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Beyond radicalism and resignation: the competing logics for public participation in policy decisions

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Participation – like justice or freedom – is a term that can be constructed in multiple ways. However, existing typologies of participation pay little attention to the alternative logics for public participation in policy decisions: either they assume one particular normative bias or categorise by institutional design features without reference to the broader ideology that informs the use of these designs. This paper outlines an alternative approach that connects the variety in participatory practices to competing theories of democracy and public administration. It identifies four archetypes of participation: knowledge transfer; collective decision-making; choice and voice; and arbitration and oversight.

key words public participation • citizen engagement • participatory governance
• grid-group cultural theory

Introduction

The need for greater public participation in politics and public services has now long been advocated across the political spectrum in Britain. The idea of the participating citizen is used as a justification for a plethora of policy prescriptions, from marketisation to deliberative governance. It has also become ubiquitous on a global level; public participation in the policy process is advocated by everyone from the radicals of the Occupy Movement to the econocrats at the World Bank. Moreover, there are multiple influences credited with precipitating this phenomenon. From the right, the legitimacy of decision-making by elite bureaucracies was eroded by the neoliberal challenge to the democratic socialism that animated many of the architects of the welfare state (Le Grand, 2003). More recently, there has been a revival in Conservative localism that Ryder (2015) traces back to Nozick's libertarian vision for a localist utopia and Wainwright (2003) credits to communitarianism, with its focus on community self-reliance. While neoliberalism has undoubtedly been an important influence in the rise of the active, participating citizen, Wainwright (2003) also notes the concurrent influence of the 'participatory left' that grew out of the radical social movements

of the 1960s and 1970s, and this has been accompanied by the ‘deliberative turn’ in democratic theory (Dryzek, 2000).

The breadth of these advocates for public participation, the precipitating ideological influences and policy applications, point to the tension behind the apparent consensus in favour of citizen participation. Compare, for instance, the empowered self-interest of the neoliberal, consumer-citizen with the other-oriented, reasoning-citizen of deliberative democracy and it is clear that, while both philosophies may be animated by a notion of the participating citizen, they are different, seemingly incompatible, notions. Participation – like justice, freedom or fairness – is a polysemous concept that can be constructed in multiple ways, and each construction should be understood with reference to the normative conception of societal organisation it encompasses. However, these competing constructions of participation are rarely given much attention, particularly when it comes to formulating typologies of participatory mechanisms (see, for instance, Arnstein, 1969; Pretty, 1995; White, 1996; Bishop and Davis, 2002; Fung, 2003; Rowe and Frewer, 2005; Smith, 2005; Tritter and McCallum, 2006; Cornwall, 2008). Existing typologies mostly take one of two approaches: either they assume one particular normative basis and categorise participatory forms along a continuum from most to least legitimate, or they categorise by institutional design features without reference to the broader social and political ideology that informs the use of these designs. This article outlines an alternative approach. It attempts to unravel the most common constructions of public participation as a means to influence and/or take policy decisions, situate these within broader theories of public administration and social and political theory, and demonstrate how they are connected to particular forms of participatory practice. The objective of the paper is, therefore, not to make the case for or against participation in general, nor any particular version of participation. Neither does it consider egregious examples of ‘democracy-washing’ that no-one would recognise as legitimate: where participation is employed to manipulate the public, for example. It instead presents competing understandings of what might be reasonably argued to be legitimate forms of participation, in which those involved could be said to be engaged on genuine terms.

The aims of this endeavour are twofold. The polysemy of participation is no doubt what makes it beguiling – it enables people with quite different worldviews to coalesce around a common project. However, this can also result in muddled thinking. Although a number of researchers have noted the impact of different ideological influences on the way that participation is both constructed and practised (Pearce, 2010; Martin, 2008; Parkinson, 2004; Papadopoulos and Warin, 2007; Abelson et al, 2003; Barnes et al, 2007), this has mostly been a tangential component of their studies rather than the direct object of investigation. A typology that systematically outlines the different ways we construct participation and the respects in which these constructions are similar and different from each other will help to clarify our understanding and avoid many of the confusions and omissions that are characteristic of thinking about public participation in policy-making. In turn, greater clarity regarding the ways participation can be constructed should help to improve participatory practice, for instance by reducing tensions that result from often unacknowledged definitional conflicts in real world participatory initiatives.

