Representation, Community Leadership and Participation: Citizen Involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal and Local Governance

**Prepared for the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
Office of Deputy Prime Minister**

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Executive Summary

Within the UK, as in many other parts of the world, an increased focus is being placed on the involvement of community leaders, voluntary groups, neighbourhood residents and civic associations in the policy decisions which affect their lives and in the design and implementation of services, especially at the local level.

Often referred to in the UK as 'the new localism', these initiatives are seen by their proponents as enhancing civic life, deepening democratic participation, and contributing to more effective neighbourhood renewal and sustainable communities. Critics of these approaches, on the other hand, argue that the new participatory approaches weaken the co-ordinating role of local government and erode the roles and responsibilities of locally elected councillors and representatives.

Commissioned by the NRU to explore these issues further, this paper outlines (i) underlying issues related to leadership, representation, and participation as they have been experienced in other parts of the world and (ii) suggests lessons from international experience which may relate to the debate in the UK context.

Following a review of the broad trends towards new and innovative forms of citizen participation in governance, the paper outlines key challenges which these trends pose, especially in the area of community leadership and democratic representation. These issues include:

- tensions found in competing concepts of representative and participatory democracy;

- the accountability and 'representativeness' of both councillors and leaders;

- questions of procedural legitimacy – how representatives and leaders are chosen;

- broader sources of legitimacy – representation beyond the ballot box;

- the problem of representing multiple publics, and

- balancing 'insider' and 'outsider' roles, especially around issues of power, conflict and collaboration.

The paper examines various legal frameworks for incorporating citizen participation in local governance that have been used in other countries, and which go beyond 'consultation' to incorporate more empowered forms of citizen involvement with elected leaders. These may include:

- approaches to planning at the local government level that link community representatives and elected representatives in forms of authority and decision-making;

- new ways in which public accountability is exercised;

- more direct and popular forms of participation at the local level;

- approaches which make existing representative structures more inclusive.

The paper concentrates on experiences and examples from abroad, rather than on perhaps already existing examples in the UK. Nevertheless, through the review a number of lessons emerge. Discussed more fully in the following sections, these broad lessons highlight the need to:

- strengthen the legal or statutory provisions which enable participation;

- recognise diverse local and regional contexts. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work. New tools may be needed to 'map' the preparedness of communities and local governments for participatory approaches, as well as to map and to build upon the diversity of local understandings of leadership;

- 'work both sides of the equation', simultaneously focusing **both** on community empowerment **and** supporting the capacity of local officials and civil servants to understand, and respond to that empowerment;

- develop and promulgate clear guidelines which clarify the appropriate rules and roles for engagement between community leaders, government staff and elected officials in the LSP and similar bodies;

- develop guidelines which help to clarify the different forms of accountability which underlie different forms of representation;

- improve the incentives for quality representation and participation, especially through ensuring that real decisions over resources and strategy can be made by local bodies;

- seek support from broader bodies, including trade unions, the political parties, and others;

- name and address power relationships that surround participatory process, so that community leaders, local government officials and elected representatives participate on a 'level playing field' to the extent possible;

- recognise that the development of new forms of representation and participation will take time, and involves change not only in rules and procedures, but also in culture, attitudes and behaviours.

Finally, the report points to the need for learning from the approaches to these issues across the variety of community involvement initiatives which exist in Whitehall, as well as to identify local innovations and examples already existing in the UK which can help to suggest more concrete ways forward.

Representation, Community Leadership and Participation:
Citizen involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal and Local Governance
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I. Introduction

Within the UK, as in many other parts of the world, an increased focus is being placed on the involvement of community leaders, voluntary groups, neighbourhood residents and civic associations in the policy decisions which affect their lives and in the design and implementation of services, especially at the local level.

Often referred to in the UK as 'the new localism', these initiatives are seen by their proponents as enhancing civic life, deepening democratic participation, and contributing to more effective neighbourhood renewal and sustainable communities. Critics of these approaches, on the other hand, argue that the new participatory approaches weaken the co-ordinating role of local government and erode the roles and responsibilities of locally elected councillors. Others argue that localism can constrain national policies for greater social equity and poverty reduction.

One of the arenas in which these conflicts are emerging is in the implementation of the government's Neighbourhood Renewal Programme. The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR) places community involvement at the heart of the strategy and integral to the process of improving the most deprived neighbourhoods (which are located in 88 local authority areas). Within these areas, community participation programmes fund community involvement in a variety of ways. The Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), for instance, provides resources direct from central government to local community and voluntary sector organisations to ensure their involvement in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), the bodies designed to link a range of stakeholders including public service providers, councillors, the voluntary, community and private sectors.

In this process, confusion and tension is emerging in many LSPs regarding the respective roles of community representatives, elected councillors and local officials. It is not uncommon for each to claim to represent the community and each have responsibilities to ensure that communities have a strong voice in local decision-making. Beneath this particular tension lie broader issues about the nature of democratic representation, who advocates for whom, how legitimacy in leadership is derived, and the links between participatory and electoral forms of democracy.

The Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies has a great deal of experience and expertise in participation and governance issues in the context of community development and poverty reduction in other countries. This paper has been commissioned by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) to draw on this experience to (i) outline underlying issues related to leadership, representation, and participation as they have been experienced in

participatory approaches to community revitalisation and participatory governance in the UK and other parts of the world, including the poor countries of the South and the more developed countries of the North; and (ii) outline innovative steps that have been taken elsewhere, or which could be taken in the UK, to alleviate these tensions.

In approaching these tasks, the following paper will:

- locate the debates about community leadership and representation in the broader context of the changing nature of democratic governance;

- explore more specifically the issues involved in linking participation, community leadership and political representation;

- examine some recent examples of participatory governance that have been used in other parts of the world to link community leaders, community participants and local representatives; and

- drawing on this analysis, suggest some lessons and ways forward on this issue for the NRU, ODPM and other interested parties.

The paper concentrates on experiences and examples from abroad, rather than on perhaps already existing examples in the UK. Nevertheless, through the review a number of lessons emerge.

II. From government to governance: the broadening basis of democratic participation

In recent years a number of studies have pointed to the gap that exists within both North and South between ordinary people, especially the poor, and the institutions which affect their lives, especially government. For instance, the World Bank's *Voices of the Poor* study, prepared for the World Development Report 2000/1, finds that many poor people around the globe perceive large institutions – especially those of the state – to be distant, unaccountable and corrupt. (Narayan, et. al. 2000:172*)*. The *Voices of the Poor* study is not alone in its findings. Another study by the Commonwealth Foundation (1999) in over forty countries also found a growing disillusionment of citizens with their governments, based on their concerns with corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor, and the disconnection from the lives of ordinary citizens.

The empirical evidence on the crisis in the relationship between citizens and their state is not limited to the South. Though for perhaps entirely different reasons, in a number of established democracies, especially the UK and the USA, traditional forms of political participation such as voting have gone down, and a series of studies show clearly the enormous distrust citizens have of many state institutions. In the UK, a study sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation points to the:

> *need to build a new relationship between local government and local people. There are two reasons for this. The first has to do with alienation and apathy. There is a major issue about the attitudes of the public, as customers or citizens, towards local government …This is a symptom of a deeper malaise, the weakness or lack of public commitment to local democracy (Clarke and Stewart 1998:3).*

A more recent study by IPPR argues that people remain interested in political issues, but are increasingly becoming frustrated in the political process and feel that Britain is becoming less democratic (Clarke 2002). A host of other studies point to similar concerns.

Other data in the United States, most notably the work by Robert Putnam (2000), points to the decline in civic participation and the growing distance between citizens and state institutions. More recent work by Skocpol (2003:11) warns of the emergence of 'diminished democracy', in which public involvement has lost its link to political life and political engagement has become more the domain of professionalized associations, such that 'early-twenty-first-century Americans live in a diminished democracy, in a much less participatory and more oligarchicly managed civic world'.

While the 'democratic deficit' is now widely recognised, there has often been disagreement about how to respond. On the one hand, attention has been given to strengthening the processes of citizen *participation* – that is the ways in which ordinary citizens exercise voice through new forms of inclusion, consultation and/or mobilisation designed to inform and to influence larger institutions and policies. On the other hand, growing attention has been paid to how to strengthen the *accountability* and *responsiveness* of these institutions and policies through changes in institutional design, and a focus on the enabling structures for good government.

Increasingly, however, we are beginning to see the importance of working on both sides of the equation. As participatory approaches are scaled up from projects to policies, they inevitably enter the arenas of government, and find that participation can only become effective as it engages with issues of institutional change. And, as concerns about government responsiveness grow, questions about how citizens engage and make demands on the state also come to the fore. In this debate, we have seen a shift from discussions about *government* to those of *governance,* which focus on broad forms of involvement between the state, civil society and market.

