



Non-Governmental Public Action Programme

Preliminary Research Findings Brief

Municipal Innovations in Non-Governmental Public Participation: UK/Latin America

Project aims, objectives, methods

This project focuses on the municipal spaces of innovation in public policy making that have been notable in Latin America since the 1980s and in the UK since the 1990s. These innovations open new participatory spaces for non-governmental actors (NGOs, social movements, voluntary and community organizations) with the intention of creating effective approaches to poverty, exclusion and conflict. Our main research question is: what tensions, changes and outcomes emerge when non-governmental actors begin to make use of these new opportunities for public participation in municipal government? This question is being explored through six municipal case studies, three in Latin America and three in the UK, through an interactive not extractive research process with non governmental research participants and strong dissemination mechanisms to non academic as well as academic users. The research method engages the research participants in a process of 'co-producing knowledge' so that the knowledge generated may strengthen participatory action for change. The data collection methods include participatory observation and field diaries and in-depth interviews which are to be analyzed using NVIVO qualitative software. As well as empirical knowledge, this research aims to contribute theoretical insight into the evolution of democratic theory in the age of globalization. These municipal innovations may appear to be isolated experiments. However, we associate them with a post Cold War shift in democratic thinking towards 'participatory governance'. We seek to clarify whether this is creating meaningful spaces for participation and change below the state, capable of delivering effective new approaches to contemporary social problems and the relational inequalities in which they are embedded.

Key research findings

We have research findings which are aimed at our research participants for each of our case study cities. However, we have also identified a number of cross cutting themes. These were discussed with research participants in feed back workshops in the three Latin American Cities in October-November 2007 and we are about to feedback to our UK participants in a conference in January 2008. Research briefings for our research participants will be available in three languages on our website in February (see website details later). These initial findings are aimed at practitioners and participants in our research and are outlined in the next section. In addition we have academic findings which we are in the process of developing from analysis of our data and from the feedback sessions with research participants. Amongst the emerging issues are:

- Despite frequent claims that the 'people decide' or at least influence decision making in these participatory experiments, the reality is much more complex. However, the cases help us to learn much more about the theory and practice of participation under a varied spectrum of political and economic philosophies towards democracy and the market, from New Labour's 'active citizen' to Hugo Chavez's 'popular subject'.
- Porto Alegre, in Brazil, is a 'symbolic multiplier' of participatory innovation. Its participatory budget has persisted and evolved over 18 years. However, when the Workers Party government lost power in 2004, a new administration much more,

influenced by technical approaches to participation, and much less interested in its potential to engage or empower the dispossessed, has put much less energy and emphasis on the process. With its long history of participation, Porto Alegre is a good case for assessing what happens over time and whether innovations are able to create critical and active subjects or only to offer marginal improvements to the lives of the city's poor. We worked with a group of people new to participatory budgeting and another who were more long standing in their involvement. We also worked with some of the poorest people in the city who work in the rubbish recycling sector to explore the complexities around who participates and who does not.. We found that the original dynamism of the participatory process in the City, is now being reversed. Fewer people are attending the community assemblies, and representatives on the participatory budget council tend to be more educated than their communities and to stay in their roles for much longer. Political mediation between parties and community leaders is returning after years of bringing citizens into direct participation. Inequality in income distribution has not been changed, despite the years of participation, although services for the poor have been greatly improved. The middle classes of Porto Alegre were supportive of participatory budgeting in general at the beginning, but this support was not deepened politically by the PT. Under the new administration, the framework of the PB has shifted, emphasizing the city as a competitive global space for consumption. Activists have become managers of 'third sector' poverty alleviation programmes rather than facilitators of community empowerment through their direct engagement with the local administration. Our findings suggest that this is at odds with the original politics of the participatory budget, and its emphasis on social and economic change led by the poorest and drawing in the middle class to support efficient and equitable public services and goods for all.