Existing participation typologies

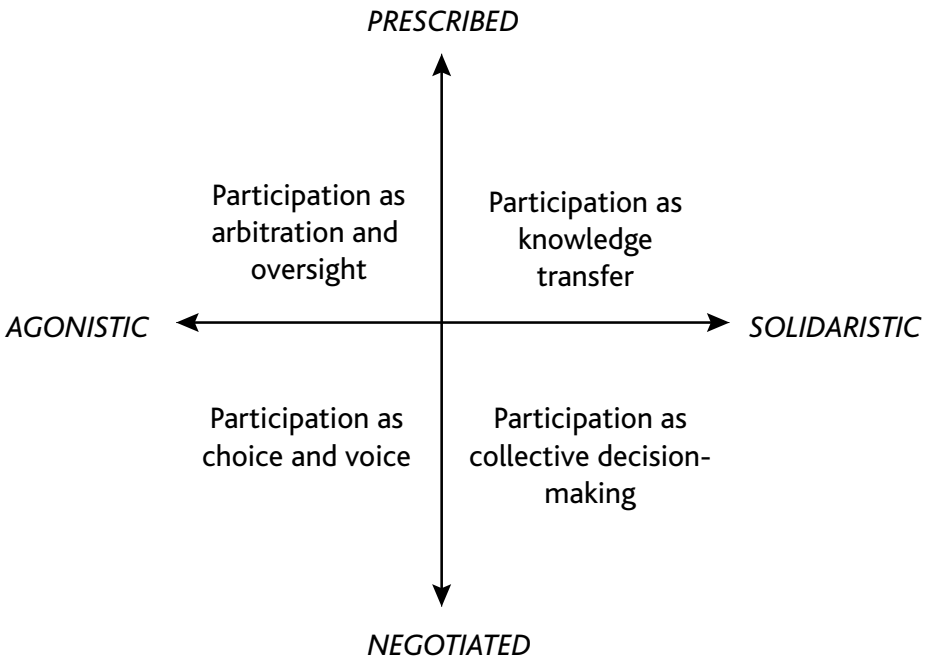
First published more than 40 years ago, Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation has been influential in shaping the way that academics and policy-makers think about participation (Tritter and McCallum, 2006; Cornwall, 2008). Arnstein views participation with an activist's eye, as an insurgency against government power: 'citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power' (1969, 216). 'Citizen control' is the apogee of the eight rungs on Arnstein's ladder, and a number of the other forms she identifies are presented with connotations of illegitimacy; the bottom five rungs are classified as 'non-participation' or 'tokenism' (Arnstein's, 1969, 217). This overt normative basis is a common feature of the 'continuum model' for classifying participatory mechanisms (Bishop and Davis, 2002). Pretty's (1995) typology moves through several stages from *manipulative participation* to *self-mobilisation*, while White's (1996) categories range from *nominal* to *transformative*. However, the use of strongly normative typologies of participation is inherently problematic when participation is subject to competing definitions (Bishop and Davis, 2002). A typology normatively skewed towards one construction of participation is unlikely to do justice to the variety of alternative constructions. While it may be tempting to dismiss all those forms of participation that do not fit with one's own preferred construction, this limits the use of the typology and also restricts our understanding of different forms of participation; it makes no genuine attempt to discover why these other forms of participation are legitimate within the theoretical framework in which their advocates operate; it only denigrates them and, as such, is unlikely to meet with widespread acceptance in more than a superficial sense.

An alternative, less overtly normative, method for classifying participatory mechanisms is to generate a typology based on a range of institutional design features, such as the direction of information flow, the participant selection method and the extent of decision power afforded to participants. Fung (2003), Rowe and Frewer (2005) and Smith (2005) adopt variations on such an approach. This decoupling from a normative basis for participation is a potential benefit in that it is not prescriptive about types of participation and thus is potentially more widely acceptable. However, it reduces the amount of information provided by the typology. The continuum model implicitly provides us with a description, though only partial, of which institutional forms are compatible with which normative claims, whereas there is no comparable information within the typologies by institutional design features, as they are somewhat disconnected from the wider debates regarding what constitutes legitimate participation. Rowe and Frewer (2005) and Fung (2003) provide us with information regarding which institutional forms will realise which goals, but, as they themselves note, there is no way to judge which goals might be desirable without reconnecting to these debates and picking a normative position. Moreover this approach fails to highlight how an institutional design may be altered by the way it is discursively constructed; for instance, Sintomer, Herzberg and Roecke (2008) have outlined the variety in practices of participatory budgeting as it has been transferred from its Brazilian origins into different European contexts. A typology of *modes* of participation, which connects particular participatory practices to the broader construction of participation from which they draw their meaning, would help address this lacuna.

Bishop and Davis (2002) go some way towards a typology of modes of participation. Based on the argument that ‘There is no single methodology for policy participation, and no shared theoretical base’ (Bishop and Davis, 2002, 21), they argue, *contra* the continuum model, for a *discontinuous* typology and identify five types – consultation, partnership, standing, consumer choice and control – each of which ‘has a public rationale, and a characteristic set of policy instruments’ (Bishop and Davis, 2002, 26). However, this typology also has its weaknesses. It is explicitly ad hoc, ‘Given frequent innovation in participation processes, any classification must be provisional’ (Bishop and Davis, 2002, 26). Ad hoc identification of types raises a number of questions as to the extent to which the types are discreet, mutually exclusive, jointly exhaustive and of a similar kind. There are some reasons to doubt whether Bishop and Davis’ (2002) typology meets these conditions: for example, they point to the use of one of their categories (consultation) within another category (consumer choice), suggesting that the categories may not be mutually exclusive or of the same kind. There are also no dimensions on which their ad hoc types are ordered, meaning that it is difficult to understand how the different types relate to one another.