In both South and North, there is growing consensus that the way forward is found in focusing on **both** a more active and engaged citizenry **and** a more responsive and effective state which can deliver needed public services (Commonwealth Foundation 1999). Within this debate, citizens move from being simply 'users or choosers' of public services policies made by others, to 'makers and shapers' of policies themselves (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000). In this process, participation means more than consultation, but involves shared responsibilities for decision-making in the making of policies and the allocation of resources.

To quote a recent study from OECD: 'Policy-making in all OECD countries rests on the foundation of representative democracy. Within this framework, many OECD countries have long-standing traditions with extensive community involvement. All are looking for new ways to include citizens in policy-making' (2001:12). While within this process, sharing information with citizens and insuring consultation are critical building blocks, active participation is something more: 'a relation based on partnership with government, in which citizens actively engage in defining the process and content of policy-making…it requires governments to share in agenda-setting and to ensure that policy proposals generated jointly will be taken into account in reaching a final decision' (2001:12).

In response to this agenda, a number of initiatives around the world have sought to find new forms of governance, which link citizens and states in new ways and seek to rebuild the relationships between citizens and their governments. Such innovations go under various labels, ranging from participatory democracy, to deliberative democracy, to 'empowered participatory governance' (Fung and Wright 2003:5). Exploring four examples of empowered participatory governance in both North and South (neighbourhood governance councils in Chicago; conservation planning processes in the US; participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and panchayat reforms in West Bengal and Kerala, India), Fung and Wright argue that these reforms 'aspire to deepen the ways in which ordinary people can effectively participate in and influence policies which affect their lives…They are participatory because they rely upon the commitment and capabilities of ordinary people to make sensible decisions through reasoned deliberation and empowered because they attempt to tied action to discussion.' Arguing in a similar vein, Wainwright explores a series of experiments which represent 'a new participatory approach to political power' (2003:x).

The search for new forms of participatory governance has been a key part of the current UK government as well. This philosophy has spawned a range of initiatives across Whitehall aimed at strengthening citizen participation and reconnecting citizens to the state, in areas having to do with health care, youth, older people, community revitalisation, public service delivery, and the environment. (For a review of some of these initiatives, see, for instance, Channan, forthcoming; Clarke 2002; Burton 2003). The trend is also seen in the rapid uptake of participatory approaches by local authorities. An ODPM report review of 216 local authorities showed that in 2001 some 8 million people were involved in local authority

initiated exercises, which drew on a range of nineteen different methods for consultation, participation and deliberation. The report also shows a 'marked increase on some innovative and deliberative approaches' since 1997 (Birch 2002:5).

Of the range of government initiatives, one of the most far-reaching has been the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, which targets 88 authorities with the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and commits the Government to 'ensuring that communities' needs and priorities are to the fore in neighbourhood renewal and that residents of poor neighbourhoods have the tools to get involved in whatever way they want'. At the heart of this strategy are four goals for greater community participation, including greater voice ('that enables communities to participate in decision-making and increase the accountability of service providers'), improved social capital, service delivery, social inclusion and cohesion (NRU 2003.)

The approach has not only been on the domestic front. In other parts of the world, the Department for International Development (DFID) has been at the forefront of efforts to promote participatory approaches to development and governance. Its strategy paper on *Realising Human Rights For Poor People (2000),* for instance, argues for the rights of citizens to be engaged in the decisions and processes which affect their lives. Underpinning the approach are three principles of a rights perspective: *inclusive rights* for all people, the right to *participation*, and the 'obligations to protect and promote the realisation' of rights by states and other duty bearers – a concept which links to that of *accountability*.

Several common characteristics underlie these various UK initiatives. These include:

- a concern with more *active and participatory forms of citizenship*. Such views go well beyond the notions of citizens as consumers, as articulated during the 1980's and early 1990's, to citizens who engage in policies and in the delivery of services. They also profess to go beyond consultation to deeper, more empowered forms of involvement;

- a concern with *inclusion*, especially of racial and ethnic minorities, youth, older people, and others seen as previously excluded or marginalised;

- a simultaneous concern with involvement of *multiple stakeholders* in new forms of partnership, which in turn enable wider 'ownership' of decisions and projects;

- an emphasis on broader forms of *accountability*, which enable multiple partners to hold institutions and policy makers to account, and which involve social accountability as well as legal, fiscal and political forms.

Through this approach, the hope is that participation will not only contribute to overcoming the 'democratic deficit' through better governance and a more engaged citizenry, but also that participation will meet developmental goals of improved communities and service delivery.

The extent to which these promises are being realised in new participatory initiatives is now widely debated around the globe. A full review and evaluation of the approaches is beyond the scope of this paper. What has become clear, however, is that realising new forms of participatory governance and development is full of challenges. Participatory governance is

not simply achieved from above with new policy statements, but requires multiple strategies of institutional change, capacity building, and behavioural change.

One of these challenges has to do with how more direct forms of community participation, and the leaders who occupy community roles, link to roles of authority and representation found in more traditional forms of representative democracy. In a review of participatory public policy initiatives in the UK, Taylor (2004) writes of the ongoing tension between representative and participatory democracy:

> *Not enough thought has gone into the relationship between the two with the result that many politicians are no longer sure of their role and feel threatened by the power that they feel is being given to community representatives. It is this that creates "wounded lions" at all levels that frustrate the rhetoric from the centre.*

 Similarly, in a recent study on who participates in the new democratic politics in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Houtzager et al (2003:33) conclude that:

> *citizen participation is not simply an exercise of political involvement by ordinary citizens in the policy process, but rather includes a diverse set of collective actors. This raises a significant new question in the debate on citizen/civil society participation: what forms of representation are civil society actors constructing in the new participatory institutions, and how do these new forms of representation involve ordinary citizens in policy-making?*

This issue – widely cited but rarely explored in the burgeoning literature on participatory governance – is the one to which this paper shall now turn.

III.   Representation, leadership and participation: A review of the debate

> *The democratic impulse needs to be strengthened by finding new ways to enable citizens to share in decision-making that affects them…The truth is that in a mature society representatives will make better decisions if they take full account of popular opinion and encourage public debate on the big decisions affecting people's lives.*
>
> *-- Tony Blair 1998[1]*

One of the assumptions of participatory forms of governance and development is that greater participation will allow more inclusive inputs into decision-making processes, which in turn will lead to better decisions, as the Prime Minister's oft-quoted statement above suggests. At the heart of the assumption is a link between participation and representation, such that greater participation will also lead to better, more informed, forms of representation.

In real-life situations, the linkage is not so straightforward. A number of studies now point out that a consequence of opening up decision-making and service delivery to new forms of inclusion, and to a broad range of stakeholders, is that traditional roles and accountabilities become less clear. Nelson and Zadek (2000) argue, for instance, that with the movement towards partnership approaches, the traditional reliance on clearly structured representation and the rule of law gives way to more fluid patterns of participation. Similarly, in their recent study of deliberative policy processes, Hajer and Wagenaar (2003:1-3) argue that 'the rise of a vocabulary of governance indicates a shift away from well-established notions of politics and brings in new sites, new actors and new themes…Their efforts to find solutions acceptable to all who are involved (and to expand the circle of involvement) nibble and gnaw on the constitutional system of territorially-based representative democracy'.

These conflicts are seen especially at the local level, which historically has been understood as the key site for democracy building and citizen participation. As Lowdes (1995:161) reminds us, it is at the local level that 'people usually come into contact with politicians or public officials, receive services and benefits from the state, and organise together in communities'. Here, the move for more inclusive, participatory forms of governance throws into immediate relief questions about representation, leadership, legitimacy and authority - questions which are as old as the debates about democracy itself.

In traditional representative democracy, elected representatives are the ones expected to make decisions on behalf of the people, who in turn hold them accountable at times of elections. Decisions and policies in turn are carried out by rational bureaucracies, occupied by specialists whose expertise is the basis of their legitimacy. In more participatory approaches, both the elected and the bureaucratic forms of representation and legitimacy are challenged, as communities and their leaders are invited into (or demand) more direct forms of engagement. Conflicts emerge over who speaks for whom, and with what authority, and about the appropriate relationship between the 'governors' and the 'governed.'

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[1] Tony Blair (1998), 'The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century' (London, The Fabian Society), quoted in Clarke 2002.

