“ENGAGED GOVERNANCE: AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT-CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT”

By Dr Diane M Guthrie

“The liberal conception of the autonomous citizen, the communitarian conception of the freely cooperating citizen, and the egalitarian conception of the equal citizen are all founded on the proposition that the good political life emerges only from the positive, active decision of equally choosing human beings; never from their submission to the constraints of some impersonal fate that dominates them, but that a separate class among them is itself able to dominate. It has to be explicit in any democratic theory that….to be subjected, without real agreement, to another’s power over us within our own community is to become pseudocitizens.” (Green, 1985 p. 270, italics this author)
1 Background to Engaged Governance

The aim of this paper is to develop a framework for understanding the role of citizen engagement in government, particularly public administration, decision-making. The paper explores the concept of government-civil society engagement through, firstly, the principles of good governance and then in the context in which engagement occurs, that is, the public policy cycle and administration system. Following this discussion, the paper proposes a conceptual framework for describing and analysing those conditions that promote, shape and support engaged governance. The framework can also function as a template for institutionalising the elements of engaged governance in a public administration system.

Because government-civil society engagement is, fundamentally, a political activity, it is argued that an engaged governance approach should begin with a normative starting point that has at its core the democratic ideals of political equality and the public good. This approach affords citizens equal participation in a representative democracy and opportunities to shape the public interest. As an approach, engaged governance enables the expression and co-ordination of political, administrative and civic interests for the achievement of policy coherence, social justice and sustainable development.

1.1 The state and civil society: evolving relationships

Throughout the twentieth century, the public service tradition of the politically disinterested, aloof, ‘expert’ bureaucracy (Felts and Jos, 1996) was slowly eroded in many of the developed nations as it became mired in crises related to the growing costs of public services due to the increasing scale of provision and alleged inefficiencies. Governments were perceived to lack accountability, which led to increasing community dissatisfaction and demands for privatisation and greater public choice (Ackroyd, 1995; Esquith, 1997). In the late sixties, commentators were predicting that emerging themes in public administration would be social equity, ethics and citizen participation (Esquith, 1997).
Government responses to these crises ushered in the marketisation and managerialism solutions (private sector ‘solutions’ to public sector ‘problems’) of the 1980s. These approaches, referred to by some as ‘new public management’ (NPM), emphasised strategic planning, performance measurement, accountability, results, purchaser/provider split, contracting out and ‘doing more with less’ (Hood, 1991). These managerial tools were constitutive of a corporate governance focus adopted by Governments. Consistent with private sector principles and practices the public became connected now to the State as “consumers with the ability to choose and complain [although] not the ability to proactively shape services” (Corrigan and Joyce, 1997, p. 419).

The general view, however, is that market-managerialism failed “to deliver on its central claim to lower costs per (constant) unit of service (see Hood, 1991). This perceived failure in the 1980s efficiency measures has been attributed, in part, to a “[s]ervice provision [that] simply grew and grew without much consideration or systematic evaluation of the needs served or calculation of the benefits to the community as a whole.” (Ackroyd, 1995, p. 26).

For many nations with developing economies, the last century was also a time of deepening administrative crises centred on the State’s ineffectiveness in addressing issues around poverty and social and economic development. The intervention by international funding and donor agencies throughout the 1970s and 1980s to address such issues were frustrated (de Alcántara, 1998) by weak governance institutions, entrenched corruption and a post-colonial legacy of under-developed human capital. Of interest is that, from the 1980s, the same managerialist reforms applied in the developed nations were transferred without question to countries that differed not simply in economic terms but in broad cultural, political and social terms.

Compounding these administrative crises, the last few decades have seen Governments across the globe increasingly engage with the “complex dialectic of globalisation-regionalisation that has made it more difficult for nation states to control economic activities within their borders and to achieve coherent economic spaces” (Jessop, 1998, p. 33). In addition, old traditions of patronage politics and clientelism have been contested by a multitude of organised civil society interest groups and recently emerging global policy networks (e.g. Transparency International, the Kyoto Protocol), each seeking to influence national policy agendas (Streck, 2002).
Striving to maintain legitimacy amid an increasingly complex administration field and significant community distrust, Governments have sought to expand their governance repertoire beyond hierarchy and market modes to draw increasingly into their decision-making processes a diverse array of private sector, civil society organisations, international financial institutions and public interest groups (Jessop, 1998 p. 32). This same shift in governance focus is observed in Governments in developing nations (Musoni, 2003) stimulated, primarily, by IFI and donor funding incentives. Purely economic approaches to development problems by these agencies had proved ineffective in achieving planned economic restructuring. Moves towards an institutional economics perspective provided the frame through which IFI and donor agencies could intervene into the social and political aspects of State governance, which were impacting on the smooth functioning of the modern economic markets they were assisting to develop (de Alcántara, 1998). This institutional approach by IFIs and donors has further evolved to incorporate, or at least support in principle, democratising agendas. Economic development programs and funds are now linked to the promotion of more participatory State governance approaches in the view that more ‘grass roots involvement’ (in particular, by the poor) would better inform national poverty reduction programming and, thus, enhance prospects of sustaining development efforts on the ground.

In general, recognition of the citizen’s right to participate and the associated challenges to the role of public administration have prompted a re-examination of governance. Merrien (1998) describes the search for new forms of governance as a response to growing state dysfunction, the crisis of legitimacy in the public sphere, intervention at all levels of state activity by agents and institutions from the private sector and the new importance of the market model.

1.2 Institutional values for government-civil society engagement

A new form of governance has been taking shape, that described as ‘good governance’, and it places the individual’s and the group’s right to participate in government decision-making as a centre-piece along with notions of good corporate governance. The political rhetoric around good governance describes ‘democratising’ Governments ‘working together’ with ‘responsible’
and ‘active’ citizens to address complex problems, be more responsive, transparent and accountable and find sustainable solutions.

From a review of the relevant literature, Graham, Amos and Plumptre (2003) identify five broad sets of good governance principles, which they relate to resolving the exercise of power and the results of power. There is a certain robustness about these principles the authors note, given their apparent universal recognition and basis (of some) in international human rights law. A summary of these principles is as follows:

- **Legitimacy and voice**
  - Recognition of a person’s right to participate in decision-making whether directly or through intermediaries that represent their intention,
  - Consensus orientation that mediates differing interests in the group’s best interest and on policies and procedures;

- **Direction**
  - Leaders and the public share a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development, and understand the historical, cultural and social contexts for such development;

- **Performance**
  - Responsive institutions and processes that serve the needs of all stakeholders,
  - Effective and efficient institutions and processes that produce results, which meets needs while making the best use of resources;

- **Accountability**
  - Government, private sector and civil society decision-makers have some form of accountability to the public as well as to institutional stakeholders,
○ Transparency through institutions, processes and information being directly accessible to those concerned, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them;

- Fairness

○ Equity of opportunities for all persons to improve or maintain their well being,

○ Rule of law that is fair and enforced impartially (Graham et al, 2003).

