunity in these circumstances for different publics to communicate their anxieties, shape policies, and create 'thicker' networks of local interests capable of mediating the competitive effects of global transformation. A lack of empirical evidence prevents a clear answer, but a priori the issue of geographical scale seems fundamental to it. Although there will always be silent voices at all scales, voices present at one scale may be absent at another. Even when the same voices are present at several scales, their behaviour will be influenced by what power they believe they have at each scale and we know little about the territorial scales of policy and civil networks.

Underpinning the globalisation thesis is technological change, and especially information technology (IT). This affects networks by altering the ways that people communicate, manage data, and take decisions. This is not always negative because these technologies have the potential to create new social and political spaces. However, exchanges in the cyberspace of IT do not meet all of the characteristics of what constitutes a meaningfully inclusionary and deliberative process. Participation is by individuals and each may feel that decisions are being made 'further away' and by less identifiable and accountable interests. The effect is more likely to create a sense of disassociatedness especially among those dependent upon networks for capacity building as opposed to those capable of using the technology to create new networks to their advantage.

In political and ideological terms, social and cultural pluralism has been promoted in its own right since the Second World War, rather than merely existing as an empirical observation on society (Dahl, 1982). In Western liberal democracies, pluralism stood in contradistinction to socialist totalitarianism, but now that the Cold War has ended those who advocate a plural society have had to create a politics that does not rest on such simplistic dichotomies. One response is 'Third Way' politics, one characteristic of which is the celebration of diversity and self-fulfilment of life goals. Community has become the new spatialisation of government where individuals are expected to take on greater responsibility for themselves and their families. Yet individualisation does not necessarily mean disengagement but can represent multiple engagements coexisting together (Beck, 1994; Stenson and Watt, 1999). Fluid social groupings become defined around ethnicity, gender, and lifestyle choices, or around issue-based politics, few of which are adequately tracked by the established institutions of government. Deliberative and inclusionary processes form one means through which these multiple engagements might be accessed and better connected to formal institutional structures.

Cultural fragmentation also raises questions about the relations between pluralism, active citizenship, and governance (Kearns, 1992; Parker, 1999). Addressing this issue, Miller suggests that although "our personal lives and commitments may be very different ... we are all equally citizens, and it is as citizens that we advance claims in the public

realm and assess the claims made by others" (1995, page 432). But this statement begs a series of questions, including what notion we hold of citizenship, how citizens can engage, and what should be their level of engagement. It also fails to counter Young's (1997) challenge of how best to respond to the growing importance and continuous redefinition of difference within society, and the implications this has for the realisation of individual and collective rights. In reply, Miller accepts that all citizens have a right to engage in the conduct of public affairs but it is not a requirement that they should do so. "[I]t should be part of each person's good to be engaged *at some level* in political debate, so that the laws and policies of the state do not appear to him or her simply as alien impositions but as the outcome of a reasonable agreement to which he or she has been party" (page 448; emphasis in original). But how can we achieve sufficient engagement to ensure 'reasonable agreement'?

The need for the British state, among many other democracies, to revisit this issue arises in part from the declining legitimacy of representative politics, especially at local level. Participation is very low (see Young and Rao, 1997), with voting turnout in the local elections falling from just under 50% to a mere 29% during the 1990s (*Sunday Times* 2 May 1999). Part of this decline is attributed to a fall in confidence among voters that voting makes any difference to what goes on locally (Stoker, 1997), while citizens' engagement with other areas of activism, such as opposition to planning applications, roads schemes, and school and hospital closures, remains much more in evidence. Recent attempts to address this issue, via devolution and directly elected city mayors, reveal the ambivalence of central government towards these initiatives through its continuing reluctance to let go of key powers and resources, again raising the risk of unfulfilled expectations.

Recent trends in UK governance
Many of the distinctions drawn between the state, market, and civil society during the era of the welfare state have been eroded and their relations redrawn over the last quarter of a century (see, for example, Rhodes, 1997; Rose, 1996). Lying behind the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s was the conviction that the state should share or devolve responsibility for policy delivery to the private sector. The state should work with the market, or through businesses and communities, and do so by detaching "the substantive authority of expertise from the apparatuses of political rule, relocating experts within a market governed by the rationalities of competition, accountability and consumer demand" (Rose, 1993, page 285). In evaluating these reforms, Rhodes concludes that the effect was for the British government to adopt "a strategy of 'more control over less'" (1997, page 16) and to try to compensate for loss of managerial control by centralising financial control. In practice, the degree of change introduced has varied widely by economic sector and welfare service (see Davis et al, 1997; Hogwood, 1997; Painter, 1994; Patterson and Pinch, 1995) but it has been extensive enough to encourage arguments in favour of more inclusionary governance on three main grounds.

First, by establishing numerous independent and quasi-independent bodies (QUANGOs; privatised concerns, executive agencies, etc) responsible for policy delivery, the government reduced political accountability just at the point where the citizen feels the impact most. Second, the government created a narrow view of public service by emphasising economic efficiency and, more recently, best value, treating the citizen as consumer. Third, the reforms created more fragmentation in some areas of public service and monopoly suppliers in others. The search for functional efficiency in limited domains has not helped government address cross-cutting issues, such as

health and transport, while monopoly suppliers of key services have failed to shake off the image that they have put their shareholders before their customers.