- Medellin in Colombia appears in many respects to have gone further than Porto Alegre in its efforts to engage the wider city in its participatory budget and planning process. We worked with a middle class as well as poor neighborhood and with city civil servants to track the progress of this initiative. The innovation was led by a
- Liberal Mayor, but supported by radical non governmental organizations with a long history in the City. In Medellin, the factor of violence and insecurity were major components to the context and an ongoing culture of patronage and clientelism. Our research showed that the close accompaniment, flexibility and commitment to social and political change did generate important changes. Four years is not enough however, and the forces of armed and unarmed clientelism continue to derive added strength from an adverse national context.
- In Caracas, Venezuela, we worked with relatively new participants in local neighborhood processes around housing and water. They were now being recognized as the subjects of Hugo Chavez' radical challenge to global and national power structures and we followed how our participants responded to the national agenda of the President while seeking to improve neighborhoods with some of the poorest infrastructure in Latin America. Although, Chavez is the most radical in his participatory discourse in Latin America, there are many problems in meeting the expectations of the poor and encouraging autonomous processes. The discourse is often too abstract rather than focused on delivery of much needed infrastructure and services. The women who worked with us and who are members of the Water Tables, which bring government together with community to discuss water provision, faced catastrophe during our research. Their houses collapsed in a landslide and it took a month for even a temporary shelter to be found. Nevertheless, the women are committed to the Chavista project, which unlike our other participatory projects, is committed to meaningful change and recognizes the poorest a subjects of that change.
- Chavez' popular citizen is distinct from New Labour's liberal citizen, Medellin's participatory citizen and Porto Alegre's participatory subject (itself now challenged by a non Workers Party government). This means that political context and the philosophical and ideological shaping of that context impacts on the space for meaningful self development of each participant within his or her social environment

- The UK cities are all from the north of England, but marked by important differences.
- Manchester has a strong and growing economy although high levels of poverty and deprivation. It wishes to locate itself as a global city. Its New Labour administration sees participation as a feature of global cities (Barcelona was a pioneer in this sense) but has an instrumental and managerial attitude towards it. In Manchester we worked with grass roots activists as well as the community and voluntary sector who are working to question this model. We found interesting dynamic at the community level and a voluntary sector seeking to re-balance its professionalisation with closeness to the grass roots and capacity to promote meaningful participation at that level. Manchester is recognized as the most unequal city in the UK, and like Porto Alegre, its rise as a globally oriented city does not foster the kind of belonging and sense of opportunity for all, which could encourage participation for social change and influence on decision making from the poorest sectors.
- Bradford and Salford by contrast, are very poor cities; the former is characterized by its multiethnic and diverse population, the latter by its mainly white working class population. In Salford we worked with city councilors, while in Bradford we worked with the community and voluntary sector and the local strategic partnership body.
- In all the UK cases, the history of activism and organizing at the community level was much weaker and state dependent than in Latin America. It tended to be less politicized or occasionally as in the Salford case, a small group of highly politicized voices claimed community representation and were unable to make serious use of the participation spaces. In Bradford, the lack of independence of the community and voluntary sector from the local State and the weakness of social organizing, made participatory experiments very 'top down'.
- Despite these weaknesses, it is clear that the meaning of participation is evolving through new spaces. Our reflections on the opportunities and limitations together with our research participants, has generated new understandings which can potentially strengthen non governmental participation in the spaces. We are in the final stage of our dissemination and discussion with research participants on our findings, and we will capture this learning in the final academic outputs of the research which will follow.

We have identified nine cross cutting themes with policy and practice implications from all our case studies which we have discussed with our research participants in workshops in October and November 2007 in Porto Alegre, Medellin and Caracas. On 31 January 2008, we are holding a similar workshop for UK participants in our research and other practitioners from across the North of England. We have also invited another of the NPGA research projects led by Marilyn Taylor and Christopher Miller to join us. Our nine preliminary cross cutting themes are as follows (and below we expand on the themes):

1. Autonomy and Self organizing
 2. Leadership and Representation
 3. Deliberative participation
 4. Participation as human development, instrumental goals or transforming power
 5. Radical campaigning, mobilizing and participation
 6. Professionalised Participation
 7. Inequality and Participation
 8. Neoliberal Economic and Individualistic versus Altruistic and Social Participatory Goals
 9. The challenge of non participation
- Effective participation requires a sense of autonomy and self organization amongst participants. This gives energy to the process and limits the risks of co-option