These principles are largely normative in nature and it is the duty of political leadership to provide this normative basis for engagement, either constitutionally (as in Thailand and the Philippines) and/or through regulatory and/or policy frameworks (as in Queensland, Australia). An explicit statement of values and governing principles provides (a) public administration with a template for organising, performing and accounting for its effectiveness and (b) citizens with an awareness of the range of their political opportunities to shape policy decisions and monitor and evaluate government performance. In an operational sense, Graham et al (2003) suggest, these principles can be translated into criteria for determining the practice of good governance.

In practice, Governments and/or public administrators are inclined to frame citizens’ rights to participate as a democratic procedure with instrumental value, as a means to an end. In effect, enacting political equality for the purpose of realising social and economic equality. Few Governments promote the intrinsic value of citizen involvement in the process of defining the public interest, which is, essentially, a commitment to democracy as central to notions of good governance (Etzioni, 1996). Some examples include the Queensland and Western Australian State Governments in Australia. The Queensland Government has instituted, as will be described later in this paper, civil society engagement as both a way for government to work and a performance outcome. The Western Australian Government has recently embarked on a state-wide citizenship development strategy to strengthen democracy and develop citizen knowledge of government processes and their rights.

Whether revisionist or pragmatic in orientation, ‘modernising’ Governments generally support the notion that public involvement in government decision-making “contributes to good
governance by fostering….greater transparency, more accountability and enhanced legitimacy and lead[s] to better quality decision with higher levels of implementation and compliance.” (OECD, 2001a, p. 6). Other espoused benefits of government-civil society engagement include the following:

- Providing for evidence-based policy and planning (Russell, 2000);
- A capacity to tap new sources of policy-relevant ideas, information and resources;
- A capacity for aligning allocation of resources and service provision with community needs;
- Enhanced risk management in the context of an increasingly vigilant public;
- Potential for development of more strategic, long-term partnerships between government and civil society sectors;
- Development of civil society’s trust in Government and public institutions;
- Development of citizenship and civic capacity; and
- Strengthening of democracy and democratic institutions (Guthrie and Bishop, 2003).

In reality, the dilemma for many public administrators is reconciling perceived or expected tensions between enacting the various principles of good governance, in particular, the principle related to participation and that of performance. Government-civil society engagement is for many administrators an unfamiliar and risky process. Initiating and managing engagement processes reflects core values that would appear quite distinct from those associated with the managerialist emphasis of corporate governance frameworks (and that aspect of ‘good governance’ that receives most attention in reform agendas). For example, the NPM regime emphasises economy and parsimony with success judged in terms of frugality while standards of failure include waste through muddle, confusion and inefficiency (Hood, 1991). To the extent that the public administrator is steeped in NPM values and practice, the complexity of engaging and mediating between competing public interests, the resource-hungry nature of engagement
processes and a perception of ‘loss of control’ of the policy process may add up to an experience of confusion, inefficiency and risk to frugality.

However, good financial management and government-civil society engagement are not ‘either or’ judgements. The value of political equality can not be applied and withdrawn at will although it may be exercised in very different ways across cultures, political and economic regimes and differing policy issues. Further, values of frugality and inclusiveness are not by nature competing goals and all engagement is not risky and can actually serve as a risk management strategy. From a public administration perspective, an important goal for engagement is better alignment of public service provision with the community’s expression of its needs, values and democratic aspirations, represented, supposedly, in their Government’s priorities. Such alignment is also the goal of good governance.

While the first principle (Legitimacy and voice) refers directly to the right to participate, it can be argued that each of the principles is interdependent. That is, in implementing the right to participate, Governments need to provide public administration and civil society with parameters (Direction and Performance) for participation, performance standards (Accountability) for assessing the effectiveness of engagement practice and processes that are inclusive and safeguard citizens’ rights (Fairness). Equally, one can argue that Government transparency and accountability is enhanced through participative processes.

Many of the administrative dilemmas experienced around engagement can be related, in large part, to ingredients missing from reforms aimed at implementing the principle of participation without reference to its function in a good governance regime. Most good governance reform efforts pay little attention to the institutional rationale and design implications of a governance mode that promises and safeguards political equality. In other words, the rhetoric of participation as a component of good governance is not being matched, operationally, in the development of good governance systems. The typical implementation approach is political rhetoric at one end of the system and a narrow focus on participation techniques at the operational end of the governance system. Reform efforts tempt the possibility of unintended (possibly adverse) consequences when they do not include (a) a clearly stated political/social
philosophy as an institutional rationale for public administration to undertake its core business in new ways and (b) an institution-wide change program that repositions, incrementally, organisational structures, systems and processes to accommodate participatory practice and outputs as new ways of undertaking ‘core business’.

Engaged governance is a useful strategic and conceptual device for referring to a system of governance that marries citizen rights, Government political vision, elements of good corporate governance and social justice. Good governance has been conflated in practice with a narrow focus on corporate governance and provides little understanding of the importance of engagement as a political goal in setting Government direction and shaping performance and accountability systems.

1.3 Regulatory systems for government-civil society engagement

Values and principles are realised, further legitimised and reproduced through tasks and behaviour. The tasks around which government-civil society engagement is organised is, of course, the policy cycle and its component tasks (policy being used in the broadest sense here). As the following diagram indicates, there are options for government to open its political opportunity structures at various points in a policy cycle and there are various points in the policy cycle where citizens can access, or advocate to gain access into, decision-making processes. Of course, there is a capability dimension for both government and citizens as they engage each other on these tasks. Capability can refer to adequate knowledge, understanding, skills (technical and social), resources, opportunity and so forth.

The policy tasks are likely to have local/regional as well as State dimensions. For example, it is traditional for policy to be formulated at the central government level. However, in a decentralised system of government, information generated through local/regional government-civil society dialogues may set the policy agenda. Or conversely, an issue may be identified at a State level but require substantial public input at the local/regional level during the policy analysis phase. Similarly, while some planning processes may be centralised, a decentralised system of government that aims to be responsive to local/regional needs will have at its heart a
deliberative, strategic planning process involving government and civil society in identifying local priorities and solutions.

![Diagram of the policy task and opportunities for participation]

*Figure 1. The policy task and opportunities for participation*

To implement engaged governance in practice, there are two issues for Governments and public administrators to resolve for each policy task:

(i) Determining, formalising and communicating the distribution of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for government and non-government sectors and actors for each policy task (e.g. across state, regional and local levels), in other words, describing the policy task network. Doing so can enhance governance performance on all dimensions (e.g. legitimacy, direction, performance, accountability, fairness). It may be that decentralisation strategies can optimise governance performance on some dimensions (e.g. legitimacy and fairness) and, in turn, significantly enhance institutional capacity to enact other governance principles (e.g. performance).