These trends reveal a more complex institutional pattern of governance as the state cedes responsibility to business and voluntary organisations, but they do not contain an equivalent political response that ensures political accountability to customers. Instead, accountability is essentially upwards and primarily directed towards meeting economic performance targets. Nor is there much sense of the importance of informal processes of governance to the social basis of public affairs. The reforms fail to recognise sufficiently that governance should incorporate a set of processes which will, inter alia, influence the social construction of shared beliefs, promulgate a language of collective interests, such as the 'common good', articulate rules of behaviour among actors with respect to collective affairs, and allocate and regulate rights and obligations among interested parties (Hanf and Jansen, 1998; Healey, 1997).

In practice, these processes operate through a set of arenas or institutions, but their significance to governance in action cannot be underestimated. They represent the essential dynamic inherent in the constantly changing relations between formal institutions and civic engagement. Established institutions may provide the "values and language within which rights are redeemed, duties defined and resources allocated and distributed" (Healey, 1997, page 304), 'carrying power' from their general source to the particular instance, and they often require a significant degree of stability and permanence if they are to generate trust and be effective, but as social constructions within democratic societies their behaviour and power must be constantly open to challenge (Bryson and Crosby, 1993). Informal civil processes are there to ensure reflexivity among the institutions of government. There has to be an active context within which institutional capacity building and mutual learning are constants, where differing interests are encouraged to collaborate, and where together these processes create the social and political spaces within which new rights and responsibilities can emerge (see Healey, 1998a). Their role should be to release the capacities of all society's stakeholders and to "rebuild the public realm at the service of citizens rather than one dominated by the abstract systems of government and economy" (Healey, 1997, page 314).

Assessment

Those who argue in favour of more deliberation and greater inclusion in the conduct of public affairs believe their time has arrived. Representative democracy is seen as insufficiently sensitive to the needs of culturally and economically diverse constituencies while policymakers are no longer regarded as the only source of solutions to complex social and environmental problems. The call for greater civic engagement discussed in this paper runs parallel to current attempts in the United Kingdom to refashion the state through the greater use of partnerships between previously underconnected market and civil interests. But current initiatives risk raising expectations unduly as politicians and administrators remain very cautious about sharing power and there is growing anecdotal evidence of 'stakeholder fatigue' where consultation has become a burden, or even viewed as a form of control. Establishing the most effective ways to proceed remains a major task and is itself part of the reform process.

With notable exceptions, we lack empirical analysis and evaluation of participative experience. Lessons from the land-use planning system may not be easy to transfer to, say, education and health policy where the key issues relate to professional competence and financial rationing as opposed to economic development and the protection of private property; nor to sustainable development with its current focus upon questions of lifestyle and social exclusion (DETR, 1999). Indeed, generalisations are always

difficult to draw, especially as what is judged as success is often the result of specific actions (see Coenan et al, 1998). All that is generally agreed is that traditional practices based upon information dissemination and consultation and directed from a source of authority to a 'public', are insufficient. Within varying limits of what is deemed 'practicable', engagement has to be based on the principles of transparency, negotiation, respect and inclusion; and beyond these the determination of acceptable forms of evaluation. How can we know whether participative practice, invariably and deliberately more time-consuming than representative practice, leads to better decisions? Hajer and Kesserling (1999), for example, conclude that it may not. They challenge the orthodoxy that enhanced democratic rights necessarily help reduce environmental risks, but they base their judgment solely on an evaluation of outcomes, raising once again the central issue of what deliberative and inclusive processes seek to achieve.

Returning to the Habermasian ideal of communicative action, the primary but not exclusive benefits are to be drawn from the process itself. It is the process of engagement, and the sense of ownership in the decisions this brings, that should be central to measures of success. Effective engagement raises the level of trust, which may allow, in turn, the achievement of robust and workable outcomes in situations of disagreement, which are frequently the norm, and this is a much more powerful and realistic reward than merely a singular search for consensus. Of course, such benefits are not derived independently of outcomes, nor from the sense that a particular series of outcomes will partly set the conditions for the next round of negotiations. But this is quite different from attempts to reduce worth to a set of outcomes. The main drawback is that feelings of civic pride may be an insufficient incentive to engage. This is not merely a matter of compensating for the time-consuming nature of deliberative processes, although practical experience reveals this to be an issue in itself, but we also often lack evidence that those who have participated have been listened to, a requirement fundamental to the building of trust and commitment. This leads us to suggest the following empirical agenda for research in this area:

(1) systematic identification of those areas of the 'common good' that can be most effectively addressed through deliberative and inclusionary processes, and the incentives required to ensure participation;
(2) the impact of geographical scale on the nature of deliberation, who is included and who excluded, and who decides;
(3) the role of the state as initiator and partner;
(4) the contribution of such processes to social learning and institutional reform;
(5) the issue of evaluation, how it is done and by whom.

This agenda keeps the relations between social process and institutional structure as the central issue. There is little point in stimulating the 'soft' civil infrastructure (Healey, 1997) to create new ideas, aspirations, and values if there are no effective channels of exchange with the formal institutions of governance. At the same time, there has to be a balance. The constant redefinition of institutions and their practices can be destabilising. It can undermine shared meanings and knowledges and any sense of continuity, lowering trust and effectiveness in governing institutions. Moreover, achieving a workable balance will always be contested and although it has powerful interests of its own, the state has to retain a central role in any change. Individual citizens may distrust it but they also expect it to protect them from other powerful interests. It is expected to facilitate but not control, to diffuse its power, and not simply through partnerships with other powerful interests who 'can get things done', and to become more transparent. Such an apparent loss of formal power would be more than compensated by the increase in respect in which it was held by those whom it is there to represent.

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