The next section of the article addresses the four issues identified above by outlining a typology that: 1) explores the plurality of constructions of public participation in the policy-process; 2) does not categorise participation mechanisms according to one normative basis; 3) attempts to connect particular forms of participatory practice to the broader constructions of participation; 4) orders types of participation along persisting theoretical dimensions, rather than identifying types through ad hoc observation.

Figure 1: Four modes of public participation in policy decisions



A new typology

This new typology, outlined in Figure 1, draws inspiration from Hood's (1998) classification of modes of public administration and Dean's (2013) taxonomy of modes of social citizenship, hence owes a debt to Douglas' (1970) influential grid-group cultural theory. The typology consists of four archetypal modes of public participation, organised on two, intersecting dimensions: *sociality* and *negotiability*.

The horizontal, *sociality* dimension concerns the extent to which the participatory space is agonistic or solidaristic. Agonistic participation is conflictual with individuals and groups predominantly concerned with promoting and defending their own interests and values against other participants. Contrariwise, in a solidaristic participatory space, participants view themselves as interdependent members of a social collective and participation is oriented towards collective ends and the common good. Whether humans are predominantly cooperative or competitive, and thus whether social relations are essentially agonistic or solidaristic has been a point of contestation in political and social theory for hundreds of years – it divides Rousseau from Hobbes and Foucault from Habermas. It has been an important component of deliberative democrats' critique of aggregative, liberal democracy (Dryzek, 2000), and Mansbridge (1980) used a similar dimension to distinguish between *adversary* and *unitary* democracy, noting some of the implications for the practice of citizen participation. Moreover, it has been a central concern in recent programmes for reform of public services and public administration (Le Grand, 2003).

The vertical, *negotiability* dimension concerns the extent to which the participatory space is prescribed or negotiated. In prescribed participatory spaces questions such as who participates, and about what, are determined outside of the space (perhaps by the commissioning organisation, perhaps by circumstance) and imposed upon the participants, who thus have little scope to determine the conditions of their participation. In negotiated participatory spaces these conditions of participation are negotiated by the participants themselves, as part of the process. Once again, a similar theme has been at the heart of long-standing debates about democracy: for example, on the appropriate limits to popular sovereignty, which has characterised arguments between republicans and liberals. Whether public organisations should be constrained by overt rules, standards or targets imposed from above, or free to manage by discretion has also been a long-standing feature of prescriptions for good public management (Baldwin, 1997; Hood, 1998) and was a central debate in New Labour's approach to public administration (Barber, 2007; Le Grand, 2008). In addition, the negotiability of the participatory space, though not synonymous with 'citizen power', resonates with the dimension underpinning Arnstein's ladder.

Now that it has been established that negotiability and sociability are salient features of debates about the practice of public participation in policy decisions, as well as long-standing points of contention in democratic and public administration theory, which are both likely to influence the ways in which participation is more broadly constructed, the article will next consider each of the four modes that constitute the typology.

Participation as knowledge transfer

This exploration of the four modes of participatory decision-processes begins with forms of participation that are prescribed and solidaristic: participants have little control over the participatory space but view themselves as interdependent fellows of a unified community with common goals and interests. This resonates with what Hood (1998) terms the ‘hierarchist way’ of doing public management in his grid-group typology of approaches to public administration. Hierarchical forms of organisation may seem a strange place to begin an exegesis of public participation, given public participation is often posited as an alternative to bureaucratic hierarchies (Fung, 2004; Le Grand, 2008). However, careful examination of the tenets of hierarchical organisation demonstrates how it can, and often does, profitably accommodate public participation.

From Plato’s guardians to Weber’s bureaucracy, there are a number of common features to hierarchical approaches to government. The primary feature is of course role stratification – a division between governors and governed – based on the justification that it is in the interests of society as a whole for each individual to carry out the function for which he or she is most suited. To operate effectively this stratification entails a number of conditions: that officials should not use office for the pursuit of their own self-interest or their own personal policy preferences; that the basis of authority is rationality and specialist expertise; and, therefore, officials should be selected by an open and meritocratic process. Though Plato saw democracy as one step from tyranny, an orgy of instant gratification at the expense of wisdom and self-discipline, later theorists such as Weber acknowledge it has an important role as a check on the totalising power of administrative bureaucracy. They thus separate bureaucratic administration from political control. However, Weber is pessimistic about the potential for democracy to realise popular control. The complexity of modern societies renders direct democracy infeasible. This complexity also means that political judgement is itself a form of technical expertise that cannot be accessed by the laity and must be honed by specialists. Judgements based on public opinion can never be more than demagogic, and political leadership is indispensable (Shaw, 2008). We emerge with a political-administrative model of policy-making in which it is the role of political leaders to use expert political judgement to ascertain and formulate the general interest of the population and direct the administration towards providing for this general interest. The role of the administration is to bring to bear the requisite specialist expertise and rational judgement to efficiently provide for this general interest. These ideas pervade quite varied traditions of political thought. They are present in both the Fabian socialism of the Webbs as well as JS Mill’s epistemic justifications for liberal democracy.