(ii) Decisions regarding who should participate, what information and engagement opportunities should be provided, what engagement mechanisms are appropriate and what capacities are needed must be linked demonstrably to the enactment of governance and not viewed
myopically, as is currently the case, as project or program specific methods for solving technical problems only with discrete start-end dates to citizen participation.

1.4 Examples of government-civil society engagement on the policy task

This section explores examples of government-civil society engagement around different tasks in the policy cycle with the goal of identifying how the participation principle of governance can affect/be affected by other governance principles (e.g. accountability, performance) and what impacts engagement practice has on the administrative system.

In this exploration, I will adopt Graham et al’s (2003) strategy and set up some likely governance performance criteria by which to compare engagement practice in the case studies. For example engaged governance has: an instrumental function in that it contributes to the achievement of both development policy and governance objective(s); procedural qualities in that engagement processes should reflect, for example, appropriate opportunities for participation and the provision of information to facilitate meaningful participation; and a transformative function in that an engagement process can enhance the capacity of participants to engage and strengthen the governance system and democracy.

This exercise is not intended as an evaluation or assessment of the cases described but as an exploration of an engaged governance system works in practice. Cases presented below are based on secondary data sources and present a few examples only for illustration.

1.4.1 The engagement principle at work in some examples from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) program

The first phase of the PRSP program, as conceived by international financial institutions (IFI), is the formulation of a national strategy for poverty reduction, the process of which must involve participative processes. The IFI assumption is that such processes will create a sense of broad-based (government and civil society) ownership of the strategy. Civil society involvement would focus on participatory poverty analyses, prioritisation of public actions to be addressed in the strategy and monitoring governments’ delivery of the commitments made in strategies. Approval of PRSPs and funding is conditional, in part, on an ‘acceptable’ participatory process.
This section draws on the work of McGee, Levene and Hughes (2002), which looked at 10 sub-Saharan PRSP cases. At the time of their review, the PRSP processes were in the early, formulation stage although, oftentimes, the conditions set up initially will have impacts throughout a program. The authors note the differing views held by the sectors involved (IFIs, government officers and Community Service Organisation (CSO) representatives) as to the value and function of the participatory process. However, given the general lack of systematic, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation undertaken within most of the PRSP processes it is not possible to ascertain whether these different perspectives would undermine the programs in the longer term. It is worth noting that the authors make particular mention of the Rwandan PRSP process as an exemplar of a good process. Rwanda will be examined later in this paper as an example of an institutional development approach to embedding engagement in its governance system.

Table 1: Engagement principle at work in sub-Saharan PRSP processes

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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Findings (McGee et al, 2002)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instrumental:</strong> Participation contributes to achievement of objectives.</td>
<td>CSOs’ work in facilitating the involvement of the poor in poverty assessments widened government’s understanding of poverty. Too early to gauge national ownership. Mixed results with respect to participative practice changing the prevailing economic policy making modality. CSOs were not invited generally into the analysis and decision-making around macro-economic policy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Procedural:</strong> Clear roles and responsibilities; Adequacy/appropriateness of participation opportunities;</td>
<td>Some CSOs/NGOs initiated their own involvement while others were invited into the process. Some CSOs established parallel processes in order to advocate for entry into the mainstream process. Little time to consider information and deliberate. Consultation more than collaboration and little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of rules for decision-making; Adequate provision of information; and Breadth of inputs considered.</td>
<td>involvement by the poor in analysis of poverty data. Government formulation of the PRSP closed and top-down (e.g. reference to a ‘black box’ process). Poor information provision by government and lack of government openness during interpretation and planning stages. Greater reliance on CSOs input than that of the grass roots’ poor. Some CSOs managed to raise public awareness of the PRSP process but no reports on whether this awareness contributed to greater involvement.</td>
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<td><strong>Transformative:</strong> Commitment to the process; Enhanced capacities for engaged governance; and Broader grass roots involvement, network development and resources mobilised.</td>
<td>Uncertainty over CSOs continuing involvement as indicated by lack of government transition planning for CSOs’ ongoing role. Generally, CSOs motivated to continue involvement but want improvements. Capacity development in the PRSP process was not addressed. CSOs broadened awareness but not necessarily involvement. CSO network resources mobilised but not clear with respect to the poor.</td>
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</table>

There were a number of contextual factors highlighted in McGee et al’s (2002) report that should be addressed in the field and considered when initiating any future PRSP processes. For example, in a number of the PRSP processes, government accountabilities to civil society are low, a condition reinforced by little available information to enable CSOs and citizens to build their knowledge of the process and the technical issues. As noted earlier, some tension has been experienced in some cases as a result of differing conceptions of the value and function of participation in the PRSP process. In terms of the ‘program logic’ of good governance, it begs
the question as to whether and how much the governance system is undermined irreparably in the PRSP process if certain governance principles (e.g. accountability) are not pursued and, thus, conditions are set up that serve as barriers to achieving engagement effectiveness.

1.4.2 The engagement principle at work in Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Porto Alegre.

This section draws on the review work by Wampler (2000) on the Porto Alegre (Brazil) example of citizen involvement at the local government level in the allocation of resources, broad social policy discussions and the monitoring of public spending. Part of a larger democratisation project in Brazil, there are estimated to be nearly 100 municipalities and five states that have implemented a PB program (Wampler, 2000).

Porto Alegre has a population of around 1.3 million, is a wealthy municipality by Brazilian standards and was the crucible in which PB took shape in Brazil. The Porto Alegre program was initiated in 1989 by the Worker’s Party, which was the majority party in the Local Government. The PB program is framed and structured as a pro-poor strategy that seeks to achieve social justice through improved policies and resources allocation favouring low-income neighbourhoods and breaking the cycle of patronage politics. The pro-poor policy is applied through the use of a Quality of Life Index that provides assessments of relative neighbourhood disadvantage.

