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Community Engagement: Participation on Whose Terms?

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Community engagement and citizen participation have long been important themes in liberal democratic theory, although managerial versions of liberal democracy have typically been dominant. In the past two decades, however, many countries have seen a shift away from a managerial or top-down approach, towards a revitalised emphasis on building institutional bridges between governmental leaders and citizenry, often termed ‘community engagement’. This paper outlines some of the main explanations for this shift, including international trends in governance and political economy; the availability of improved communications technologies; the need to share responsibility for resolving complex issues; and the local politics of managing social, economic and environmental projects. Some critical perspectives are also raised, suggesting a degree of scepticism about the intentions of government and implying serious limits on the potential influence of the citizenry and community groups. Important distinctions are drawn between policy arenas, in relation to the different dynamics and opportunities in different policy fields. The importance of building effective capacity for citizens and all non-government organisations (NGOs) to participate is emphasised. Typologies of community engagement are outlined, and linked to ideas about social capital.

Introduction: Terminology

The term ‘community’ is notoriously vague and value-laden. It is often a euphemistic term that glosses over the social, economic and cultural differentiation of localities or peoples. It often implies a (false and misleading) sense of identity, harmony, cooperation and inclusiveness. Its symbolic value explains much about its widespread usage in political discourse. Many years ago, the discourse of ‘community’ was aptly criticised as a ‘spray-on solution’ for a range of social and economic issues (Bryson and Mowbray 1981). This problem has intensified rather than been

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overcome. New variants of ‘community’ programs and ‘community’ engagement continue to multiply (Adams and Hess 2001; Reddel 2004; Reddel and Woolcock 2004), encouraged by politicians, policy-makers, and social organisations usually identified as grass roots or ‘community-based’.

Citizen participation and involvement have long been important themes in both the normative and descriptive forms of liberal–democratic theory. In particular, the reformist and developmental orientations in democratic theory have championed the notion of ‘active citizens’ who participate in a range of policy or institutional settings (Pateman 1970; Dryzek 2000; Warren 2001; Fung 2003). The managerial or realist orientation in democratic theory, by contrast, has drawn attention to the inherent elitism of professional bureaucracies and representative government (Hindess 2002), and has urged us to recognise the structural inevitability of the ‘democratic deficit’; that is, the gap between democratic ideals and managerial realities. Although the managerial and elitist versions of democracy have typically been dominant in all democratic countries, it is noteworthy that there have been significant shifts away from this model in many countries during recent decades. There has been much critical commentary on the inadequacies of a narrowly managerial approach, both in industrial societies (OECD 2001, 2003) and in developing countries (UNDP 1997; UNDESA 2003).

Recommended new approaches include greater citizen ‘engagement’ (which suggests an ongoing and active relationship) and public ‘consultation’ (which might perhaps be seen as more episodic) in a variety of social, political and program contexts. There has been a revitalised emphasis on building institutional bridges between governmental leaders and citizenry (Vigoda 2002; Lovan et al 2004). These institutional relationships between the governmental and non-government sectors are generally mediated through organisations and institutional forums, rather than being expressed directly in face-to-face relations between large numbers of people. ‘Inclusiveness’ of participation is often seen in terms of interests and viewpoints, mediated through groups and associations; rather than solely seen in terms of direct and comprehensive citizen involvement. Any useful typology of social involvement, therefore, needs to register this range of forms and differences.

In this discussion, the conventional threefold classification of ‘sectors’ has been adopted—distinguishing between the government sector (based on law, public authority and public finance), the private business sector (based on private investment and purchasing power), and the community or third sector. Thus, for the purpose of this paper, the ‘community sector’ does not include all non-government organisations (NGOs). In particular, major business groups are not included in this discussion of ‘community engagement’ because their power base is quite different from the social interests represented by the third sector.

Explaining the Rise of Community Engagement

Systems of representative government focus on the electoral process and the ongoing competition by parties for public office. This formal process of institutionalised democracy is no longer regarded as sufficient by wide groups of citizens and leaders of NGOs. There has been a renewed focus on *dialogue* between government and citizens, and deliberation among stakeholders in the process of deciding priorities and actions. Governmental decision-making has always taken account of

organised elites, but the new approaches seek to emphasise processes for *inclusion* of broad constituencies and disadvantaged groups.