The conflicts over the respective roles of representative democracy and community participation in the context of neighbourhood development are by no means new. Marris and Rein (1972) discuss abortive attempts at including participation by the poor in the 'War on Poverty' in the United States during the 1960s, and relate this to the Skeffington Report and other early attempts at community participation in the UK. They ask the difficult question:

> *How is a community to initiate its own projects and articulate its needs without challenging the authority of local government – and who then represents the community? What is a community forum worth if it has no power to command attention: and if it has such power, will it not undermine the rights of elected government? (1972: xviii)*

Nor are such conflicts restricted to the UK context. In a review of partnerships for rural development across Europe, Westholm notes the importance of legitimacy, representation and local democratic accountability (1999: 20). Similar issues came into play in the recent US Empowerment Zone experience (Gittell et al 1998), and are also raised in the context of efforts for participatory local governance in developing countries (Johnson and Wilson 2000; Bollens 2000; Panos Institute 2000.)

The relationship between participatory community development initiatives and local governance is not always seen as conflictual. In an important study in the United States, Chaskin and Abnimah (1997:15) found that:

> *in general the neighbourhood-based governance entities created by community-building initiatives are accepted by (and acceptable to) local government. Representatives of local government neither see them as a fundamental intrusion on the roles, responsibilities or prerogatives of elected government, nor as much of a threat to its representative and provisionary functions. Because such entities were seen as grounded in their neighbourhood, public officials therefore assumed them to be able to act more effectively as a conduit of information, an organiser of interests, and a broker among neighbourhood actors and between them and the city. Indeed, neighbourhood-based governance entities…were seen as potentially important mechanisms for fostering the kind of sought-after 'partnership' between local government and its neighbourhoods that many officials described as desirable.*

At the same time, their study suggests the need to unpack further some of the underlying issues involved in the link between community participation and representative governance.

Though our review has found very few studies which focus particularly on this link, from the broader literature we can cull at least six conceptual and practical issues at the heart of the debate on community participation and elected representation. These include:

- differing conceptual understandings of the nature of democracy
- questions of accountability and 'representativeness' of both councillors and leaders
- questions of procedural legitimacy – how representatives and leaders are chosen
- broader sources of legitimacy – beyond the ballot box
- the problem of representing multiple publics
- balancing 'insider' and 'outsider' roles, especially around issues of power, conflict and collaboration.

The following discussions will review these debates further, drawing largely from literature in the UK. Then, in Section IV we will focus more on the experience of other countries.

Representative and/or participatory democracy?

At the heart of the current debates about representation and participation are age-old debates about the nature of democracy. At one end of the spectrum, often associated with democratic theorists such as Schumpeter, participation is a 'hindrance to freely-elected representatives' (Smith and Beazley 2000: 858). Such a view historically has also been very much part of the British political system. As Clarke writes:

> *Ever since Edmund Burke's famous speech to the electorate of Bristol in 1774 the*
> *British way of politics has been to leave decision making to the politicians and the*
> *policy experts. The role of the public (or at least those that had the franchise) was to*
> *periodically pass judgement on their leaders at election time. This passivity has*
> *become an entrenched part of the British political culture (2002:1)*

 Internationally, the view is expressed for instance by Bollens in the context of South Africa, who argues that 'taken to its extreme, an over-reliance on citizen consultation and consensus is contrary to the notion of representative government, wherein elected officials are delegated the tasks of policy-making and implementation by the citizenry' (2000: 175). In a review for the FAO, Ribot (1990) concurs, and argues that accountability can only come from mechanisms of representation, not participation.

The view that participation and representation are incompatible is directly challenged by the recent statements under New Labour for more active forms of citizenship. These echo other more participatory strands of democratic theory, elaborated by those as diverse as Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, G.D.H. Cole and others. Or as David Beetham puts it, 'the choices that people make at election time…do not entail agreement with everything that the representatives may do in the future. Systematic and regular consultation is therefore a necessary democratic complement to the electoral process' (quoted in Needham 2003:19). In addition to leading to better decisions, others argue, participation can also lead to better citizens, that is, it can serve an educative function which strengthens local democratic leadership and capabilities, and which re-invigorates trust in the democratic process.

While in some of the public debates in the UK, participation is perceived as an alternative to representative democracy, in most of the conceptual arguments, participation is seen to augment representation, not to replace it. In the famous study by Parry et. al., *Political Participation and Democracy in Britain*, political participation is defined as 'taking part in the processes of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies. It is concerned with action by citizens which is aimed at influencing decisions which are, in most cases, ultimately taken by public representatives and officials.'   Warren (1992:9) juxtaposes standard liberal democracy with 'expansive democracy', which argues for:

> *increased participation in, and control over collective decision making, whether by*
> *means of direct democracy in small-scale settings or through stronger linkages*
> *between citizens and institutions that operate on broader scales…Whereas in the*
> *standard view, democracy most often refers to institutional processes such as*
> *competitive elections, in expansive theories it refers more broadly to the effects of*

institutions in increasing individuals' control over self-determination and self-development.

Building on Warren, Hajer and Wagenaar (2003:3) argue that:

> *This does not imply that 'classical-modernist' institutions, characterized and maintained by codified well-established patterns of behaviour, simply fade away. Clearly much of the business of governing is still effected by the traditional institutions of government. However, they must now increasingly compete with open-ended, often unusual, ad hoc arrangements that demonstrate remarkable problem-solving capacity and open up opportunities for learning and change in exactly those circumstances where classical-modernist institutions have failed to deliver.*

The point is that except in most extreme views, neither the participatory nor the representative views are seen in exclusion of the other, at least conceptually.

Who represents whom? issues of accountability and representativeness[2]

In practice, however, as the debates between representative and participatory forms of democracy move from the conceptual level to the more practical, further tensions emerge about who is really most accountable and representative of the citizenry. Is it elected representatives? Or is it 'community leaders' who speak for and with neighbourhood associations, voluntary associations and community organisations? Much of the literature here dwells on the negative, with the proponents of each side accusing the other of not being accountable or representative.

Questions of accountability of local councils and councillors

While much recent debate has questioned the accountability of community leaders, a number of studies have pointed for some time to questions of the accountability and representativeness of local councillors. In the context of public services in the UK, Prior et al summarise this viewpoint:

> *The lack of opportunity for citizen involvement in decision making is a significant theme in the contemporary critique of public services. Briefly, the criticism is that the established mechanisms of representative democracy have proved to be an inadequate protection of the interests of the 'ordinary citizen' in the face of an increasingly remote and inaccessible political executive and a monolithic provider-dominated public service bureaucracy. What are needed are new means for empowering citizens in their relationship to the services they use and pay for (1995: 122).*

This also goes beyond the UK.   A study by CARE International on urban governance in six cities in developing countries found that 'many elected leaders act as gatekeepers to information, opinions and decisions rather than sharing them openly with the communities. Some base their decisions and patronage on personal or political interests. People without links or connections do not feel represented by these leaders (2001:7). In other instances, the

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[2] While the focus here on accountability of elected officials and community leaders, another important issue is the role of civil servants and government staff. A large body of literature considers questions of accountability in this context. For a review of this literature see Newell and Bellour (2002).

problem is not a lack of accountability but rather accountability only to certain more elite sectors of the population. Fung (2003:5) notes that proponents of new participatory systems 'view structures of representative legislation and insular administration as easily captured, or at least biased, toward wealthy and socially advantaged sections of the polity.' Similarly, in the UK, authors like political activist and commentator Hilary Wainwright argue that representative democracy has given way to 'elite' democracy, and has proven 'too weak to provide a sufficient basis for popular control over state institutions, let alone looming private economic interests' (2003:29).

Questions of accountability of community representatives

While critics of representative democracy are quick to point out the lack of accountability of elected representatives, likewise much attention has also been paid in the literature to the relative lack of accountability or representativeness of community leaders.[3] While acknowledging these critiques, Taylor looks into why 'participation – at least at the more formal end of the scale – appears to be very much a "minority sport"'(2003: 184). She explores the question of the emergence of 'usual suspects', or the relatively limited number of local community leaders that are involved in partnerships. There are many reasons for this:

- newcomers are nervous to take over from experienced community leaders
- domination of cliques (in some cases)
- 'the majority of people seem happy to let the leadership get on with things most of the time'
- groups go in cycles: initial surges of activity are difficult to sustain
- people may not have the time nor resources to get more involved
- community leadership involves the 'risk of putting your head above the parapet' and community leaders have been met with harsh critiques from both sides and sometimes even with violence (e.g. when campaigning against drug dealing on estates, etc.)
- 'expectations of community representatives can be highly unrealistic'
- 'burnout' is common
- 'usual suspects are often created by the systems, timescales and structures of partnership itself'.