In Porto Alegre, the PB sponsor is the Mayor and the process is managed and supported through his office. The PB process is primarily focused on new public works and the size of the government budget involved is between 10-15%. Constitutionally and legislatively, the Mayor has total budgetary and administrative authority (Wampler, 2000).
Table 2: Engagement principle at work in the Porto Alegre PB program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Findings (Wampler, 2000)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instrumental:</strong> Participation contributed to achievement of objectives.</td>
<td>Social justice goals achieved as per the distribution of works undertaken in disadvantaged areas relative to the overall volume of public works undertaken and the steady increases each year in total distribution of public works. High quality of public works delivered possibly due to citizen oversight bodies.</td>
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<td><strong>Procedural:</strong> Clear roles and responsibilities; Adequacy/appropriateness of participation opportunities; Clarity of rules for decision-making; Adequate provision of information; and Breadth of inputs considered.</td>
<td>Delegates and citizens’ Council members elected by peers. Clearly prescribed participants’ roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. Involvement of civil society in approving technical plans and overseeing implementation. Meetings held at neighbourhood levels. Targeted information provision. Use of the Quality of Life Indicator as a decision tool. Deliberative processes coupled with ‘on ground’ assessments allowed consideration of the public good beyond self-interest/group interest. Decisions made in public fora. Clear rational and systematic rules for the implementation of projects. Clearly structured processes and mechanisms for deliberation and decision-making. Significant investments in public information. Grass roots inputs into government decision making and planning facilitated by citizen Councils over a series of neighbourhood meetings.</td>
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<td><strong>Transformative:</strong> Commitment to the process; Enhanced capacities for engaged governance;</td>
<td>Participation in thematic deliberations. Enhanced negotiation skills. Increased knowledge of rights, government</td>
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Broader grass roots involvement, network development and resources mobilised; processes and policy matters. Department working across government and sectors. Steadily increasing levels of civil society participation each year.

Contextual factors that are likely to be significant conditions for success in the Porto Alegre case include: the demonstrable political leadership, authority and commitment to a democratisation process and social justice as a political goal; a legislature with weak connections to the process reinforcing the Mayor’s formal autonomy in sponsoring the program; Local Government’s political and fiscal decentralisation allowing total authority over resource allocation; decentralised administration through branch offices allowing direct contact between government and civil society; and substantial pre-existing cultural/social networks and an organised civil society sector.

Worth examining further, however, particularly in terms of future prospects for sustaining the project, is the current connection between the legislature and the program. Legislative members are described as feeling threatened by the program and uncertain of their role. What is the capacity of a quietly disenfranchised legislature to undermine, or at least not work to sustain, the program in the long term? Given the PB program has no constitutional basis, what would happen if the current political regime were to change or to step back from its earlier social justice commitments? It is assumed, however, that the steadily increasing numbers of active civil society participants in the program will act as a legitimising force and safeguard for the program in its current intent.

The PB program is prey to the same constraint that besets many such local governance examples, that is, its failure or lack of opportunity to integrate local planning with regional or higher order systems. Integration provides the local level with strategic reach into external policies and resources that can help address local problems linked to external factors, for example, local employment and its relationship to regional economic development or State-level macro-economic policies.
While seemingly successful in achieving its aims, the Porto Alegre PB is not without its problems. There are the complaints and questions typical of government-civil society engagement, such as, citizens wanting more information than governments are willing to provide or believing the government has a pre-determined agenda and, in turn, government officers viewing citizens as too parochial in outlook. Overall, the program delivers on its goals and appears to demonstrate a coherent internal program logic in that the principle of engagement is enabled by other principles of good governance being in place.

1.4.3 The engagement principle at work in Noosa (Australia) Shire Council’s (NSC) Community Governance Model

Australian Local Governments are politically and fiscally decentralised entities with a revenue raising capacity. Individual Local Governments throughout Australia are innovating in the area of local governance. Noosa Shire Council’s Community Governance Model aims at mobilising the collective resources of the community to identify a community vision and apply the whole range of their resources to the prosperity of the district. The Council describes its role as enabling the contribution of those resources through a governance process that is empowering of communities and citizens, seeks to reconcile the diversity of views and interests in the community and serves as a ‘mentoring and learning’ approach to the best use of resources (Community Board Brief, Noosa Shire Council). The program is sponsored by the Mayor and supported politically by the legislature (in principle) and operationally by the Local Government bureaucracy. Prior to the launch of the Community Governance Model, the Council had undertaken a smaller scale community governance program within the tourism economic development sector. This earlier governance initiative has now been incorporated into the current Community Governance Model.

In essence, the Community Governance Model involves a community visioning process and the development of a number of sectoral (economic, social, environmental and arts/heritage) action plans that identify methods for achieving the district vision. The mechanism put in place to facilitate the production of the vision and plans and the connection between the Council and the broader community is the Community Sector Board. The initial model included four Boards
representing the sectoral interests above although, as noted earlier, the Tourism Board is to be incorporated into the Model. These Boards are each comprised of around nine community representatives, an elected representative and at least one senior Local Government officer. The Boards are guided by a Strategic Reference Group whose membership includes the Mayor, the CEO of the bureaucracy, at least one elected representative and a representative from each of the Sector Boards. The Strategic Reference Group reports to a Council sub-committee responsible for District planning.

The process for constituting Board membership involved a general notice for interested persons to nominate for positions. Council interviewed applicants and selected those they believed could fulfil the terms of the project brief. The Boards had two years in which to undertake consultation in the broader district communities and develop the vision and the sector plans.

The following details are taken from a presentation made by various community representatives in the program.

**Table 3: Engagement principle at work in the NSC Community Governance Model**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Findings (Vasiliauskas et al, 2003)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instrumental:</strong>   Participation contributed to achievement of objectives.</td>
<td>Development of a community vision to 2015 and four community sector (economic, social, environment, arts and heritage) board plans detailing methods for achieving the vision.</td>
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<td>Significant overlaps noted in final plans.</td>
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<td>Council incorporated Sector Boards’ plans into Council’s Planning Scheme and Infrastructure and Service Delivery Plans.</td>
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<td><strong>Procedural:</strong> Clear roles and responsibilities;</td>
<td>Clear project brief to members of Sector Boards outlining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.</td>
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<td>Sector board members recruited from general community although a number were representatives of particular sectors rather than the general community.</td>
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<td>Adequacy/appropriateness of participation opportunities;</td>
<td>Sector Board members developed and implemented their own plans for broad-based</td>
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<td>Clarity of rules for decision-making; and Adequate provision of information.</td>
<td>civil society involvement although appropriateness not formally evaluated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breadth of inputs considered.</td>
<td>Adequacy of two-year time frame.</td>
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<td>Satisfactory provision of data and active support by project manager in data searching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numbers of community members who connected with the process were relatively low.</td>
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**Transformative:**

**Commitment to the process;**

Voluntary pursuit of deliberative processes within and between sector boards. Several board members are developing transition strategies to continue involvement in the implementation phase of the process. General agreement by board members to commission an independent evaluation of the process to date for learning purposes.

**Enhanced capacities for engaged governance;**

The project manager provided by Council to support the Sector Boards played a critical resource and coordination function.