Why has there been an international trend toward more participatory governance? At the global level, the impetus for this re-orientation comes from several sources. In the advanced industrial societies, a more 'society-centred' rethinking of social democracy emerged in the late 1980s, together with so-called 'Third Way' approaches to government–society relations and greater openness to market choices in services (Giddens 1998). In Eastern Europe a major stimulus has been the debate over the institutional and cultural requirements for effective transition to democratic regimes and efficient market economies following the collapse of former communist regimes (King 2000; Kopecky and Mudde 2000), and consideration of the specific conditions on which new member-states would be admitted to an expanded European Union. Even before the fall of communism, some researchers discerned a trend towards the rediscovery and revitalisation of civil society (Keane 1988a, 1988b), participation and partnerships. Moreover, international organisations such as the OECD (e.g. OECD 2001) and the United Nations (e.g. UNDP 1997; UNDESA 2003) have strongly espoused the benefits of participatory frameworks for good governance and for achieving enduring social benefits. Many researchers assume that the inter-relationships between the governmental, business and community sectors are also becoming closer as a result of the globalisation of communications, technology, trade and commerce (Giddens 2001; Held and McGrew 2003). The availability of improved communications technologies has certainly emerged as a strong enabler, if not a key driver, of these changes (OECD 2003).

At a national level, a more participatory approach has been linked to a growing awareness of the complexity and inter-connectedness of many problems, and the need to share responsibility for resolving these complex social and environmental issues ('wicked issues'). Importantly, there has been a strong impetus towards assisting regions and communities to identify strategies for social and economic development, and build their capacities for self-management. At the local level, there is an increasing appreciation of the benefits of involving local citizens in identifying problems and contributing to the solutions. Of particular note is the widespread interest in 'building social capital', understood as resources that may increase the skills and connections among people at the local and regional levels (Reddel and Woolcock 2004). Two types are especially noteworthy: 'bonding' social capital connects people more closely to their immediate social groups and social support networks; and 'bridging' social capital consists of social connections that enable people to draw on wider groups and resources (Productivity Commission 2003). The first type is sometimes the object of social programs to strengthen immediate systems of care and voluntary support for dependent and vulnerable families or individuals, whereas the second is sometimes the object of programs to strengthen the skills, connections and self-reliance of local and regional communities.

Types of Civic Participation

Participation by citizens in processes to identify and resolve social problems may span many different organisational forms and may cover a wide range of topics or problem areas. Many different techniques and processes are potentially available. For example, *governments* may show initiative and encouragement by providing rich and diverse information to groups, undertake surveys of group and public

opinion, consult with key players, establish forums and advisory boards, delegate powers and funds to community bodies, and outsource implementation responsibilities. On the other hand, *citizens* and community groups may decide to take independent or additional actions outside the formal channels established by public institutions (e.g. lobbying, protesting, establishing new forums for dialogue, establishing coalitions of support, developing community action plans, etc.) (OECD 1996; Bishop and Davis 2002). Information-based community engagement has become far more practicable as a result of electronic forms of communications technology, allowing for rapid dissemination of documents and mechanisms for feedback and dialogue (OECD 2000, 2001).

Structured opportunities for citizen *participation*, whether provided through official channels or created through direct group action, may be weak or strong, narrow or broad, episodic or continuing. It is widely recognised that there is a continuum or spectrum of possible participatory forms. These forms of participation range from information-sharing, to formal consultation on proposals, through to various types of partnership, delegated powers and, ultimately, citizen control (Walters et al. 2000; Ross et al. 2002; Bishop and Davis 2002). Advocates of strong and effective forms of participation (e.g. Arnstein 1969) sometimes draw attention to the dangers of tokenism and bad faith that may be evident in some of the weaker examples of consultation. For example, Hart (1997) argues that standard governmental processes seldom take seriously the opportunities for participation by young people in matters affecting their own interests. Hart outlines an 8-point scale (or 'ladder') ranging from manipulation, 'decoration' and tokenism (all regarded as inauthentic participation); through to situations in which youth are assigned specific roles and consulted about projects devised by others; through to adult-initiated shared discussion and decision-making; and, ultimately, youth-initiated shared discussion and decision-making (Hart 1997).

Much of the literature on forms of participation and community involvement in public issues has been summarised and usefully categorised in the work of the International Association for Public Participation (IAPP) (<http://iap2.org>). The IAPP 'Spectrum' of public participation distils five main types of process: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering citizens. These constitute a sliding scale of participatory forms, from weaker to stronger forms. Each is associated with a clear objective and implicit promises or undertakings to the public, thus minimising ambiguity about the purpose and nature of the participation. Typical instruments or tools associated with each form of participation are also outlined (see Table 1).