This model of policy-making entails two rationales for public participation in the process, both of which are constructed as knowledge transfer opportunities. The first is that in order to correctly interpret the common will of the population, political leaders will need good information about that population, their needs and values. Accordingly, they may invite the public to participate in processes that capture those needs and values, so we see participation justified on the basis that, ‘Understanding peoples’ needs, preferences and values by talking with them is a way to enhance the effectiveness of decision-making and service provision’ (Involve, 2005, 22). The participatory principle is based on pragmatism; participation is to improve outcomes, not necessarily because of a right to participate.

The second rationale is concerned with improving outcomes by ensuring epistemic quality. Epistemic theories of democracy suggests democratic policy-making is the best method for pooling the disparate knowledge required to ensure effective policy decisions (Fuerstein, 2008). The public is thus invited to participate where it is seen to possess expertise that can improve the effectiveness of a policy decision, participation 'allows government to tap wider sources of information, perspectives and potential solutions, and improves the quality of decisions reached' (Cabinet Office, 2002, 5). This also helps to remedy an inherent weakness of stratified political systems in modern societies; the lives of elite decision-makers rarely follow the patterns of those of the 'common man', and so the public is particularly valued for its experiential knowledge of situations that elites rarely encounter, such as poverty. Weber may have based the technical superiority of bureaucracy on the increasing complexity of modern societies, but advocates of participation frequently cite the increasing heterogeneity of society, and a supposedly more educated and less deferential population, as reasons why bureaucratic elites cannot claim a monopoly on expertise (Involve, 2005; HM Government, 2012)

Unlike the monopoly on specialist expertise, the monopoly on rational judgement remains with political and bureaucratic elites. It is important to stress that these processes are not commissioned in order that the public can directly instruct policy-makers what to do. The public participants are viewed as information units, providing inputs into a process of expert interpretation and decision-making: 'Public involvement contributes to evidence based policy-making. But it is only one source of evidence. The advice and decisions of policy makers will involve balancing evidence from a wide range of sources, including existing and new research; economic modelling; regulatory impact assessments; evaluation and scientific, technical and expert advice' (Cabinet Office, 2002, 5).

The construction of participation as an opportunity for the public to transfer knowledge to public-spirited, expert decision-makers is likely to be accompanied by particular institutional practices of participation. Processes are likely to be stratified, with specialist roles reserved for expert decision-makers and facilitators which delineate them from ordinary participants. Still, those involved in the process will be encouraged to see each other as partners, who are all making their own valuable contribution towards a common goal, usually an improved policy outcome, thus bargaining or strategic game playing by participants will be discouraged. In addition, the participatory space is likely to be an invited space in which the public is invited to contribute towards an agenda that is pre-determined by an organisation's policy priorities. Similarly, who is to participate will be decided according to this pre-determined agenda, with the public organisation retaining control over both which participant selection method to use, and then who should be selected. Nonetheless, given that the efficacy of a participation process within this participatory mode is chiefly based on its contribution to improved policy outcomes, the focus is not so much on one particular participatory form, but that the form should be tailored to best attain the desired outcomes.

Participation as collective decision-making

Our second mode of participation is that primarily associated with the participatory left. It rejects the role differentiation, particularly the distinction between governed

and governors, that characterised the previous mode in favour of a vision of self-government through collective decision-making, “participation” refers to (equal) participation in the making of decisions and “political equality” refers to equality of power in determining the outcome of decisions’ (Pateman, 1970, 43). The express notion of *participatory democracy* advocated by Pateman may have originated in the US, out of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, but it has long roots that have found expression in diverse forms throughout history – from Ancient Athenian democracy to the anarchism of Bakunin. Nonetheless, Pateman (1970) is a useful starting point as, drawing on Rousseau, JS Mill and GDH Cole, her theory of participatory democracy weaves together five of the essential principles that have characterised this mode of participation.