Purdue et al (2000: 44-5) add that participation in partnerships may be particularly attractive to those with skills in accounting and negotiating bureaucracy, but these may not be the people with the most dynamic leadership ability. They note that partnerships are processes of change, but their leadership gets fixed early on as certain community representatives become trusted. Despite capacity building work, it is difficult for new leaders to emerge. This may be summed up by saying that acting as a community leader is a difficult and often thankless role, and only a few members of local communities will be willing to take on this commitment.

However, it should also be noted that challenges to the representativeness of community leaders are often driven by other agendas. Purdue et al describe this at length:

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[3] Within this report, 'community leaders' are discussed primarily in relationship to those leaders who emerge in relationship to external partnerships with government. We recognize that there are many other leaders who participate in community activities which may not be state connected.

Community representatives may have views that conflict with those of other partners and press for policies which are, for example, at odds with government policy or which other partners are unable or unwilling to support. In such situations, other partners may question the legitimacy of the community representatives in an attempt to undermine their position. In some instances other partners attempt to put the spotlight on community leaders in order to deflect attention away from their own inability to address particular problems. Where the ability of the community partner to represent the community is questioned, this can reinforce and entrench the tensions which already exist. (2000: 1-2)

Taylor makes a similar point, adding 'community representatives are quick to point out that other partners (including those from the private sector) are rarely questioned about their legitimacy or representativeness' (2003: 134). In fact, in recent research, Taylor and Warburton found that 'democratic legitimacy' of voluntary and community organisations was not always seen as a priority by government actors. 'Indeed, this was most likely to be raised as an issue, with accusations of unrepresentativeness, when VCOs opposed government agendas' (Taylor 2004).

In response to questions of accountability and representation, arguments may fall back to issues about legitimacy. Here there are often two types of legitimacy – one having to do with legitimacy derived from how a leader is chosen, the other focusing more on the experience and skills that the leaders bring to the governance process.

Procedural legitimacy: How are leaders selected?

Selection of elected leaders

 Much of the legitimacy of locally elected leaders derives from the ballot box. Elected leaders are seen to have been chosen by the community, and thus authorised to speak for it. Critics, however, point to the limits of choice given at the ballot box within the UK. Despite formal democratic structures for electing local councillors, the councillors may in fact be nominated by a handful of ward-level party members and elected sometimes by as little as a few hundred votes. In some cases, the turn out rates for the election of community leaders in neighbourhood regeneration schemes may have been greater than that for the local politicians. Moreover, accountability mechanisms such as the right of recall, which are present in a number of other countries, are not available in the UK.

Selection of community representatives

Despite the fact that there are a number of issues to be raised about selection procedures for local officials, more attention has been focused on the procedures used for community leaders.

Purdue et al identify 'community leaders' in the context of regeneration partnerships as 'individuals who are elected, selected, nominated, self-appointed, arm-twisted or otherwise chosen as the "leaders" of a "community"' (2000: 2). The procedures for identifying leaders can be democratic, transparent and relatively representative; often they are not. Leaders can be chosen through democratic elections; nomination by community groups; self-selection; or co-option by councillors or other partners.

In the context of NDC partnerships, Hilary Wainwright (2003: 80) notes that community representatives are often elected by votes open to all residents. In the East Manchester NDC

that she studies, however, community representatives on the NDC board are chosen by residents' associations. This does not appear to be an isolated case. Selection through community-based organisations may be the most common route of entry for community leaders to join partnerships. Purdue et al (2000: 39) review community leadership in area regeneration partnerships, and conclude that in peripheral estates, community leaders tend to emerge from residents' associations; while in inner cities, voluntary projects were the main source. Internationally, there is more concentration on non-governmental and community-based organisations as partners, rather than with community leaders *per se*, with Houtzager et al (2003) and Alvarez (1993) in Brazil, Desai (1996) in India, Songco (1997) in the Philippines and Johnson and Wilson (2000) in Zimbabwe all looking at the role of civil society in partnerships with government.

Community leaders also emerge through self-selection. Taylor notes that 'community leaders may self-select in ways which do not make them the best people for the job' (2003: 184). She points out that often community professionals, not local people, get involved at the strategic level; and that where funding is present, it may attract community representatives seeking funding for their organisations. Taylor also points out the connection between self-selection and the phenomenon of 'usual suspects', as discussed earlier.

A final form of selection of community leaders is co-option by councillors or other partners. In a study of partnerships in mid-Wales and Shropshire, Edwards et al (2001: 297) noted how partnerships 'cherry picked' (in the words of one partner) representatives that are easy to work with. They are critical of this:

> *...the notion of partnership as 'working together' is a discursive block on the widening of participation, as it leads partnership initiators to restrict the involvement to partners with whom they feel comfortable working. These tend to be institutions and individuals with whom working relationships are already established, hence reinforcing the focusing of partnerships on existing institutions, territories, and scales of governance.*

Taylor (2003: 132) also notes how public sector partnerships often select the people that they find easiest to work with – what she calls 'the accessible face of community involvement'.

Community leadership may overlap with elected representation. Purdue et al (2000: 39) found that while most community leaders emerge through connection to community or voluntary organisations, in some areas the community leaders were the elected local councillors. In these areas, Labour councillors played a central role in virtually all local community organisations.

Beyond the Ballot Box: other sources of legitimacy

While in the case of elected leaders, legitimacy is often derived from the ballot box, in the case of community leaders, legitimacy often has to do more with other forms of claiming support from the communities, and less on procedural and selection issues. Studies by Barnes et al on public participation in Liverpool and Birmingham, for instance, found that whatever the formal rules, 'informal claims to legitimacy tended to be based on the skills, knowledge and experience of particular members, and/or their claims to "represent" a wider constituency' (2002:6). In the United States, Chaskin and Abunimah (1997:9) found that in

the eyes of local government officials the legitimacy of neighbourhood leaders grew from their 'superior knowledge about neighbourhood circumstance, priorities and needs' while government had 'the technical expertise and instrumental capacity to help to realise neighbourhood goals.'

Similarly, Prior et al argue for a 'new understanding of representativeness, based neither on electoral nor statistical criteria, but on a certain kind of experiential relationship between representative and represented' (143). This could involve choosing representatives not just on the basis of locality, but also on their ability to represent differing identities or functions which are under-represented in the political process. This seemed to be the case in a service users' forum where participants 'were invited to join on the basis of (i) their capacity to represent service users' views by virtue of their own experience; (ii) their capacity to represent particular user groups for example, disabled people; (iii) their capacity to represent other service users through contact with them' (2002:6). Other work has pointed to the importance of 'experiential expertise' to be included in public policy decisions, along with technical, disciplinary or professional expertise

Sometimes the legitimacy of community leaders is derived from their perceived social capital. Purdue's article on neighbourhood governance (2001) examines how community leaders can mobilise or utilise social capital to support their position. He writes:

> *Community leaders act as key points of contact between governmental regeneration initiatives and local residents in neighbourhoods. The effective development of this role, whether conceived of as social entrepreneur or not, requires the accumulation of two types of social capital—internal communal and external collaborative social capital. Each of these requires gaining mutual trust or goodwill in relation to a wide range of community groups/networks and, secondly, regeneration partners drawn from the private and (crucially) the public sectors (2001: 2221).*

A further source of this legitimacy and ability to act as a community leader has more to do with individual qualities. Purdue draws on Weberian leadership theory to distinguish between two types of community leaders: 'Social entrepreneurs resemble "transformational leaders", combining entrepreneurial skills with a vision for the neighbourhood. Community representatives resemble "transactional leaders" who interact with their followers (2001: 2211). Nelson and Zadek (2000) also find community-based social entrepreneurs to be critical in making new social partnerships work.

The ' myth of community': representing multiple publics

Representation becomes a very problematic issue when one starts to look specifically at who is being represented . Too often, the notion of 'community leadership' relies on the notion of a relatively-homogenous, geographically bounded community that can be led. This notion of community has been challenged by several authors. Almost fifty years ago work by Hillery (1955) found over ninety different definitions of community in the literature, even then. Channan (forthcoming) points out the different criteria that communities can be based on, including communities of interest and of identity as well as geographic communities. Guijt and Shah (1998) point to the tendency of talk about 'communities' to submerge attention to gender, age and other differences.

Purdue et al (2000) write that partnerships based on 'communities of place' create the expectation that community leaders can represent all types of people in their area. But communities are fragmented, diverse, and based on interest and identity as well as on geographical location. Taylor writes about the tension between cohesion and diversity. While government policies promote the concept of diversity, Taylor's research (2004) finds that 'government respondents were often impatient with the number of different voices they were exposed to on similar issues and clearly preferred the sector to speak with a single voice'.