Utilisation of participatory processes will also depend on the individual and organisational *capacity* of citizens or the community sector to become involved. The community sector, as with the business sector, comprises a shifting range of unorganised individuals, partially organised groups and well-organised stakeholder organisations. Their capacity and interest in interaction and engagement will vary widely. The normative underpinning of social capital theory suggests that capacity for engagement is an important civic quality that should be fostered by public policy, for the benefit of individuals, families and neighbourhoods. These issues are sometimes taken up by 'place-management' and 'community strengthening' programs, especially in disadvantaged areas (e.g. Wiseman 2006).

On the other hand, organisational theories concerned with interest 'structuration' (e.g. Atkinson and Coleman 1989) draw attention to whether the overall system of community interests is dispersed and fragmented or, alternatively, is centralised in

Table 1. Levels of public participation and empowerment

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<i>Public participation goal</i> To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	<i>Public participation goal</i> To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	<i>Public participation goal</i> To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	<i>Public participation goal</i> To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	<i>Public participation goal</i> To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
<i>Promise to the public</i> We will keep you informed.	<i>Promise to the public</i> We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	<i>Promise to the public</i> We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	<i>Promise to the public</i> We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	<i>Promise to the public</i> We will implement what you decide.
<i>Example techniques to consider</i> Fact sheets Web sites Open houses	<i>Example techniques to consider</i> Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings	<i>Example techniques to consider</i> Workshops Deliberative polling	<i>Example techniques to consider</i> Citizen advisory committees Consensus-building Participatory decision making	<i>Example techniques to consider</i> Citizens' juries Ballots Delegated decisions

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a few large NGOs or other organisations (Casey 2004). In view of the diversity and inequalities among groups, it would be unrealistic to expect equal capacity for participation in new participatory governance arrangements across all sectors of organised and unorganised interests. In some circumstances, government agencies have invested public funds in building the capacity of certain NGOs to participate more fully and, thus, better represent vulnerable client groups, although this is more true of government policy in the United Kingdom than Australia (Lyons and Passey 2006). On the other hand, governments have increasingly attempted to deal *directly* with citizens, without the intermediation of NGOs. Techniques widely used include provision of information and feedback opportunities, using focus groups to sample public perceptions on key issues, and creating forums and public meetings.

Organised representation of interests through NGOs and advocacy groups is an inevitable feature of social organisation. Thus, a key issue in community engagement is whether the local and national NGOs, as key participants, are seen as legitimate and democratic by their membership (Papadopoulos 2003); that is, whether they are fairly representative of members, and whether NGO leaders can reasonably speak for members and client groups. There are sound internal reasons for NGOs to keep in close touch with members and clients, seeking to maintain organisational legitimacy by taking seriously their representative functions. Consultation processes initiated by governments very often rely heavily on the scope and quality of NGO involvement.

Domains of Involvement

The challenge of implementing effective community involvement is radically different under a range of geographical and political or institutional situations. Vastly different issues emerge in developing effective approaches for various *spatial scales*; thus, what is useful and effective at a local or micro level may not be easily transposed to a broader provincial or subregional level. Similarly, national channels of community involvement in policy and program issues may be quite different from the dynamics of supranational arrangements (e.g. in the European Union), and in international and global forums. The role of international institutions in foreign aid and peace-keeping programs, and of international NGOs in supporting aid programs, adds another layer of complexity.

A second challenge is to recognise and respond to the diversity of *problem issues and policy arenas* and the organisational forms that cluster around these arenas. Community engagement and citizen participation might differ, for historical or practical reasons, across a range of relevant policy and administrative arenas. Arrangements that apply in health, for example, might be different from those found in education, agriculture, tourism, transport, the environment, defence, policing and so on. These policy arenas will typically vary in terms of the openness or closure of group processes and the scope for various forms of citizen participation. Social policy has generally been seen as open to the influence of many (although often weak) players (Casey 2004), whereas defence policy and technology policy have tended to be the preserve of much tighter circles of stakeholders. Some policy issues are substantially focused on technical and scientific expertise and, thus, perhaps on technical solutions, whereas other issues are characterised by complex inter-connections and multiple stakeholders. In the latter case, policy

solutions require relationship management and agreement on behavioural change by many groups to achieve progress (Luke 1992; Hemmati 2002).