The first principle is the direct participation of all in the taking of decisions, based on Rousseau’s notion of liberty, that we are free in as far as we are the co-authors of the decisions to which we are subject. The second, a general condition of political equality, is a corollary of the first – we can only be said to be co-authors of decisions if we have equal power to determine them, thus no person should be able to dominate another. Therefore, we are presented with a theory of democratic self-government in which a society of interdependent equals collectively (usually consensually) take decisions to which they are all equally subject. Third is the principle of subsidiarity, that decision-making should take place at the lowest appropriate (usually geographically defined) level and cascade up. The fourth principle is that participation should not be limited to the political. Participatory democracy entails a participatory society in which participation in political, social, civic and economic decision-making is woven into the fabric of a citizen’s everyday life. The final, fifth principle is that participation is, in the broadest sense, educational. It is essential to both the socialisation of citizens and the full realisation of human capacities.

A brief consideration of the position of deliberative democracy within this typology is also necessary, given its influence has arguably superseded participatory democracy, at least in the Academy. Deliberative democracy appears to be overtly solidaristic in nature, given its rejection of deliberation as strategic bargaining between actors with pre-political interests in favour of a conception that emphasises the reflective transformation of preferences, consensus and the common good (Dryzek, 2000). It is, however, less clear where deliberative democracy stands on the *negotiability* dimension. Though there seems to be a general presumption that participation should be negotiated, deliberative democrats may show greater commitment to the quality of opinion formation than to the idea of open and direct participation if the two come into conflict (Papadopoulos and Warin, 2007). In addition, Habermas’ (1996) influential ‘two-track’ model of democracy, in which public participation takes place in a free-wheeling public sphere that influences but is separate to institutionalised processes of official decision-making, may arguably be considered closer to the knowledge transfer mode outlined above.

Although, as aforementioned, the return to fashion of participatory democracy in the 1990s and the ascendancy of deliberative democracy are often credited with driving the upsurge in participatory policy-making initiatives, it is quite rare to see their radical egalitarian forms given serious consideration as a practicable component of a theory of public administration. One might expect to find some synergy with theories of *network governance*, which incorporates similar principles of interdependence, autonomy, negotiation and trust (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005). However, those theorists of

network governance that have considered the role of public participation (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005; Bingham et al, 2005) give little attention to the direct forms of popular control that sit at the top of Arnstein's ladder and are envisaged by participatory democrats like Pateman. Moreover, Dryzek (2010), though optimistic regarding the potential of a 'deliberative governance', doubts the possibilities for popular control of governance networks given the difficulty of even conceptualising an appropriate public to which a network corresponds. Baccaro and Papadakis (2009) are also sceptical of the possibilities for a 'participatory–deliberative public administration' and contrast this with the Habermasian conception, which they favour.

This lack of fit with theories of public administration is mirrored in the absence of these radical egalitarian modes of public participation in official spheres of policy decision-making, at least in the UK. Although the rhetoric of participatory democracy has become prevalent – for instance, all three major political parties advocate giving power to real/ordinary/local people in recent manifestos – the practice of popular control through consensual decision processes is rare even at local level. Accordingly, Barnes et al (2007) locate pressure for inclusive democracy outside the state and in contradistinction to four 'official' discourses of participation, and previous work by this author has shown that official evaluations of deliberative participation initiatives pay scant regard to principles of deliberative democracy (Dean, 2012).

Outside the UK, participatory democratic prescriptions for decision processes have had greater influence within official institutions. The now famous participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil was inspired by participatory democratic thinking, as were the 30,000 communal councils of Venezuela, and there is a long history of collective, local decision-making through town hall meetings in New England. Within the UK citizen control has been restricted to social movements and civil society. The Glasgow Poverty Truth Commission creates an egalitarian space where those who experience poverty can collaborate on first name terms with public officials, relying on the power of the resultant personal relationships to drive wider policy change. Occupy London also appeared to be heavily influenced by participatory democratic thinking and examining its operating procedures can illuminate the practices typical of this mode of participation.

Like the knowledge transfer mode of participation these processes are solidaristic – interactions between participants are characterised by mutual respect, strategic behaviour based on securing personal preferences is discouraged in favour of public reason-giving, and the resolution of any conflicts proceeds through discussion oriented towards mutual understanding. Unlike the previous mode, the purposes and nature of the initiative are negotiated between the participants, rather than prescribed from outside the participatory space. The agenda is not pre-set, but collectively set by the participants and anyone can contribute a topic for discussion. Participation is open to anyone, rather than participants being selected, and restrictions on participation in order to achieve representativeness or some other criteria would probably be rejected. The rules of appropriate behaviour and the ways in which the business of the participatory space is to be conducted are also collectively determined by the participants, and always open to re-negotiation. As Polletta (2014) notes, though radical egalitarian organisation is often seen as leaderless, a better description is that everyone is seen as a potential leader, and leadership responsibility for particular tasks is continually negotiated between participants. Nonetheless, there is no special elite group of 'decision-makers', and decisions are prosecuted through collective

discussion in which each participant can wield an effective veto, thus the aim is to reach group consensus. Whether this approach to collective decision-making can survive institutionalisation on a national scale remains to be seen, and the attempt of Podemos in Spain to take the *indignados* movement into the sphere of electoral politics while retaining popular control will prove instructive.