**Broader grass roots involvement, network development and resources mobilised.**

No prescription on the level or nature of grass roots involvement to be achieved by the members of the Sector Boards. Accounts of community involvement achieved but no assessment of community networks or resources mobilised through the process. Representativeness of the members of the Sector Boards indirectly addressed through broader community’s acceptance of the plans produced by the Boards.

The Community Governance Model is soon to be subject to an evaluation at the request of the CEO and the community members involved. The aim is to undertake a reflective review of the process for taking forward any learning into the implementation phase. One of the issues that surfaced regularly throughout the development of plans was the lack of perceived integration between the Sector Boards’ processes despite the shared understanding that the four policy areas are highly interdependent, particularly in the context of the local economy which is based predominantly on tourism and associated recreational pursuits strongly related to the highly
valued natural environment qualities that are actively conserved in the area. Ironically, given the lack of integration between some of the Sector Boards’ activities, some of the groups’ outputs reflected elements of duplication.

While the membership of the Sector Boards included, predominantly, highly educated, professional class individuals and private sector entrepreneurs, accounts indicate that Board members went to great lengths to motivate broad public interest in the development of the plans. As with the PB program above, the Noosa process was not without its relational difficulties. Given the high level of autonomy afforded the Sector Boards in their processes, internal difficulties were worked through at members’ discretion.

In terms of the internal logic of the program, it would appear that the mechanisms provided, processes adopted, resources applied and capacities mobilised generally reflected those characteristics of a good governance program which enabled the exercise to proceed in a reasonably coherent manner.

1.4.4 Summary

The three cases explored differ in terms of the policy tasks involved. For example, the PRSP process as it was generally enacted appeared to confine civil society, and particularly CSO involvement, to the policy analysis task with little opportunity for involvement in policy decision making. Given CSOs did not receive enough information to build an understanding of the policy issues, they experienced a double bind – no knowledge and no opportunity to gain that knowledge. In the PB case, citizens are involved in policy analysis, decision-making and implementation, policy evaluation and policy setting, the latter through the reviews of the previous year’s works and the thematics discussions. These tasks required substantial amounts of information to be provided and, often, specifically targeted to different locality concerns. Because community representatives were involved in decision-making, power was redistributed. Line unit personnel within Local Government needed to collaborate with community representatives to assist in shaping their projects and to work internally in a more integrated manner, primarily with the Mayor’s Planning unit. In the Noosa case, the policy tasks for the Sector Boards were policy setting and analysis while the policy decision task remained with the
Council and CEO. In the next stage, the Sector Boards will be involved in policy implementation and evaluation tasks.

It is worth noting also the prospects for Noosa Shire Council to strategically position its agendas within a higher order sub-regional or regional planning process. The Council can take advantage of the Queensland Government’s regional planning mechanisms and regional administration coordinating mechanism, the Regional Managers’ Forum. A consistent observation of local governance initiatives is that their effectiveness in delivering on local priorities depends, in part, on their integration with higher order planning processes that impact on the local level.

Interesting differences between the two local government programs include: the heavily prescribed process in the Porto Alegre case compared to the highly autonomous process in the Noosa case; the propensity for participants in the Porto Alegre example to invest their energies in the public works stream in preference to the thematics (social policy) stream compared to the Noosa community representatives who were primarily involved in visioning and strategic planning around sustainable futures and community well being; and the relative richness of social networks and organised community groups in the Porto Alegre context compared to Noosa.

What were the impacts of engagement on the administration system itself? Administrative reform is one of the objectives of the PB process so one would expect that changes would occur in that system. Some of these effects can be summarised as follows although it is not proposed as a definitive list:

**Table 4: Administration implications of government-civil society engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Task and process characteristics</th>
<th>Risk level involved</th>
<th>Impacts on administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Restricted policy task involvement. No sharing of decisions. Little information provision. CSOs act as civil society intermediary and undertake participation activities. Possible Government perception of low task interdependencies between Government and civil society.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Administration impacts are not well known or reported but given claims that PRSP formulation was a ‘black box’ process, it is unlikely that administration pursued change as a consequence of civil society engagement. Changes are more likely to be a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 Chan ges are more likel...
Low public accountability.  

| NSC | Policy task involvement moderate. Small scale population involved. Moderate task interdependencies between local government and Sector Boards. High information demands met through project manager role. Mayor’s office involvement moderate. CEO’s involvement high. Low demand for public scrutiny. | Low to medium | Project management outsourced. Some information provision by local government. Time investments by elected representatives and Government officers who participated on committees. Some public relations activities by local government. |

It is obvious in the PB case that the scope for administrative reforms is not insignificant compared to the PRSP and NSC cases. Of interest is that in the PB case, citizens are actively involved in decision-making processes which puts high demands on government for information provision, formalised, transparent and accountable decision-making protocols and integrated business systems. If Governments promote and commit to engaged governance as the way it does its “business” needs to be at the heart of the way it does ‘business’ then it is likely that there will need to be institutional and organisational adjustments to give effect to this goal, in other words, a regulatory framework for enabling engaged governance.
1.5 Conclusion

The concept of Engaged Governance is a useful political and strategic device as it locates government-civil society engagement at the centre of a value-driven governance system in which the enactment of each of the governance principles enables (moderates) the enactment of the others. The health of an Engaged Governance system is dependent on attention to all principles as, by implication, inattention to some (e.g. lack of accountability to the people) will undermine achievement of others (e.g. legitimacy and fairness).

The mechanism (or task) through which government-civil society engagement takes place is the government policy cycle. That mechanism is, in turn, embedded in a system of supportive mechanisms (e.g. organisational structures, processes, practices and capabilities). The outcome of a governance program is the achievement of government objectives (whether they be substantive policy outcomes and/or good governance outcomes).

Viewing government-civil society engagement as having a program logic enables us to talk about and examine the conditions (context and moderating variables) under which engagement is enabled or hindered. It enables us to frame research questions and shape interventions into the system to enhance or mitigate certain conditions predisposing the system towards greater effectiveness.

This approach is consistent with the system description of governance provided by the UNDP (1997), that is as “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a nation’s affairs. It is the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences.” (p.9). How authority is exercised, what mechanisms and processes are seen to be legitimate from the point of view of the different participants’ and which citizens and groups will access these mechanisms and processes are normative questions that relate to, respectively, questions around the distribution of power, the exercise of power and the empowerment of participants.
2 A framework for institutionalising Engaged Governance

The Engaged Governance framework proposed below can be applied at any decision-making scale (State, regional, local) within the governance system consistent with the notion that all systems are hierarchically embedded, have their own internal logic and need to account for boundary interdependencies and contextual factors. Similar to Jessop’s (1998) notion of a meta-governance concept, the Engaged Governance framework proposes a way of looking at a governance system that draws on three dimensions of institutionalism as follows:

- a normative dimension that describes ideals, values and ethical practice in terms of universal and societal governance principles;

- a regulative dimension that refers to the systems for organising behaviour and resources around development and governance goals; and

- a re-generative dimension that sees governance as a system that shapes attitudes, influences perceptions and guides behaviour, which, in turn, contributes to culture-making, capacity building and citizenship.