One of the problems for more participatory approaches to governance is the rigidity of traditional bureaucratic 'silos' (regulatory and organisational) that tend to dominate the public sector in each policy arena. For the public sector, there are continuing challenges as to whether government agencies have sufficient capacity to coordinate their *own* behaviours across different policy or regulatory domains; that is, how effectively they can pursue 'joined-up' government coordination. This is critical because many of the new complex problems demanding attention actually span several issue arenas and responsible agencies. In Australia this problem of strategic coordination occurs within each jurisdiction at both the State and national levels (Head 1999; Jackson 2003; MAC 2004). On some important issues, there may be added requirements to improve multi-level (vertical) coordination (i.e. between two or three levels of government). Emerging strategies to address these complex challenges have tended to take a more holistic view of policy problems (e.g. in water resources and environmental management); and have correspondingly involved a wide array of stakeholders who are seen to be a necessary part of the broader solutions (Selin et al. 2000; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000; Nancarrow and Syme 2001; Ross et al. 2002; Weber 2003). Coordination of complex multi-stakeholder engagement requires a new set of skills for the public sector, as well as challenges for the other groups and participants (Stewart and Jones 2003; Head and Ryan 2004).

Explaining Sectoral Motives and Purposes

Community engagement is supposed to help solve community problems. But a broader understanding of community engagement requires some consideration of the motives, intentions and purposes of the three sectors—government, business groups, and the community sector—in becoming involved in more intensive forms of participation and collaboration. First, what are the motives of *government* in pursuing more inclusive governance? It must be acknowledged that many governments and public agencies have taken a systematic approach to providing *guidance* (both for officials and for other participants) concerning the purposes of public participation and the modes of community engagement in relation to policy and program issues (e.g. Queensland Department of Main Roads 2004; Queensland Department of Communities 2005). In some jurisdictions, such agency guidelines have a formal status and practices are monitored (Auditor-General Victoria 2004). The most common reason stated for encouraging civic participation practices is that the public sector will gain 'better informed' decision-making, through facilitating deeper involvement by stakeholders. However, the broader literature on partnerships and collaboration suggests some additional motivation:

- Broadening the base of responsibility for outcomes may allow a partial displacement of blame from the shoulders of government, thus sharing more widely the responsibilities for success and failure;
- Broadening community-level responsibility in this way is consistent with the managerialist doctrine that government should 'steer' rather than 'row' the ship of state (Osborne and Gaebler 1992); and
- Creating a broader sense of civic involvement may assist in restoring a higher level of 'trust' in political institutions and less support for alternative protest movements.

Second, what do *community groups* hope to gain from being involved in participatory processes and multi-stakeholder forums? For them above all, perhaps, the prospects of change are most tantalising. Non-government organisations in the community sector have been strongly encouraged by high-level international forums that have championed community engagement and social participation, such as the UN forums on sustainability, beginning with Rio 1992 and the decade of ‘Agenda 21’ aspirations (Lafferty 2001) and culminating in Johannesburg 2002. Through their participation, community groups hope to pursue several objectives:

- The prospect of greater voice and influence for the interests they represent;
- Seeking to fulfill the equity principle that people should be involved in issues affecting them;
- The hope for better outcomes for ordinary citizens and disadvantaged groups; and
- Opportunities for NGOs to obtain revenue growth from provision of outsourced services (albeit, NGOs are very aware of the potential risk of compromising their value-based mission by providing contracted services designed and monitored by government).

Third, large *business groups* also become involved in participatory governance processes. The distinctive and central status of business involvement in public policy, and in major project negotiations, remains substantially in place, despite the rise of community engagement politics. Multi-sectoral processes may change the pace or direction of change in some policy areas. However, business interests remain very important for determining outcomes and for shaping the context of community sector involvement because: (i) business interests are often competitors with not-for-profit NGOs for publicly-funded service delivery contracts; (ii) business groups sit alongside community groups in many types of multi-sectoral forums; and (iii) business involvement may indeed be essential for achieving solutions for many of the complex problems facing societies. Business groups choose to become part of a broad multi-sectoral engagement process because:

- Where new forums are established, there are strong incentives for business interests to participate in order to maintain their positional influence (e.g. to take a proactive role in shaping policy debates or to exercise veto power);
- In particular, business may wish to propose material incentives and voluntary industry codes (rather than enforceable regulatory standards) as the primary means to facilitate any necessary changed behaviours;
- For some business interests there is value in demonstrating their belief in corporate social responsibility through involvement with other social interests in finding agreed solutions.

Explanations About Benefits and Impacts

Participatory democratic theory tends to assume that positive outcomes arise from participatory involvement, with benefits for both individuals and for society at large. ‘Third way’ ideology, with its scepticism about the primacy of government, attributes a positive democratic value to citizen empowerment and the revitalising of civil society (Reddel and Woolcock 2004).