Participation as choice and voice

Our third mode of participation, the first of the agonistic types, has an equal disregard for the authority of elites, but would reject the radical egalitarian preoccupation with a collective search for the common good. It is characterised by a utilitarian methodological individualism that holds the general interest is no more or less than the sum total of all the individual interests of persons composing the group (see for instance, Bentham 1789). The enduring popularity of this utilitarian thinking is demonstrated in the recent moves by both France and the UK to measure the effectiveness of government according to *gross national happiness*: that is, by aggregating the individual happiness of each citizen into an overall measure. A concomitant doctrine is the idea of *Homo economicus*: individuals have pre-political interests and values which they are driven to try to protect or secure; they are, on the whole, the best judge of those interests; and, they will respond to incentives. These ideas can be traced back to at least Adam Smith and his oft-cited quote from the *Wealth of nations* that to secure our dinner we should address ourselves to the self-love of the butcher and baker, not their humanity (1776, 119). In addition, there is a presumption that the process of each individual pursuing their own interests results in a self-regulating system of spontaneous order that produces social benefits (even Pareto Optimality). Again, this is often (controversially) attributed to Adam Smith and the metaphor of the invisible hand; it is, however, explicit in the work of Hayek, 'It is, indeed, part of the liberal attitude to assume that, especially in the economic field, the self-regulating forces of the market will somehow bring about the required adjustments to new conditions, although no-one can foretell how they will do this in a particular instance' (Hayek, 1960, 346).

These ideas may more commonly be associated with the field of economics, but as Hayek notes, they are also a central component of political liberalism and cognate doctrines, and in this section I will outline how they have been constituted as a theory of democracy, a theory of public administration, and how they should be considered as a mode of public participation in policy-making, given the not inconsiderable irony that they are inherently sceptical of what is usually thought of as the policy process.

Schumpeter's influential *Capitalism, socialism and democracy* is often credited with precipitating the conception of democracy as competition (Mouffe, 2000), but Schumpeter's model is overtly elitist in a way that political liberalism would usually reject. A more purely individualistic conception is expressed in Downs' *An economic theory of democracy*, which sets out a model in which 'parties in democratic politics are analogous to entrepreneurs in a profit-seeking economy' (1957, 295). Political actors – politicians, parties, governments – are vote-maximisers. They possess their own goals but the realisation of these goals is predicated on political support. Accordingly, political actors are engaged in a continuous competitive struggle with one another to maximise political support, and any decision will be calculated with that end in mind. The voters for whom they compete are themselves utility-maximisers. They

decide on whom to vote for by calculating the *expected utility income* from each of their potential political choices and selecting the one that provides the greatest return (so long as that alternative has a realistic chance of being elected). It is a model of democracy that gives considerable power to individual voters since political actors are beholden to their preferences. It has often been termed aggregative democracy by its critics (Mouffe, 2000; Dryzek, 2000) as political decisions are calculated by summing the individual preferences of voters.

Public servants retained their air of public-spirited altruism longer than the politicians, but not much longer – since the 1970s the ‘knightly’ motivations of public servants have been viewed with increasing scepticism (Le Grand, 2003). As a result, the market-based approach to public administration is increasingly popular. It is a central ingredient of the recipes for entrepreneurial public sector reform espoused by Osborne and Gaebler (1993), who attained guru status with the Clinton administration (Hood, 1998), but the most sophisticated exponent of this general approach is arguably Le Grand (2003; 2008), who helped drive New Labour’s market-based reforms of the NHS. The kernel of Le Grand’s position is competition between service providers (for example, hospitals and schools) for the custom of service users (patients and parents), who have the power to choose their provider, will result in greater quality, efficiency and responsiveness of services and greater equity and autonomy for the users of those services, through *the other invisible hand* of state-facilitated quasi-markets.

The primary political/social act according to the economic theory of democracy and the market approach to public administration is thus for individual citizens to express their preferences through choice, whether it is by casting a vote or choosing a service provider. Nozick (1974) even applies this logic of choice to political society in its entirety; arguing that utopia would be a situation in which there exists a multitude of differently constituted communities, where people could choose to live in the community that best suits their preferences. It may be objected that this article set out to uncover the variety of different ways the public participates in policy-level decisions, and choosing one’s healthcare provider is not participation in a policy-level decision. However, consider the decision process involved in closing a failing school or hospital. Within the knowledge transfer mode, this decision would be made by expert policy elites with appropriate input from the public, perhaps a consultation. Within the collective decision-making mode, the decision would be made through collective discussion and unanimity decision among all those affected. Le Grand (2008), however, proposes that these decisions should be de-politicised, enforced by an independent agency that decides by applying specified rules regarding market performance. The individual decisions of citizens in the market thus become a *de facto* process of policy-level decision-making, therefore choice should be regarded as a form of public participation in policy-making. Moreover, it is absolutely essential to the functioning of the market system – if citizens refuse to make choices based on expected utility, then the benefits of the market are never realised – as such, public participation as choice is a doctrinal component of market-based approaches to social policy.