Prior et al frame this in terms of addressing the realities of 'multiple publics' (quoting Gyford): 'Part of the problem is that not only does that reality embrace vast differences of experience, perception, assumption, expectation and need, it also embraces a number of 'publics' which are effectively hidden or excluded from the mainstream of civic life. (1995: 144) But diversity also relates to the different roles citizens take up within their communities and in relationship to local governance, services and these partnerships. Prior et al list some of the distinctions between roles in relationship to public service provision:

- *voluntary and involuntary users*
- *short-term and long-term users*
- *users/citizens with common interests and users/citizens with competing interests*
- *users/citizens with individual interests and users/citizens with collective interests*
- *actual users and potential users*
- *direct and indirect users*
- *users and citizens*
- *citizens as tax-payers and citizens as non tax-payers (1995: 128)*

Not only do community leaders play different roles, but they may be expected to play them differently, depending on the cultural norms of the community they represent. In black and ethnic minority communities, norms about leadership may vary, for example, amongst Afro-Caribbean, Pakistani, Bangladesh or Somali cultures. Similarly, norms of leadership may vary across other identities – between rural and urban communities, or younger and older generations.

The problem of representing multiple publics also relates to demands on community leaders to represent both the community and the partnership in which they are engaged. Taylor notes that 'there is … an ambiguity about partners' expectations. They want community participants to be representative and accountable to their communities, but there is a culture of delivery about partnerships and partners want representatives to 'deliver their communities'' (2003: 134). She also notes situations in which as community leaders get more involved in partnerships, they become less active in (and perhaps less accountable to) their communities: 'It is difficult for community representatives to become integrated in to new elite networks and simultaneously continue their role in former associational networks' (2003: 132). Community leaders are often placed in an 'impossible "pig in the middle" situation, expected by their constituents to represent community views to partnerships and by official partners to bear the brunt of representing the partnership back to communities' (Taylor 2004).

Clarifying the roles: collaborators or adversaries?

Closely associated with the 'insider-outsider' dilemma that community leaders experience is the pressure for consensus that often accompanies community-government partnerships. Community leaders may be forced to choose between the more traditional 'adversarial roles' that outsiders have often played *vis a vis* local government or the more collaborative roles now expected as insiders within government. These not only demand new skills but may threaten the legitimacy of community leaders with their communities, if they are now seen as 'cosying up' too closely to elected officials or government agencies which their community constituents may distrust. To work together, not only must new forms of trust be developed between the community leaders and government officials, but that trust needs to be expanded to include relationships with the broader community as well.

Mistrust and fears of co-optation often link to inequalities of power which exist within partnerships. In an article on partnerships in Zimbabwe, Johnson and Wilson describe:

> *Power relations between different stakeholders cannot simply be wished away. In particular, the unequal power relationship between outside agency and project beneficiary makes it difficult to obtain participation because this relationship is subject to manipulation and dependency. Thus, the more powerful may exert and extend their "power over" during participatory and partnership processes, and this may be aided by the internalisation and acceptance of those power relations by the less powerful. The tendency of participatory (and by extension, partnership) processes to seek consensus may only conceal that such consensus is more apparent than real, and actually represents the wishes of the most powerful players. (2000: 1892)*

Smith and Beazley (2000) also address issues of power in partnerships in detail, and propose a tool by which power in partnerships can be assessed.

Given that inequalities in power often exist, the struggle to attain authentic and meaningful voice by community leaders may involve conflict, as well as collaboration. While some approaches to partnership overemphasise consensus building to the exclusion of conflict, others point out that conflict and collaboration often must go hand-in-hand. In their study of examples of empowered participatory governance, for instance, Fung and Wright point out that deliberative processes are best achieved if 'there is a rough equality of power, for the purposes of decision-making, between participants' (2003:25). Moreover, they go on to point out, democracy-enhancing collaboration is unlikely to emerge and be sustained in the absence of effective countervailing power through which citizens can hold these new spaces to account (264). Similarly, Wainwright (2003:186) points to the importance of forms of 'embedded' bargaining power in participatory forms of governance, which allow popular pressure to be exercised alongside alliance-building and collaborative forms of engagement.

Given the importance of both collaboration and adversarialism in participatory processes, community leaders are often torn between multiple roles. Moreover, all members of the partnership may lack tools for understanding or negotiating conflicts.

IV. Expanding the Legal Frameworks: Experiences from other countries

The issues explored in the previous section – the nature of democracy, questions of representativeness and accountability, procedural and other forms of legitimacy, multiple identities and roles, negotiating conflict and consensus - are found in many countries which are exploring new forms of participatory governance and revitalisation. However, some initiatives in some other countries have gone further than in the UK to address these issues through legal frameworks that incorporate changes in the community or civil society relationship to local government in perhaps more far-reaching ways. It is to those examples that we now turn.

Earlier work by Goetz and Gaventa (2001) reviews a number of mechanisms from around the world for strengthening the engagement of citizens and governments. In that work, we argue that the various approaches may be seen along a continuum, ranging from ways of strengthening voice on the one hand, to ways of strengthening receptivity to voice by government institutions on the other. The 'voice' end of the spectrum, we argue, must begin with examining or creating the pre-conditions for voice, through awareness-raising and building the capacity to mobilise – that is, the possibility for engagement cannot be taken as a given, even if mechanisms are created.

As citizens who are outside of governance processes begin to engage with government, there are a series of strategies through which their voices may be amplified, ranging from advocacy, to citizen lobbying for policy change, and citizen monitoring of performance. Then, as we move along the spectrum of engagement, there are the more formalised arenas in which civil society works with the state in the joint management and implementation of public services (through various forms of partnership).

Just as there are a number of mechanisms for amplifying voice, the paper argues, so these must also be strengthened by initiatives that strengthen the receptivity to voice within the state. These include government mandated forms of citizen consultation, standards through which citizens may hold government accountable, various incentives to encourage officials to be responsive to citizen voice, changes in organisational culture, and legal provisions which in various ways make participation in governance a legal right.

At the intersection of the mechanisms for greater voice, on the one hand, and the mechanisms for greater state responsiveness, on the other, are a number of new legal or constitutional frameworks for participatory governance which incorporate a mix of direct forms of popular participation with more representative forms of democracy. There are numerous examples of innovations which arguably incorporate this approach, ranging from provisions for participatory planning at the local government level in India and the Philippines, to participatory budgeting and participatory health councils in Brazil, to citizen monitoring committees in Bolivia, to forms of public referenda and citizen consultation in the Europe. (For a thorough review of legal frameworks for citizen participation see McGee, et al 2003).

Much can be learned by looking at these emerging approaches to empowered participatory governance. These may include

- approaches to planning at the local government level that link community representatives and elected representatives in forms of authority and decision-making;
- new ways in which public accountability is exercised;
- more direct and popular forms of participation at the local level;
- approaches which make existing representative structures more inclusive.

Joint approaches to planning

Perhaps the closest approach to that found in the NRU and the LSP's is found in countries where new bodies are created for local planning and which are mandated to combine forms of representation between elected government officials and members of civil society.

In the *Philippines* for instance, the 1991 Local Government Code requires citizen participation at all levels of local government through the local development councils. Participation is mandated in the areas of development planning, education, health, bids and contracts, and policing. In theory, the LGC also provides for direct representation of civil society and voluntary organisations on local government bodies, though this has been uneven in its implementation. Legislation also mandates funds for training of citizen representatives in order for them to participate effectively (McGee 2003 et al and Rocamora et al 2003).

Perhaps the largest scale experiment in the joint approach is found in *Brazil*, where the new Constitution of 1988, termed at the time the 'Citizens Constitution' affirmed public participation in the delivery of local services as a democratic right. This has resulted in the creation across the country of municipal level councils which link elected officials, neighbourhood representatives and service providers in almost every sector, including health, education and youth. The scale of these initiatives is enormous. In the case of health, for instance, over 5,000 health councils were created by the 1988 Constitution, mandated to bring together representatives of neighbourhoods, social movements and civil society organisations with service providers and government representatives to govern health policy at the local level (Schattan, et. al. 2002.)

By Constitution, the federal government is also required to transfer decision-making authority over resources to the municipal level as well. In this case, the laws mandating new participation are closely linked with laws relating to decentralisation and to integrated planning across local, state and federal levels. Participation is also linked to Municipal Organic Laws, through which each municipality specifies procedures of public consultation and public hearings and the process of delegation of municipal powers to sectoral councils or committees and to neighbourhood committees. However, despite the general orientation of the national Constitution towards participation, the way in which local laws for participation are actually implemented may vary a great deal across states and municipalities.