According to some commentators, ‘managing for inclusion’ could potentially achieve a helpful ‘balance’, at least from the perspective of public managers,

between participation and control (Feldman and Khademian 2000). The public benefits of state involvement in the creation and sustenance of new forums are potentially substantial, providing that the important state powers of legitimacy and material resources are used wisely and benevolently (*cf.* Akkerman et al. 2004). But this perspective can still be somewhat technocratic or paternalistic, characterised by careful managerial control over the nature and extent of NGO input. There is also the danger that community input can be ‘co-opted and captured’ rather than accorded independent vitality (Singleton 2000). State sponsorship and funding of participatory forums can potentially have unintended effects that could undermine the spirit of the collaboration.

Leaving aside these structural issues, there is a growing literature documenting the positive outcomes arising from the direct involvement of citizens in the assessment of needs and in deliberation about practical solutions (Adams and Hess 2001; Harwood Institute 2005). For example, studies of decision-making on the allocation of scarce natural resources, such as water, note that stakeholders’ support for ‘public-interest’ allocations (such as guaranteeing ‘environmental flows’ in rivers) is greatly diminished *unless* the solutions have been subjected to close involvement and discussion by users and landholders (e.g. Nancarrow and Syme 2001, 40). Broader civic participation in deliberative processes to consider important social issues is recommended for addressing deep and complex problems (Dryzek 2000; Warren 2001; Fung 2003). Citizen involvement, including the collaboration of groups across a spectrum of interests, can be vital for resolving community-based issues, such as the micro-politics of conflict over service provision, land-use planning and infrastructure projects (Hemmati 2002; Innes and Booher 1999, 2003, 2004).

The consequence is that ‘new governance’ approaches have become more common, adopting the goals and rhetoric of devolved decision-making, community partnerships, and working across boundaries between sectors and levels (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000; Lasker et al. 2001; Mandell 2001; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). There is some enthusiasm for welcoming a possible future era of participatory and collaborative networks in which community engagement would flourish (Kooiman 1993, 2000; Foreman 2002; Weber 2003). But there is some room for doubt, when assessing this participatory governance literature, as to whether the enhanced participation is an expression of the growing influence of citizens and NGOs, or whether the new processes are largely the result of state-directed outsourcing and state-controlled devolution (Rhodes 1997; 2003). If community engagement is largely at the discretion of the state—and, indeed, is largely organised, shaped and subsidised by the state (Head and Ryan 2003; 2004; Reddel 2004; Head 2005)—there must be some questions raised about the robustness and independent strength of community engagement in such circumstances. Moreover, NGOs and community groups commonly report unhappy experiences of ‘participation’, owing to poor project management or even bad faith by governments; for example, in cases in which people enter an apparently participatory process, only to find there is an absence of genuine devolution or meaningful involvement because the governmental sector has been unwilling to forego control over processes and the shaping of results.

Evaluating Effectiveness and Limits

Community engagement and participatory processes clearly span a variety of practices and possibilities. This is no doubt part of the reason for the widespread lack

of clarity over criteria for judging the effectiveness of participatory processes. This problem is exacerbated by the (perhaps deliberate) vagueness of the terms under which many community engagement exercises are established.

Moreover, there are some serious unresolved issues in evaluation methodology concerning how to measure the effectiveness of multi-sectoral or network processes (Provan and Milward 2001). The first issue is to be clear about the *purposes* of such an evaluation; for example, to promote learning and improvement or to ensure compliance with contractual requirements (Behn 2003). The second issue is to find an appropriate balance of *indicators* that focus on both: (i) the quality of participatory and cooperative processes; and (ii) the program and service delivery outcomes for clients. The third issue is to take account of organisational factors such as inequalities, capability building, the time-scale for expecting results, funding arrangements and the choice of specific structures for interactions.

Recognition of inequalities (power relations) is fundamental to understanding the dynamics and limits of organisational forms. This perspective is important in understanding the true character of recent governmental trends with third-sector 'partnerships' (Osborne 2000) and 'collaboration' (Mandell 2001). Concepts such as 'community partnership' are notoriously vague entities. In considering the actual relations embedded in new governance arrangements, it is useful to distinguish the relative power of the actors, the extent to which they bring resources to the shared forum, and the extent to which they agree to be bound by the outcomes (Kernaghan 1993). The evaluation process itself, therefore, needs to consider such issues.