2.1 The Engaged Governance framework

The Engaged Governance framework can be described as follows:

(i) A normative dimension that provides the institutional basis for government-civil society engagement and includes:

a. A shared political vision of substantive goals that specifies the object(s) of governance (Direction);

b. A shared vision of the political rights of sectors and actors within the governance system (Legitimacy and Voice);
c. A shared understanding of contextual (political, cultural, social economic, environmental) factors that can explain why certain qualities are valued over others and why, sometimes, certain qualities are traded off (Direction); and

d. A set of legitimising conditions for establishing the nature of desirable government-civil society engagement, for example, policy frameworks and supportive policies, guidelines and performance indicators (procedural and transformative) that are embedded in government performance management systems (Accountability).

(ii) A regulative dimension that serves as the institutional framework for organising systems around the core principle of a citizen’s right to participate and other governance principles such as Performance and Accountability:

a. A policy cycle that can be understood as a vertically and horizontally distributed task network that can be described in terms of policy goals, task interdependencies (including political connections), accountabilities, performance standards and management systems;

b. The roles and responsibilities for government and non-government sectors and actors within the task network at any point in time;

c. Mechanisms, processes, practices that enable government-civil society engagement throughout the policy cycle; and

d. Resources (human, financial and informational) that will need to be applied by the institution to government-civil society engagement around policy tasks.

(iii) A regenerative level that is focused, primarily on capacity development, also citizenship.

a. Capacity development strategies for the whole governance system focusing on, for example, knowledge and skill capabilities of the various sectors and actors to access the political opportunity structures within the policy cycle.
This framework provides a map for institutional development efforts aimed at incremental strengthening of the governance system. It also describes a ‘program logic’ (Dahler-Larsen, 2001) that affords description, analysis and a template for formulating change programs.

The Engaged Governance approach has some similarities with, but differs in important ways from, other governance concepts that include or allow for government-civil society engagement. Particular comparisons of interest include the network governance approach and the concept of deliberative democracy.

2.2 Network governance

Two central features of network governance are the notions of interdependency and collaboration for mutual benefit. Sectors and actors (state, market and civil society) come together in the policy cycle through joint interest in a specific activity or outcome that no one party can address without the other parties’ contributions (Agranoff, 2001 p. 676). At the same time, none of the parties has the power to determine the strategies of each other and decisions about direction and management of operations is by negotiation.

The much touted-advantage of networks is the flexibility they provide for partnering for mutual advantage. In essence, networks are catalysed by, and sustained on the basis of, informal and non-binding opportunism. Thus, if networks cease to provide advantage or perform as desired, partners/resources get rearranged or shifted. The relevance of the rent-seeking concept is not totally out of place when describing behaviour in networks, even public management behaviour.

An interesting case that highlights the problems of opportunistic partnering is actually an example of, supposedly, associative governance in Ontario, Canada. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the Ontario Government sought to address policy issues around labour market, diversified quality production and industrial matters through innovative partnership structures involving government, labour and business. After 10 years and limited policy achievements through these arrangements, the experiment was terminated. Bradford (1998) argues the failure could be attributed to: the sector representative groups not being inclusive of their membership and lacking a coherent policy position; limited trust between the sector groups and limited
history of working together; and a political culture that did not value decentralised policy initiatives and social partnerships. Of particular interest, though, is the asymmetrical power relationship that favoured business in the partnership and the sector’s unwillingness to share power responsibly with the other sectors as well as assume equitable concessions (Bradford, 1998).

The example demonstrates how opportunistic investment in partnerships tends to be speculative in nature and is unlikely to encourage trust and build social capital within a system, and partners may be unwilling to negotiate for mutual benefits. Although there may be strong incentives for operating in networked partnerships, policy processes in networks are unpredictable and complex as demonstrated in the Ontario case. Network governance is not suited to development contexts that require long-term strategic and operational commitment, irrespective of conflict.

However, network governance does have a place particularly in the area of policy advocacy and where government may be seeking to build coalitions for short-term benefits. Networks may add value in policy setting and analysis where relationships between network partners are sufficiently formalised. The implication for the engaged governance framework is that these kinds of opportunistic partnership arrangements can be integrated analytically into the task network so that their interrelationships with other parts of the task network can be identified and the scale of their impacts (risks) can be anticipated. An example of impact would be the extent to which they may jeopardise the enactment of governance principles (for example, lack of transparency because of claims that information is commercial in confidence) and undermine the institutional basis for government-civil society engagement.

### 2.3 Deliberative democracy

Deliberative democracy refers to informed dialogue and negotiation around matters of policy. The assumption is that reasoned people choose “the most empirically valid and logical course” in order that “a community (or society) may establish its normative guidance of conduct and its policies” (Etzioni, 1996 p. 97). Etzioni (1996) contends that deliberation is elusive because, among other things, information is always insufficient, participants are either representatives of particular sub-groups or individuals whose thinking and choices largely reflect their membership
in various groups and sub-communities, and the issues communities face are, to a significant extent, normative and not empirical or logical but require an appeal to values. However, these limitations do not preclude participants from experiencing educative benefits through the process as they come to appreciate the value-laden nature of policy issues as well as an enhanced sense of social responsibility (Woodward, 2000; Cooke, 2000).

Queensland’s (Australia) Department of Natural Resources and Mines has piloted a form of deliberative democracy in a community-based regional resource use planning exercise to determine the sustainable use of natural resources. The model that was piloted has three key elements:

- supporting individuals, communities and sectors in regions to develop their own planning and management capacity;
- building stronger institutional arrangements that facilitate negotiation between these interests; and
- facilitating better understanding of the social, economic and biophysical processes within regions (Bellamy and Dale, 2000).

The process involved structured arrangements for sectors to consider the science and local knowledge around regional resource use planning while supported by a facilitator, web-based information systems and decision support tools and a research capacity. The rigorous evaluation demonstrated “significant on-ground improvements in the region’s planning system as well as delivering change in on-ground natural resource use and regional infrastructure” (Bellamy and Dale, 2000, p. ix).