Also in *Brazil*, such local level participatory planning is often accompanied by a process of participatory budgeting, made famous now by the example of Porto Alegre. In the case of participatory budgeting, priorities for government funding are established at the neighbourhood level through large-scale public fora. The neighbourhood assemblies also choose community representatives who then take the neighbourhood priorities to the higher tiers made up of themselves and elected representatives. In a standard representative democracy, the task would be left to civil servants, and merely ratified by the local elected bodies (McGee et al 2003 and Nelson et al 2003).

__Changing forms of accountability__

Further innovations have not only emphasised citizen involvement with local governments in planning, but also empowered citizen representatives to hold government to account 'for carrying out properly the functions of government, whether these relate to executing budgets with probity, holding the requisite minimum number of public hearings or council meetings, or implementing laws on joint planning processes' (McGee et al 2003:50).

In *Bolivia,* the Law of Popular Participation of 1994 mandated broad-based participatory processes, starting at the neighbourhood level, as part of the process of local government decentralisation. It also recognised the importance of social organisations that already existed (including indigenous communities, with their own practices and customs). About 15,000 such 'territorial base organisations' are registered to participate in the planning process. However, in addition, the particular innovation of the Bolivia law was legally to create citizens' oversight or Vigilance committees in each municipality, which are empowered to freeze municipal budgets if actual expenditures vary too far from the planning processes. Again, the actual implementation of these laws varies greatly, due to differences in understandings, power relations, citizens' awareness, etc. in differing localities.

__Empowered forms of local direct participation__

While many approaches are looking for new forms of a joint relationship between citizens and elected representatives, others are creating forms of direct citizen participation, which complement representative forms of governance with more empowered, direct involvement of citizens at the local level. In *Brazil,* as we have seen, large-scale neighbourhood meetings may be used as part of the process of participatory planning or budgeting. (Estimates are that over 100,000 people, representing some 10% of the population, have attended a participatory budgeting meeting at least once over the fourteen years of the initiative.) In *India,* the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments gave local governments (the panchayati raj system) with the task of planning for economic development and social justice. In theory this process begins at the village level, or the gram sabha, though this varies in practice across states. In the State of Madhya Pradesh, a new law was passed in 2001 which virtually transferred all powers concerning local development to the village assemblies, including powers related to village development, budgeting, levying taxes, agriculture, natural resource management, village security, infrastructure, education and social justice (McGee 2003:49). In Kerala, as part of the People's Planning Campaign, local governments received 40% of the state budget allocation for local services. Grassroots planning processes were carried out in thousands of villages which were then approved by direct vote in popular village assemblies.

__Strengthening the inclusive representation of locally-elected bodies__

Another strategy employed in certain countries has been to try to make local councils more inclusive of traditionally excluded populations. For instance, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in *India*, mentioned above, mandated that one-third of the seats should be reserved for women, as well as one-third of the offices of the chairperson. Similar reservations have been made for those of the lower castes and tribes. While making local councils more inclusive, the Constitution also gave them a great deal more power for

planning for 'economic development and social justice' in twenty-nine separate areas of local development, including forests, education and irrigation. While the implementation of these new representation processes has been uneven, and while the local councils are not always granted adequate financing from central government, the inclusion of new members in the political processes has been vast. About one million women and about 600,000 lower caste or tribal members have now been elected to local government office.

While none of these approaches offer a panacea, they have created through legislation new roles for community leadership in relationship to local governance. However, the extent to which the legislation itself opens new spaces for participation varies a great deal, both according the characteristics of the legal frameworks themselves, and the broader contextual situation in which they are a part. Table 1, below summarises the key findings of the study by McGee and colleagues, who examined legal frameworks for citizen participation in some eighteen countries. (See Table 1).

Table 1: Enabling and Constraining Characteristics of Legal Frameworks for Citizen Participation

Enabling characteristics of legal framework	Constraining characteristics of legal framework
Promulgated in response to demands from below and with citizen inputs	Imposed from above without groundswell of popular demand, and overly inspired by prevalent international discourses and tendencies to the neglect of home-grown discourses and in-country or regional aspirations and sources of inspiration
Seeks to strengthen and improve institutions of representative democracy by better representation of those with least voice, better quality of representation and performance, and by complementing with mechanisms of participatory democracy	Seeks only to make the institutions of representative democracy work better, not to challenge these or extend governance relationships beyond them
Recognises people and civil society organisations as citizens with rights, including the right to participate in governance and auxiliary rights	Treats people and civil society organisations as relatively passive subjects, to be engaged only in non-binding consultations at a relatively late stage of decision-making
Builds in accountability measures that ensure representatives can be recalled and government actors held to account for poor performance	No accountability measures, or measures that are impracticable in real-life situations
Provides for or contemplates in future a significant degree of fiscal decentralisation and citizen participation in fiscal processes, as both an incentive to citizens to participate in local governance and assurance that local government can allocate resources to participatory processes	Centralised power retained over fiscal matters – revenue-raising and allocation – or no participation envisaged in them, contradicting spirit of decentralisation and citizen participation and reducing incentives for involvement in local governance
Law(s) accompanied by set of operational guidelines, policies or capacity-strengthening measures to ensure that the relevant actors are enabled to apply them	Excessive reliance on laws and on a legalistic approach to the neglect of operational guidelines or the provision of practical support and capacity-building for implementation

-extracted from McGee, et al, (2003) *Legal Frameworks for Citizen Participation: Synthesis Report.* LogoLink Research Report Series, Institute of Development Studies, pp. 62-63.

Fung and Wright, in their path-breaking study of innovations in 'empowered participatory governance,' point to three broad 'design properties' for such approaches to participatory governance to work, each of which have some general relevance to the current UK context.

- First, empowered participatory governance is best carried out in relationship to a process of genuine *devolution*, e.g., 'the administrative and political devolution of power to local action units' who are 'charged with devising and implementing solutions and held accountable to performance criteria.' The bodies which they study are not advisory, but have been granted some real power – e.g. 'they are creatures of a transformed state endowed with substantial public authority'(2001:21).

- Secondly, although there is a substantial devolution of public authority, there is *also a strong coordinating role of the central government unit*, suggesting a model of 'coordinated decentralisation rather than autonomous decentralisation.' These central offices can 'reinforce the quality of local deliberation and problem solving in a variety of ways: coordinating and distributing resources, solving problems that the local units cannot address themselves, rectifying pathological or incompetent decision making in failing groups, and diffusing innovations and learning across boundaries' (Fung and Wright 2001:22).

- Thirdly, these approaches use and generate new state institutions to support participatory processes 'rather than leaving them as informal or voluntary affairs' (2001:17). Going down this formal route is seen as harnessing 'the power and resources of the state to deliberation and popular participation and thus to make these practices more durable and widely accessible' (2001:23). In so doing, participation of citizens also is changed from either that of the advocacy group making demands on the state from outside, or of consumers of public goods. Rather, these approaches institutionalise participation 'in the direct determination of what those goods are and how they should best be provided' (2001:23)

Such design principles have clear consequences for the UK. When one compares the recent initiatives in the UK with cutting-edge experiments in participatory governance and citizenship in other countries, the UK experience seems to be limited in two ways. First, many of the attempts at greater involvement have focussed on processes of consultation. Only recently has the question gone beyond consultation to attempt to incorporate new forms of empowered decision-making within new governance structures, such as potentially within the LSPs. Secondly, though there have been a number of white papers, guidelines and committee reports promoting community participation in the UK, unlike in other countries the legal and statutory frameworks supporting participation have been relatively weak. On the whole these have been add-ons to the responsibilities of local government and other agencies, often carried out in parallel but rarely linked tracks of local government modernisation and reform. This stands in sharp contrast to other countries where participatory approaches have gained recognition in national legal codes and constitutional documents, and where these have been linked directly to processes of democratic decentralisation and devolution.[4]

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[4] Some of these differences may arise, of course, because of different political systems –e.g. the UK does not have a Constitutional system as do some of the other countries cited.