Capacity building is crucial for the overall success of participatory processes. Individuals and groups have very different starting points in terms of the knowledge and experience that contribute to effective participation (Cavaye 2004). Capacity building is necessary to improve the effectiveness of the processes, identifying and improving the informational and skills gaps of the weaker participants (e.g. community NGOs), thus enabling them to contribute more effectively to broader processes of discussion and deliberation (whether at a local, regional or national level).

The time scale for building results can be a very important dimension in collaborative exercises. Building capacity for longer-term joint interaction may be as important in the early years of a program as ensuring immediate and tangible on-ground benefits for communities. Moreover, building *trust* and confidence among key participants (Alford 2002; Selin et al. 2000) can be generated only over time. This requires substantial effort and commitment, as well as good faith.

Government, as the formal representative of the public interest and fairness, arguably has a special obligation to ensure that its own role does not undermine the spirit and substance of inter-sectoral processes. There are some inherent costs arising from state control and sponsorship of inclusive or participatory governance processes. This is because state agencies and political leaders usually:

- Prefer to secure quick tangible wins (as against longer-term and less certain outcomes);
- Seek to retain ultimate control through conditional funding;
- Impose detailed reporting and compliance obligations on other stakeholders where public funds are provided (Head 2005);
- Demonstrate low trust of community NGOs when the latter are involved as managers or decision makers (Yang 2005).

Decisions about program design and organisational structures are vital to success in participatory processes (Curtain 2003). There are important issues about selecting an appropriate organisational form (with all its implications for leadership, resources, accountabilities, deliberative protocols etc.). It is useful to understand the key differences between specific forms of interaction among stakeholders. The extent of citizen participation, as discussed earlier, is not the only relevant issue. Many researchers have drawn attention to another type of continuum, ranging from short-term voluntary *cooperation* around specific tasks, through to the longer-term relationships and commitments that are necessary to tackle intractable or complex issues (see Table 2). In brief, there are important differences between voluntary *cooperative* relationships, more formally *coordinated* joint activities, and long-term integrated *collaborative* activities that involve sharing power, resources and decision-making. Each type is suitable for addressing certain tasks and challenges, but not for others.

The complex literature on community engagement, partnering and collaboration (e.g. Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000; Mandell 2001; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002; Edwards 2003; Lovan et al. 2004) suggests that there are several important lessons to be drawn about the factors underlying successful community engagement and collaboration among diverse groups. These can be framed as six learning challenges for those who choose to participate in collective processes:

1. Learning how to develop and refine common *directions and objectives*
2. Learning how to *build relationships and trust* over time
3. Learning how to make *mutual adjustments* and give up some demands for control
4. Learning how to develop a *facilitative* and enabling style of shared leadership rather than a directive form of leadership
5. Learning how to deal with reform fatigue and the need for *renewal* of commitment

Table 2. Networked arrangements

Integration relationship	Duration	Goals & perspectives	Structural linkages	Formality	Risks/rewards
Cooperation	Short term	Independent outcomes Participating organisations remain autonomous	Movement in and out by members, loose flexible links	Informal	Low risk/ modest reward
Coordination	Medium term; depends on previous working relations	Joint planning and programming But members remain autonomous	Some stability of members, medium links and often central hub	Informal/ formal	Increase in risks and benefits up to a point
Collaboration	Longer term	New systems and operations Highly interdependent with sharing of power	Members move outside traditional functional areas, tight links	Formal	High risk/high reward

Source: Adapted from Brown and Keast (2003).

6. Learning how to deal with the 'two hats' problem of role conflict; that is, members learning to reconcile their role within the shared partnership and their different role inside their 'home' organisation.

Although these are challenges for participants from every sector, it is argued in this paper that the governmental sector has a special obligation to respond more positively to these challenges because of its significant role in structuring and sponsoring the broader forms of participatory governance.

Conclusion

Community engagement and consultation have become endemic in the modern era, and multi-stakeholder forums are common. However, it would certainly be premature to suggest that a new era of community engagement, understood as partnership and collaboration, is about to replace the old era of hierarchical control and regulation, or that a new era of dialogue and consensus politics is about to replace the old era of interest-group conflicts. There is little evidence that the widespread advocacy and adoption of 'community engagement' and 'partnership' approaches have yet involved substantial power-sharing. There are two reasons for this. First, governments tend to retain control of these processes through funding, service contracts and regulation. Government institutions find it difficult to devolve power and control. Second, the capacity and motivation of citizens to participate effectively, or to create alternative forums, remains a weakness in community engagement strategies.

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