There are a range of secondary mechanisms of participation that are also commonplace within this mode; complaints procedures, customer satisfaction surveys, and interest group lobbying, for example. It is quite common to find the nomenclature of customer outreach applied to participation, for instance the World Bank has equated citizen voice with listening to their customers and generating ‘demand-side pressure’

(Kim, 2013). As Le Grand (2008) notes, if service providers are trying to attract your custom they have a strong incentive to listen if you choose to voice your wants and needs (as do political parties trying to attract your vote). Therefore, politicians and public service organisations are likely to set up processes that allow you to express your preferences to them because your preferences are a direct form of market intelligence. Preferences expressed through interest group lobbying should also find a sympathetic ear if meeting them can increase the ‘market share’ of politicians and public service organisations.

The construction of participation as choice and voice differs from the two previous modes of participation outlined in this paper since it is the first in which participation is oriented towards expressing preferences rather than an attempt to reach a form of mutual understanding or address the common good. Again this construction entails particular forms of participatory practice. Participation mechanisms will tend to facilitate interactions between individual citizens and politicians or public organisations rather than between citizens. The goal of participation is responsiveness: politicians and public organisations should listen to citizens’ preferences and do what they say (unless there is a larger group of citizens who express opposing preferences), which is quite different from the knowledge transfer mode, where public participation is just one of a number of inputs that need to be weighed in the decision process. Nonetheless, public voices do not have a decision-making role, such as that in the collective decision-making mode. This is unnecessary since they can exercise their power through making choices in the marketplace. What is similar to the collective decision-making mode is the scope of the public to determine their own agenda for participation. Individual citizens and interest groups decide what preferences they want to express to set the terms of the debate.

Participation as arbitration and oversight

Our final mode of participation is also based on an agonistic construction of society in which there is continual conflict between individuals and groups to realise their own interests and values. However, this mode is sceptical of the proposition that all this competition leads to spontaneous order and social benefits. For Hobbes, a society left unregulated by a common power will degenerate into civil war as men ‘make warre upon each other, for their particular interests’ (1651, 225). State compulsion is necessary in order that humans can live peaceably together; otherwise individuals will renege on agreements with each other when it is in their interests to do so, and coordinated action becomes impossible. The notion of the state as a protective check on human vice is a recurring theme in political thought, which still persists today. For Hobbes it takes the form of absolute monarchy, but for Locke (1690) the community can play the role of impartial umpire. Moreover, Dunleavy and O’Leary (1987) argue that much pluralist thinking adopts a similar notion of the *neutral state* in which the state acts as referee between interest groups, working to uphold customary norms and intervening to punish transgressors.

The idea of the neutral state, like the state’s claim to a monopoly on expertise, has been attacked by a number of quite different theoretical traditions: Marxists have claimed the state in capitalist society is an instrument of bourgeois power; the New Right has claimed that state actors follow their own private interests (as discussed above); and, even within pluralism, there are competing notions of the state, for

instance, as simply a mirror of the balance of interests (Dunleavy and O’Leary, 1987). Just as the challenge to the state’s monopoly on expertise opened a potential sphere for public participation, so does the challenge to the state’s neutrality. If the state cannot be trusted to play the role of impartial adjudicator, perhaps the public can. Alternatively, processes of contrived randomness have a long history as techniques for public administration where there are concerns about interest group capture of the state; in classical Athens public auditors were selected by lot, and Burnheim’s *demarchy* also advocates the oversight of government bureaucracies by committees of citizens selected by lot (Hood, 1998). This provides two potential rationales for public participation: first, to substitute for the state as impartial adjudicator (arbitration) or, second, to play impartial critic of state activity (oversight). In both cases the objective of participation is to improve the legitimacy of decisions and render them acceptable to all, primarily by demonstrating that decisions have been subject to a fair process that has not been dominated by one set of vested interests.