V. Key Lessons and Ways Forward

None of the above examples can be given as a blueprint for the way forward in the work of the NRU in the UK. What may emerge as a solution in one context may not be appropriate in another, and many of the processes described earlier in other countries are only now being studied and evaluated in detail.   Nevertheless, the experiences above, as well as other international experiences, do suggest several lessons for how to build more effective participation and representation in the context of neighbourhood renewal. In this section, I outline ten key lessons which may be drawn from international experience, recognising that with time each could be elaborated much more specifically.[5]

The importance of enabling legal and statutory provisions

 The first point is simply to restate the conclusion of the previous section. Unlike some of the other countries referred to there, the very strong sense one gets when examining the UK experience in participation and neighbourhood renewal is the need for central initiatives to be linked more clearly and legislatively to other local government mechanisms and reforms. Having legislation in place legitimates participation as a right, not just as an 'invitation' for consultation. Legislated or statutory requirements for participation is not, of course, a sufficient condition for making participation work, but it does provide a basis from which community leaders can assert their legitimacy.   While there a number of statutes that require community consultation occur, especially in areas related to health, transport, crime, etc., how these link to strengthening participation in local governance is not always clear. As Fung and Wright point out in their design characteristics above (2001 and 2003), participation is best carried out when linked to strong processes of devolution of state power, with effective co-ordination. In her critical study of New Labour's participation policies, Needham makes a similar point, arguing that if citizens are to be treated as full citizens rather than as consumers of government polices then community initiatives must be linked to local political structures in a far more integrated way, not simply 'tacking consultation onto a closed and private policy-making process' (2003:39). What important starting point in the UK might be an inventory of the legal and statutory frameworks that support community participation, and how those in turn relate to local governance.

The importance of local and regional context

At the same time, it is important to recognise that legal frameworks and mandates, especially if only developed and handed down from above, will not lead to uniform results. Much depends on local or regional context, even within a given country. Within each of the countries mentioned in the previous section the implementation of the laws varied enormously, in interaction with other factors such as existing levels of trust between government and citizens at the local level, the strength and experience of the civil society, the support of political parties and/or other social actors who also saw community participation as important, and the level of openness and transparency within local government. Variations

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[5] In some cases no doubt, examples already exist in the UK where the lessons and approaches suggested are already being taken up, but a complete review of the UK experience was outside the remit of this paper. Rather, the focus is on lessons learned from international experience.

will also exist in understandings, depth and density of community leadership. The variations which will exist across context suggest the need for:

- mapping tools which can help to assess the 'preparedness' of communities and local governments for participatory approaches, as well as their own understandings of patterns and sources of existing leadership;
- multiple strategies of support to be used in response to local needs;
- a recognition that some localities may need more support in early stages to help to build the 'pre-conditions' for participation. In other localities, with existing experiences of working together, more rapid progress may be made.
- diversity in measuring and assessing performance, recognising the different starting points of differing localities. In general, a one-size-fits-all approach will not work.

Working on both sides of the equation – strengthening community voice

As argued earlier, building new forms of participatory local governance means 'working on both sides of the equation.' On the one hand, attention must be given to strengthening the capacity of local leaders to exercise voice; at the same time, voice without responsiveness simply builds frustration. There is also the need to build and support the capacity of local governments and representatives to be responsive to community participation, and to learn how to change their roles, attitudes and behaviours in the new environment. *On the community voice and participation side of the equation*, as leaders become 'representatives' in deliberations with local bodies attention may need to be paid to developing such leadership capacities as:

- knowledge of legal rights, procedures, roles and responsibilities in the new environment;
- skills of negotiation, conflict resolution;
- skills of 'representation'- how to listen to one's own community; how to report back and be held accountable by them;
- how to practice democratic and collaborative models of leadership

Beyond the level of individual skills and knowledge, attention and support may also need to be given to building the community capacity for supporting community leaders through the development of:

- strong, democratic community organisations who know how to select and support community leaders, and to hold them accountable;
- broad-based community knowledge and awareness of the different roles and functions of local bodies, the opportunities and processes for community engagement, and the rights and responsibilities of participatory citizenship;
- processes of information sharing and communication which can enable and support a culture of accountability and transparency.

In general, the development of strong effective community leadership is a process of community building, not simply a process of supporting individual leaders. While individual skill building is one approach, it should be embedded in a broader community approach so

that skills, knowledge and learning are spread more evenly. In line with the Government's expressed commitment to 'citizenship education', experiences in participatory governance may be seen and supported as 'democracy schools', with attempts to draw from them lessons for new forms of democratic leadership and accountability.

Working both sides of the equation – strengthening government responsiveness

On the responsiveness side of the equation, one cannot assume that elected leaders and the staff of government agencies will have the skills or support systems to operate effectively in a new environment of participatory local governance. For many decades government staff and councillors have been trained to act *for* the community. Changing to act *with* the community requires new attitudes and behaviours.   As in the community side, support may be needed for individual councillors and government staff to learn new knowledge and skills for:

- understanding the roles and philosophy of democratic representation and leadership in relationship to community leadership;
- listening to and engaging with local communities.
- communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

At the same time, individual councillors and staff of government agencies cannot sustain individual learning and change without changes in bureaucratic cultures and organisations as well. Such changes include the development of:

- incentive and performance systems which reward responsiveness to community participation;
- built in-systems for consultation and joint planning with communities;
- more flexible procedures in areas such as accounting, expenditure flows and planning which can respond to changing community needs and priorities;
- clear and accessible processes for transparency and information sharing;
- organisational learning processes and environments which enable councils and government agencies to reflect on their own performance and which invite monitoring and review by local communities.

A great deal of work is now being done in the international development context on organisational learning and changes which support and enable participation. Other pilot work has been done on new training programmes for government staff, as well as training for local communities to participate effectively. This might be one area where more concentrated focus on lessons learned might be worthwhile.

Developing and promulgating clear 'rules and roles of engagement'

As discussed in earlier sections, new forms of participatory governance create uncertainty about roles and new ways of doing things. For participatory governance to work, old rules of engagement need to be replaced by new ones which outline clearly the processes for inclusion and decision-making, and the new roles, rights and responsibilities of the various parties. Otherwise, old procedures will be likely to kick-in, even if the process looks more inclusive and participatory. These new rules and roles need to be mutually agreed and openly

negotiated (Wainwright 2003:188). In the famous Porto Alegre case, though budgets priorities are now decided in a very different, far more participatory process than they were a decade ago, this has not been in the absence of clear procedures. A participatory budgeting manual has been developed, which clearly outlines the process, the timeline for meetings and decisions, and the rights and responsibilities of the citizenry, as well as the leaders. These handbooks are widely disseminated in popular format. Again, further work might usefully examine some of these emerging codes of engagement in participatory governance processes.

Clarifying the identities and accountabilities underlying representative processes

In a recent study on 'Who Participates?' in the new democratic politics in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Houtzager et al (2003:33) argue that understanding representation in such cases involves an examination of the dense networks of associations, and how they interrelate to represent different identities and constellations of actors. Within Sao Paulo, ordinary residents may be represented through their territorial identities (neighbourhood), various policy councils, and various advocacy NGOs, social movements or special interest groups. The authors conclude that their finding 'points to the emergence of new forms of representation in which there is a three-way relationship between (i) diverse forms of participation, (ii) diverse forms of incorporation or interpretation by civil society actors of the interests of their beneficiaries and (iii) a clear delegation and division of labour between the civil society actors and coordinating bodies of civil society, such as NGO associations, which help to amalgamate community interests and priorities.'

Within the UK context, as in other parts of the world, far more work needs to be done simply to understand the complex webs of representation through which community voices reach and influence policy arenas, ranging from interest and lobby groups, to the media, to direct representation of community leaders. Building upon this background understanding, further work needs to be done on the appropriate selection criteria and processes for community leadership. If leaders are elected from 'the community', who counts as that community? If representatives come from key organisations, how are those organisations chosen and credentialed? If they are chosen to represent particular 'identities', who participates in that process and which 'identities' will be represented in broader public processes? To develop this area further, far more needs to be understood of the diverse meanings of community leadership, their perceived forms of accountability and the types and forms of representation that perhaps already exist or are being created. Given the different cultures represented in communities across the UK, there may well be cultural differences as to how these questions are answered as well.

Improving incentives for engagement and quality representation

Engaging in community participation and effective community representation take time. Processes are often messy, difficult, and can lead to burn out. Community leaders who remain may be discredited over time as simply 'the usual suspects.' (See Taylor, earlier discussion). For communities and leaders to invest the time and effort for high quality participation and representation there must be some incentives – that is they must be able to see some results or some evidence that their participation matters. Fung and Wright argue that it is most possible to gain 'broad and deep participation' in participatory governance approaches which offer the 'real prospect of exercising state power. With most other forms of

political participation, the relationship between, say, one's vote or letter to a representative and a public decision is tenuous at best. In these experiments, however, participants exercise influence over state strategies' (2001:27). If this is true, one way to strengthen the quality and sustainability of forms of community leadership and participation is to focus on the results and outcomes which emerge from such engagement.

One area which is found to make a difference to sustained, quality participation is in fiscal processes of local governance. Where resources can be seen to be generated or re-allocated through community participation and representation, then such engagement is more likely to be seen to be making a difference. In Porto Alegre, for instance, popular participation and engagement in the budgeting process continues to expand year by year. In part, Navarro (1998:68) argues, this is because people could see outcomes of their engagement. These included a reduction in corruption and malpractice, an improvement in the political behaviour or elected and bureaucratic local officials, and, most significantly, a redistribution of resources through higher taxes on the middle class and wealth sectors, and a change of spending towards the priorities of deprived and poor.