- Leadership and representation. These are difficult questions for participants who are not elected to represent communities. Who can speak for whom? There is also a tendency for leadership to be concentrated in the hands of a few individuals unless there is a dynamic participatory practice and culture to underpin it and which encourages direct participation.
- Where participation spaces are unresponsive to meaningful change, activist and politicized organizations make a real difference.
- There is a need for forms of community organizing which stress social rather than individual objectives and bring people together around principles which overcome particularisms and parochialism..
- Building experience of deliberation in participation and improving the quality of decision making at all levels can enhance the value of participation for non governmental and governmental actors.
- It is important to clarify the goal of participation. Is it about human development? Or is it instrumental to a specific outcome whose objectives are decided by a few? Or is it about transforming power?
- The question of who controls and sets the agenda in participatory spaces has a big impact on whether they are meaningful.
- Non governmental and voluntary and community sector organizations can enhance participation when they believe that the poor can be decision makers and protagonists and will support rather than substitute for them.
- Inequality has a huge impact on participation, in terms of willingness to participate, confidence in speaking, and trust in processes. This includes broader social and economic inequality across the city as well as inequalities within social groups.
- Neoliberal economic policies which emphasize the private individual in the marketplace appears to contradict participation aimed at promoting altruism, positive social interaction and public

Key publications and outputs

This research has been particularly active in engaging participants from the grass roots and community sector as well as officials and sometimes politicians in the local municipalities where we are working. This has led to a permanent nourishment of our research from the 'real world' of participation. A key outcome for the team in the UK has been the close relationships we have built with our research participants. This has meant that we have made three successful bids to the **ESRC/NPGA Practitioner Fellowship Scheme**. We have been awarded one individual and two collective practitioner fellowships:

1. **Kezia Levan**, from the Participatory Budget (PB) Unit, Manchester,

Aims of Fellowship:

To produce report and summary report inc. case studies to:

- evaluate the nature, shape and progress of emerging examples of participatory budgeting in the UK, both locally and nationally
- explore the implications of these findings for the future development of PB
- Organise workshop to disseminate findings and stimulate discussion about lessons learned for implementing PB in the UK

These outputs were completed with a national workshop on PB in Manchester in June 2007. Kezia's report on PB in the UK has fed into the announcement by Hazel Blears of UK government support for more PB experiments in the UK.

2. **Hamilton Road Area Community Association (HRACA)**, Manchester, an action research project to strengthen the Ward Forums in Longsight, Manchester (due to complete March 2008)

3. **Sustenga**, a Bradford VCS organisation with a long experience of community training in the District, who plans to develop an Open College Network course designed to give participants the practical skills they need to use Participatory Budgeting within their particular situation. (due to complete June 2008)

Conference Papers, Presentations and Dissemination Presentations January 2006-January 2008:

Sergio Baierle, CIDADE, Porto Alegre, Brazil:

Presentations on research 2006-2008

CIDADE, Centro de Assessoria e Estudos Urbanos. *Atire no cidadão, salve o freguês: orçamento participativo e cidadania nua* (Shoot the citizen, save the customer: participatory budgeting and bare citizenship) Presentation in CIDADE 2006

Curso de Verano de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, El Escorial, "Deafios y Limites en la Democracia,: Los Presupuestos Participativos' 10-14 July, 2006

CIDADE – Centro de Assessoria e Estudos Urbanos & Projeto Inovações Municipais. ... *Porto Alegre, Brasil: Orçamento Participativo E Além Dele*. Presentation to Participation Network Workshop, Bradford University, ICPS, April 2006

International Seminar on Public Budget Reform, January 11-12, 2007 Beijing

Baierle, Sérgio. *PORTO ALEGRE – Justificative for the work on regions Partenon (focus on the community Chácara dos Bombeiros) and Glória (focus on the Popular Educators of Porto Alegre Association - AEPPA)*. Presentation Cidade – Centro de Assessoria e Estudos Urbanos. 2007

Sergio Baierle and Dos Santos Paulo, Fernanda. *A História de Luta e Organização de um Movimento Social, chamado AEPPA- Associação de Educadores Populares de Porto Alegre*. Presentación, CIDADE, 2007

IS Academy Conference: 'The Politics of Urban Poverty, Exclusion and Violence: Comparative Analysis and Policy Insights' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, Holland, 27 and 28 September 2007.