This construction of participation is rarely given much attention in the literature on public participation in policy-making, but the most widespread example of citizen participation in the business of the state is in exactly this kind of role – as randomly selected members of a jury in a legal trial. Though legal juries are not a form of policy decision-making, they were an inspiration for the policy innovation of citizens’ juries that have increasingly been employed as a participatory policy-making mechanism in recent years. Moreover, Parkinson (2004) has argued that citizens’ juries have been employed in this fashion, as a means to break through deadlocks in public debates that have become a polarised battle between interest groups. Bingham, Nabatchi and O’Leary (2005) have also noted the tendency for the public to take on a quasi-judicial role in new governance processes such as mediation, facilitation, mini-trials and arbitration. Though it is rarely overtly stated as an aim of participation in the grey literature, the implicit logic of this construction of participation does seem to pervade quite widely, in particular the focus on excluding ‘vested interests’ from the process to ensure decision legitimacy is a common theme (see, for instance, the Public Administration Select Committee (2013) on *Public engagement in policy-making*). It is often perceived as an attempt by public organisations to control the process by excluding more informed and articulate participants, but the quest for impartiality may provide a legitimate rationale for excluding certain groups.

The importance of neutrality in this construction points to some key features of likely participatory practices within this mode of participation. Selection of participants will be tightly controlled. Who participates is of crucial importance to the legitimacy of the process and the acceptability of any decisions it reaches, so there will be clear criteria for demonstrating that the selection of participants has not prejudiced the final outcome. Therefore, participants will be selected at random or selected for their impartiality; namely, their lack of any links to the interest groups with a stake in the outcome of the process. If the mechanism is an ongoing process there are also likely to be limited terms for participants, since this reduces incentives for interest groups to try to co-opt participants to their cause. A specific agenda that participants are entrusted with prosecuting will also be determined in advance – this is a necessary pre-requisite for selecting impartial participants and also prevents participants adapting the process to pursue their own interests. Participation is likely to be adversarial. Those with an interest in the decision present their case to the impartial adjudicators, who are expected to interrogate their arguments and come to a balanced decision. Finally,

the output of the process will carry considerable weight – it may be a decision that all parties are expected to abide by, or a report to which a public organisation is compelled to respond.

Conclusion

This article has presented a typology of participation that goes beyond the radicalism and resignation of the most common approach to classifying participation mechanisms, which situates radical democracy as the apogee of participatory practice and any deviation from its principles as illegitimate. It has shown participatory democracy has no monopoly on claims to public participation, and has attempted to outline the most common alternative understandings of participation. Public participation is not necessarily in opposition to hierarchy and institutional power. It has a legitimate complementary role in such systems, and this is often how it is constructed by public organisations. Rather than presuming participation should always be solidaristic, it explores agonistic modes of participation, which have tended to be neglected in the literature despite rising interest in agonistic conceptions of democracy following Mouffe (2000). This is not to say we should refrain from arguments about what the right forms of participation are, only that these arguments should be directed towards contesting the actual assumptions of alternative constructions, rather than simply presuming others are bastardising the ideas of participatory democracy.

The typology presents four modes of participation – as knowledge transfer, collective decision-making, choice and voice, arbitration and oversight – in which clear rationales for participation are linked to historical notions of the functions of the state, and combined with characteristic participatory practices and conceptions of the citizen. It is intended to be a parsimonious heuristic that provides useful analytical frames that can illuminate our thinking about participation. It can help us understand conflicts between actors in existing participation initiatives: for example, why public organisations attempt to reduce interest group manipulation of processes are commonly construed as attempts to control the process by those who do not share an agonistic worldview. In addition, it may assist predictions of why some participation initiatives succeed while others fail: introducing agonistic procedures into solidaristic institutional cultures may result in alienation, whereas introducing solidaristic processes into agonistic institutional cultures may result in interest group domination and processes being viewed as illegitimate.

The typology is not intended to be a schema for classifying traditions of political thought. After all, it is possible to identify elements of all four quadrants in just the writings of JS Mill. Neither should it be used to rigidly assign different types of participatory mechanisms – for example, citizens' juries – to different participation modes. It can, however, increase our sensitivity to the nuance with which the same or similar mechanisms are used for different ends – citizens' juries, for example, can and have been used for arbitration, for knowledge transfer and as deliberative democratic tools. Moreover, the four modes are presented as archetypes and cannot capture all the myriad variations in participatory practice. The real world is messier than the neat conceptual distinctions outlined above. There are affinities as well as differences between the four modes. Participatory processes are therefore likely to contain subtle variations on these modes, and even combine elements of different modes into hybrid forms. Take, for instance, the Citizens' Initiative Review that has

been appended to referenda in Oregon. It is part soft arbitration in that a group of 20 randomly selected people are asked to hear the arguments for and against a proposal and come to a judgement, but the main focus is a variation on knowledge transfer. The judgement statement this group produces is intended to raise the epistemic quality of the final vote by providing high quality, unbiased information to decision-makers, only here the decision-makers are voters as opposed to policy-makers. The move towards thinking about state structures in terms of multi-level governance, and the difference democrat critique that there are multiple overlapping publics, not one homogeneous public, creates the potential for complex participatory systems within which different modes of participation interact. In such instances, the typology can be a useful tool for deconstructing these complex processes to highlight which components are performing which participatory labour and to what end.

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