Locating deliberative processes within a specific task network enables an informed analysis of roles, relationships and likely resource implications including information demands and knowledge management strategies. Further, these quite intense processes require a particular skills repertoire. The purpose and form of deliberative processes are consistent with the principles of engaged governance and may actually enhance experiences of participation and strengthen democracy (Woodward, 2000).
2.4 Summary

Because the engaged government framework proposes a conceptual and methodological tool that has normative, descriptive and analytic components, it can provide a means to (i) explore the value basis of other modes of governance, (ii) describe those modes in terms of their function within the policy cycle and their limitations and (iii) analyse the impacts of various modes on the wider engaged governance system.

In some respects, each exploration of an alternative concept affords a test of the robustness of the Engaged Governance framework as a meta-concept able to account for the political, administrative and social implications of various forms of government-civil society engagement. Consistent with its claim to provide a ‘pilot’ tool for charting institutional development, the framework needs to be open to improvement itself.
3 Engaged Governance: An integrative framework

In addition to providing a tool for understanding Engaged Governance, the Engaged Governance framework must be able to provide comment on the various components of engagement practice and their contribution to the effectiveness of the governance system. For example, are there good arguments for avoiding representative engagement with the community? What are the implications of actions that favour the poor disproportionately within a governance system? Does a program live up to good governance principles?

3.1 Participation: Representation and inclusion

Most good governance conceptions promote an inclusive approach to engaging with sectors and actors. Inclusiveness means any citizen, irrespective of political, social, economic or cultural characteristics, or organised interest group can be involved (Barnes, 2000). In some instances, government officers take such a literal interpretation of inclusiveness that considerable efforts are made to engage organised ‘special interest’ groups, often to the almost total exclusion of ‘ordinary people’ (Bickerstaff, K., Tolley, R. and Walker, G., 2002).

Experience indicates, however, that there is almost always an interested, active, informed minority and a large, silent majority. While it should not be assumed that it is lack of capacity that is contributing to lack of involvement, after all some people are not politically inclined, the lack of capacity to act effectively does reduce the quality of governance regardless of the degree of organisation in civil society (Wilson and Guajardo, 2000). Weakly organised civil societies are less likely to take advantage of engagement opportunities, and thus express their needs, when they do not have a compelling connection to an issue or place or collective notions of the ‘good society’. Weakly organised civil societies are also less likely to hold government accountable.

Some prefer to leave it to others to act on their behalf as they do not wish to incur the transaction costs that involvement entails. However, participation through representation (or by deferring to a more organised entity who shares the same intent) raises a host of questions relating to legitimacy of representation (Raco and Flint, 2001). Worth noting however is the enormous trust...
and confidence that many members of the general public place in some of the high profile international advocacy organisations (Mowbray, 2003).

Increasingly, in both developing and developed countries, institutional agents are looking to NGOs and CSOs to assist in gaining strategic reach into communities or the grass roots. Some Governments prefer to mainstream particular civil society partnerships that are considered more ‘reliable’ (predictable, manageable?) although there are inevitable questions about the group’s capacity to maintain independence and avoid the costs of professionalisation and bureaucratisation (Nowland-Foreman, 1998, Shortall, 2002). Mainstreaming particular community structures for ongoing collaboration offers efficiencies and builds strategic capacity but may raise concerns about capture versus inclusiveness and the representativeness of non-elected community members (Raco and Flint, 2001; Agranoff and McGuire, 2001b; Cebulla, 2000).

These decisions would need to be taken in the context of the extent to which engaged governance principles are upheld or enhanced. As well, mainstreaming certain CSOs may have a positive knowledge enhancing effect in the system.

3.2 People-centred policy

People-centred policy pushes concepts and issues that are based in political and social science into administrative focus. For example, citizens’ values, aspirations and capacities need to be placed centre-stage with at least equal consideration as more orthodox ‘technical’ streams of information. This enlarged focus has the potential to create a tension for public service administrators who adhere to managerialist values under the rubric of “new public management”, a mode much closer to the modern liberal ideal of value-neutrality in government and an escape from politics (Bagby and Franke, 2001).

However, people-centred policy relies on an overarching political commitment to address community aspirations, needs and benefits as well as sustainable human development. Such overarching goals imply a value stance at the centre of a Government’s agenda and direct public service administrators to “help citizens articulate and meet their shared interests” (Denhardt and
Denhardt, 2000). In both developing and developed nations, there is a growing recognition, particularly in local governance innovations, that development is more successful if it views people as both the owners of their problems and their solutions.

Administrators often have the authority to confer a place at the decision making table and decide what information should be considered and how it is to be considered. These are not value-neutral activities but portents of a “New Public Service” where the administrator has an enabling rather than controlling or steering role (Denhardt et al, 2000). A value position entirely consistent with the Engaged Governance approach.

3.3 Pro-poor policy

A pro-poor policy orientation is essentially affirmative action by Governments that is “explicitly biased in favour of the poor so that they benefit more than proportionately relative to the non-poor” (Deolalikar, Brillantes, Gaiha, Pernia and Racelis, 2002 p.8). To be effective, pro-poor policy needs to address the social, economic and political marginalisation that typically characterises the poor and to do so over the long-term. Taken together, the principles of an engaged governance framework provide a rationale, thus legitimacy, for pursuing socially just services to the poor.

Participation of the poor in poverty analyses and opportunities for the poor to express their needs and identify existing strengths and resources are considered key to orienting Governments to act in favour of the poor. As well, discussions around pro-poor policies tend to highlight decentralisation of decision-making as critical to understanding the genesis of poverty although the embedded nature of poverty requires both local, regional and national strategies.

It is notoriously difficult to sustain poverty reduction strategies while they are framed as initiatives that cut across mainstream political, administrative and economic regimes. To be effective, pro-poor efforts to address the complex nature of poverty need to be mainstreamed on a number of levels, for example: macro-economic and social policy formulation through linking upstream to mega-dialogues around poverty and multi-sectoral inputs into macro-economic
policy and downstream to resource allocation and monitoring of service delivery and local poverty reduction impacts.

Elements of an Engaged Governance framework that specifically support pro-poor policy orientations include: (i) a political vision of social justice and community development (consistent with good governance); (ii) a public expenditure management framework that incorporates social justice and community development goals and associated macro- and local-level performance indicators; (iii) a policy commitment to pursuing participative processes throughout the public policy formulation and delivery cycle at both the macro policy and local priority and service delivery levels; and (iv) capacity building investments either through mobilising existing community service organisations to work with the poor to participate and/or directly providing the poor with information and opportunities for capability building.

3.4 Partnership

There are myriad forms of public-private or public-civil society partnerships forged to address area-based policy implementation (e.g. neighbourhood renewal), thematic policy formulation (e.g. employment policy) or specific service delivery (e.g. construction, operation and/or maintenance of specific infrastructure). In essence, government-initiated partnerships are intended to harness ‘local’ and/or ‘expert’ knowledge, experience and skills to get best value in the public interest (Shortall, 2002).