India-Brazil-South Africa Local Governance Forum, January 17-19 2008, New Delhi

International Seminar, The Future of Participatory Democracy: Technical Fix or Popular Sovereignty? Organised by CIDADE-TNI- Methodist University of Porto Alegre, 25-27 October, 2007

Margarita Lopez Maya, CENDES, Caracas, Venezuela

Presentations and conference papers 2006-8

1.146. "Innovaciones participativas en la Caracas bolivariana" (Margarita López Maya), XXVII Congreso Internacional de LASA. Septiembre 5-8, 2007 Montreal, Canadá.

1.152. "Innovaciones participativas en la Caracas bolivariana" (Margarita López Maya),

Congreso en Conmemoración de los 50 años de FLACSO (FLACSO)

Octubre, 29-31, 2007.

Quito, Ecuador.

1.53. “Innovaciones participativas y poder popular” (Margarita López Maya), IV Congreso Nacional de Estudiantes de Sociología de la UCV.

Noviembre 2, 2007.

Caracas, Venezuela.

1.55. “Innovaciones participativas y poder popular en Venezuela” (Margarita López Maya), panel “Los consejos comunales: la nueva arquitectura de poderes en Venezuela”, Jornadas Personalités d’avenir Las nuevas formas de democracia en América Latina (Embajada de Francia en Venezuela).

Noviembre 21 y 22, 2007.

Caracas, Venezuela.

1.56. “Sobre el desempeño de la democracia participativa y protagónica en el primer gobierno de Chávez” (Margarita López Maya), Conference Globalization and the Rise of the Left in Latin America (Princeton University).

December 6-8, 2007.

Omar Uran, IPC, Medellin, Colombia:

La participación ciudadana en la planeación y presupuesto de la ciudad como institucionalidad democrática emergente, Los casos de Manchester, Medellín y Porto Alegre *Controversia*, Bogota ,Forthcoming 2008

Heather Blakey

Radical innovations or technical fix?How Latin American participatory traditions are reinterpreted in the British context. Paper to the Political Studies Association Annual Conference, April 2007

Lucy Brill

Exploring ‘municipal innovations’ in public participation within the UK. Paper to the Political Studies Association Annual Conference, April 2007

Jenny Pearce ,Presentations and Conference Papers:

Participation in the City: Understanding the democratic content of non-governmental participatory action at the municipal level. Paper presented to CEISAL conference, Brussels April 2007

“Ciudadano”, “Pueblo” O “Obrero” : Asumidos Teóricos del Sujeto Participativo en América Latina. Paper Presented at the 50th Anniversary Conferences of the Latin American Social Science Council (CLACSO) in Medellin and Bogota, October 2007

Jenny Pearce: “Ciudadano” o “ Pueblo” Supuestos Teóricos de la Participación en America Latina Paper presented to (Centro de Estudios Nacionales de Desarrollo) CENDES Venezuela, November 2007

Workshops and Local Dissemination

In addition to these formal presentations, informal workshops and presentations have been held in all our cities. In the UK, our Latin American researchers have given presentations to the Northern Practitioner Network in March 2006, to the Bradford Resource Centre, and to regional and local practitioners in an ICPS seminar in February 2007. Jenny Pearce presented the Latin American field research to the Manchester Reference group in December 2006, and fed back to all the research

participants in workshops October-November 2007 in Porto Alegre, Medellin and Caracas. In Caracas she also gave a presentation of the fieldwork to the Centro Gumilla on the 29 November 2007.

Publications

Many of the conference papers and presentations will be turned into published articles in 2008, and a book of essays on the entire research will be produced in 2008. Our research findings have been published as a briefing for all our research participants in three languages, and will be available on our website in February 2008

“Here, the People Decide”? New Forms of Participation in the City

“Aqui, o Povo Decide”? Novas Formas de Participacao na Cidade

Aquí, el Pueblo Decide”? Nuevas Formas de Participación en la Ciudad.

For further information

www.bradford.ac.uk/acad/icps/