Garnering support from non-governmental allies

A further lesson from successful experiments in participatory governance is that they often have happened with the support not only of local and central government, but also with the support of significant other civil society allies, such as political parties and social movements. In his study of participatory governance initiatives in South Africa, India (Kerala) and Brazil, for instance, Heller finds that 'civil society and social movements are critical to any sustainable process of democratic decentralisation. In both Kerala and Porto Alegre social movements that have retained their autonomy from the state have provided much of the ideological and institutional repertoire of democratic decentralisation, and party-social movements relationship have generated functional synergies between institution building and mobilisation (2001:134). This stands in sharp contrast to South Africa, where social movements post-liberation have been incorporated within the hegemony of the ANC, 'with the result that organised participation has atrophied and given way to a bureaucratic and commandist logic of local government reform' (2001:134).

Similarly, Wainwright (2003:190) argues that 'the feasibility and legitimacy of the participatory process is enormously enhanced by the existence and electoral success of a party that believes in it'. While there are trade-offs, 'the end result is that the organs of representative government lose some power to the new participatory sphere. But the new system of managing public resources through a combination of electoral and participative democracy involves an overall gain in democratic legitimacy and as a result, potentially, in power'.

The broader point is that the pressures for increased community leadership and participation cannot come from central government alone. The impulse for participation found and expressed in other quarters must be effectively tapped as well. As McGee et al also point out in their study, legal frameworks for participation which are promulgated in response to demand from below and with citizen inputs are more likely to be effective than those simply handed down from above.

Naming and addressing power relationships

To be meaningful, participatory processes must engage with and change power relationships. Simply creating new openings and spaces for community leaders to participate does not by itself change power. As Cornwall's work points out, even if new actors enter the new spaces, their interactions may simply replicate and reproduce pre-existing power relationships. Or, while providing openings for some to participate more, new spaces for participation may also be surrounded by forms of power that shape who can enter the space in the first place, on what issues, and with what effect. Similarly, internalised forms of powerlessness (e.g. long established forms of deference based on class, gender, education or other hierarchies), may affect the ability of community leaders to exercise their voice effectively even when they do enter new participatory spaces (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002).

Naming power relationships and helping community leaders to learn to map the ways they affect participatory processes are the first step to beginning to confront them. In some situations, strategies for dealing with power may involve strengthening the capacity of participants to alter the micro-politics of engagement in a given deliberative space; in other cases, they may involve recognising the power barriers which keep potential leaders from entering such spaces in the first place.

The positive exercise of power in participatory processes requires the existence of certain pre-conditions, such as a basic awareness of rights, including the right to participate, an ability to mobilise and act collectively, the ability to communicate with others perceived as having more power. In the absence of such pre-conditions, simply opening up deliberative spaces only means that they will likely be filled by more powerful actors and re-enforce the status quo. Further work, time and resources are needed in such cases to develop the pre-conditions necessary for effective participation and leadership to occur.

Taking time and going slow

Developing new forms of community leadership and political representation take time. As pointed out earlier, the moves to participatory governance at the local level in the UK, as in many other countries, run counter to decades - sometimes centuries - of a very different kind of political culture. New attitudes, new forms of trust and collaboration, new skills and capacities, new models of leadership and power sharing - all take time to develop and to grow.

Given this, a key lesson from international experience is not to rush to scale too quickly, and to think carefully about strategies for spreading and mainstreaming good practice. The temptation is to attempt to scale up from above, rapidly, and through sweeping changes in government procedures or approaches. While previous points have argued for the importance of enabling legislative and strong co-ordination from the centre, equally important for instilling good practice is the development of local ownership and supporting horizontal forms of spread. In this approach, the scaling up occurs more slowly through supporting local precedents that can become models of new relationships between community leaders and elected representatives and then encouraging the spread of such models through peer-to-peer exchanges and learning, not only at the community level, but also among elected

officials and government leaders, and highlighting and rewarding positive changes (Blackburn, et al 2000).

This lesson about taking time for relationships to change and new practices to grow is particularly important in how performance is measured. Expecting too much too quickly can lead to superficial changes; not expecting enough, or not expecting appropriate levels of change can send the signal that these areas of participation and quality representation are not important. Similarly, one-size-fits all indicators of performance may not be appropriate, because, as discussed above, certain communities may have more pre-conditions in place than others for achieving better relationships between community leaders and representatives. Helping communities design and develop context-appropriate indicators for measuring their own performance in the areas of community leadership, political representation and the relationship between the two might be a useful starting point. Participatory development of the indicators themselves has often been found to be a vehicle for strengthening communication amongst diverse stakeholders, and enabling them to understand better their synergies and differences (Estrella et al, 2000).

VI. Conclusion.

In the UK as well as in many countries around the world, a number of initiatives are seeking to develop and institutionalise new forms of participatory governance and link them to the solution of pressing community-level social and economic problems. The core assumption of these approaches is this: neighbourhood regeneration and democratic renewal go hand-in-hand. Greater community participation is not only a means of solving community-problems, it is also a means of tackling the growing democratic deficit that is now widely discussed in both 'mature' and 'emerging' democracies.

In the pursuit of this dual agenda, a number of issues emerge. This paper has focussed only on one key set of issues currently under debate in the UK, involving the roles and relationships of community leaders and elected representatives in the neighbourhood and democratic renewal process.

The review suggests that this debate is not unique to the UK, nor to the current set of initiatives. Conflicts between community participation and elected representation have been part of community regeneration initiatives for decades. At their heart are fundamental questions about the nature of democracy, and the degree to which representative forms of democracy may be augmented by other more participatory forms of citizen engagement. In turn, there are underlying questions about issues of accountability, representation and legitimacy, the selection of both community and elected leaders, the challenges of representing multiple publics and identities, and the relationships between adversarial and deliberative forms of engagement.

Through a review of the literature in this debate and of the experience in other countries, a number of lessons emerge which have implications for the ODPM, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) and other Whitehall agencies concerned with the 'new localism' agenda. Discussed more fully in the previous section, these broad lessons highlight the need to:

- strengthen the legal or statutory provisions which enable participation;
- recognise diverse local contexts. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work and new tools may be needed to 'map' the preparedness of communities and local governments for participatory approaches, as well as to map and to build upon the diversity of local understandings of leadership;
- 'work both sides of the equation' – simultaneously focusing **both** on community empowerment **and** on supporting the capacity of local officials and civil servants to understand and respond to that empowerment;
- develop and promulgate clear guidelines that clarify the appropriate 'rules and roles' for engagement between community leaders, government officials and elected officials in the LSP and similar bodies;
- develop guidelines that help to clarify the different forms of accountability which underlie different forms of representation;
- improve the incentives for quality representation and participation, especially through ensuring that real decisions over resources and strategy can be made by local bodies;
- seek support from broader bodies, including trade unions, the political parties, and others;

- name and address power relationships that surround participatory process, so that community leaders, local government officials and elected representatives participate on a 'level playing field' to the extent possible;
- recognise that the development of new forms of representation and participation will take time, and involves change not only in rules and procedures, but also in culture, attitudes and behaviours.

The above list is quite diverse – some of these lessons involve more general ways of working; others point to concrete actions. Some of these may already have been taken up, or could be taken up immediately. Others are bit more long-term. Which lessons are most important and how they are to be converted into strategies for implementation will be for programme leaders and policy makers to decide. However, while further developing these strategies, two final observations are important:

First, it is important to remember that the issues discussed in this paper are by no means unique to the ODPM and the NRU – they are relevant to almost any of the programmes for public involvement found across Whitehall in multiple sectors, including regeneration, health, environment, community cohesion and others. Therefore, high on the priority list would seem to be to learn how these issues are being handled across departments and how they can be better coordinated.

Second, it would also seem important, before rushing ahead with a centrally generated set of priorities and solutions, to attempt through further research and/or consultation to:

- understand more how these issues are being played out at the local level and
- identify solutions and innovations which already are emerging out of local practice within the UK.

While it has been beyond the remit of this paper to examine these, it has become clear though informal interactions by the author with local practitioners that already a number of local innovations are occurring which could be highlighted and shared more broadly. Moreover, there may be legitimate scepticism about proposing solutions to these issues which appear to be imposed from above or drawing from international experience without further grounding in local UK realities. A more broad-based review group composed of selected community leaders, elected representatives and local government officials with Whitehall officials might usefully review practice across the UK and suggest additional ways forward.

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