Area or community-based partnerships. Area or community-based partnerships are considered to be mechanisms for participation, dialogue, consensus building and achieving inclusiveness through representation of various sectors (civil and private) and the benefits of subsidiarity, that is, local solutions for local problems. In the UK, a number of central government initiatives in the area of neighbourhood renewal work through grants to local government, which are tied to the development of partnerships with local community structures (e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships or LSP). The partnership framework is intended to create more efficient, inclusive, and transparent local governance that brings together the various sectors to identify community priorities and needs, and work with local people to identify/mobilise appropriate resources (Geddes, 2003)
Representation is an issue in area-based partnerships. Often partnerships are initiated by government/statutory organisations and do not emerge from the grassroots. While usually including a mixture of elected representatives, the private sector and the voluntary sector, their make-up is pre-determined. In the UK LSP example, civil society representatives tend to reflect the local elite including business interests but rarely labour interests. Partnerships tend to display a consensual, centrist politics with little evidence of local innovation and an apparent greater legitimacy afforded business interests than before (Geddes, 2003). Election by peers to determine representatives from community-based groups and the voluntary sector enhances the legitimacy of civil society representation at the local level (Shortall, 2002).

Often Local Government does not have the capacity to support and work with these strategic community groups and fails to provide them with the strategic reach they require to be effective (Geddes, 2003). Other administrative obstacles to the effective performance of such partnerships include: public service routines (e.g. separate networks, weak cross-fertilising, proliferation and duplication of services); low legitimacy of the partnership in decision-making; weak accountability on partnership performance; and limited discretion to significantly adapt policies to local conditions (Geddes, 2003).

Policy partnerships. Policy partnerships tend to relate to labour and industry policy and involve representative labour groups and business groups and government. The contribution of policy-focused multi-sectoral partnerships on policy outcomes is uncertain (OECD, 2001c). However, long-term viability of such partnerships depends on (i) coherent organisation within the sectors through mobilisation and representation; (ii) an existing culture of mutual respect and cooperation between parties; and (iii) political safeguards for inclusiveness and power-sharing amongst parties (Bradford, 1998).

It is possible for partnerships forged across national boundaries (e.g. trade agreements, shared infrastructure) to compete with local level priorities (e.g. natural resource management) and local socio-economic institutions (e.g. water rights and traditional lands). It is only by reference to the strategic priorities and programming at a regional/local scale that such impacts can be gauged. What will be the obligations of any partnership for the impacts they have development directions
and outcomes at the different levels of governance systems? Obligations are determined through accountability structures, both government to the community and partner to government.

Partnerships are critical for the enactment of engaged governance with the potential for providing long-term collaboration between government and civil society. The quality of partnerships and their effectiveness from an engaged governance perspective is likely to be substantially enhanced if they are supported by administrative rationales that map their role and function in the mainstream policy task network, their responsibilities and accountabilities are formalised within mainstream public administration performance management systems and their capacities for the work of the partnership are continually monitored and addressed.

3.5 Results-based management

The efficacy of a results-based management approach hinges critically on: (i) the link between interim results/outputs and macro level outcomes sought by Government on behalf of its various communities and (ii) the mechanisms through which interim results are reflected upon by both Government and civil society for the purposes of improvements/adjustments. The monitoring of indicators can/should serve as a mechanism for stimulating dialogue and further policy agenda setting.

However, as engagement practice is a centrepiece of engaged governance then a results-based management system needs to provide performance feedback on this dimension. The development of good quality, comprehensive but timely indicators is a priority so that improvement efforts in the governance system can account for the interaction between governance process qualities and governance outputs. Good quality interim measures along the principles of governance are as much a priority as quality interim measures of productivity and efficiencies.

3.6 Conclusion

A systemic governance framework must be able to provide some explanatory power when considering the value of an innovation, a choice of investments in the governance system, the limits or risks of certain actions or decisions or relationships within the wider system. The
robustness of the Engaged Governance framework to provide these functions will increase as it incorporates new concepts and field-tests them.
4 Applying the Engaged Governance Framework

In this section, the Engaged Governance framework is applied to three country cases to explore its potential utility as:

(i) a descriptive tool for mapping contextual conditions which foster or hinder government-civil society engagement and mechanisms for achieving Engaged Governance; and

(ii) an analytical tool that connects the above conditions and mechanisms with results and outcome performance measures.

In this paper, a preliminary application of the framework to the first task is presented. The resulting application is contained in Appendix 1. The details listed are not exhaustive merely a demonstration of how the framework might be used to empirically map governance systems and their performance thus affording the basis for comparing and contrasting systems and determining the conditions that shape the various forms that engaged governance might take.

A quick scan can indicate where investments in institutional development efforts may have occurred and further analysis of performance would indicate where the strengths may be in the system and where future efforts can be directed. Further elaboration would allow specific hypotheses to be developed. As an example using the Thailand case, there may be interest in determining how a certain intervention into the governance system (e.g. the introduction of the Provincial Governor CEO position) might in conjunction with other conditions (e.g. completion of the Executive Development Training program, existing provincial NGO and CSO networks) lead to greater mobilisation of civil society resources in one province and not in another.

Of course, to examine the strength of the system in enabling the achievement of government objectives, greater specification of certain variables would be required and a causal pathway established to performance measures. Institutional processes are far more dynamic than this table can show and, potentially, can be described as a number of complex, interactive pathways.
The value of the developing framework would be in its capacity for mapping these pathways and exploring them empirically.

What is obvious is that the three country cases depicted here have embarked on institution-wide development to embed, from the political level through to the practice level, the values and principles of government-civil society engagement. The programs are each incremental and have chosen different starting points. For example, it would appear that Queensland’s and Thailand’s efforts are focused on administrative systems, particularly performance management systems, and the development of ‘tools’ of engagement. Less effort is being expended in the Queensland and the Thailand contexts in elaborating the political vision and driving it through the various political and social institutions, as is the case in Rwanda where a rich political economy is being encouraged and built on the strengths and resilience of Rwandan culture. Building the engagement culture in Queensland has been delegated to a functional unit within the Premier’s department and in Thailand to the Public Sector Development Commission. It is questionable whether an administrative unit can, without political leadership and commitment, build what is essentially a political vision. The relationship between the strategies the different countries have taken and the development of citizenship, civil society networks, policy communities and the mobilisation of civil society resources are relationships worthy of investigation and could be mapped and analysed with more refined data sets than provided here.

At the least, the framework certainly offers potential for opening up a strategic conversation about what has been established in each country’s Engaged Governance systems, what the rationale is for any particular element or set of elements and how it is expected to interact with and support other elements. These conversations are also the basis for developing some very promising learning communities.
5 Some impacts of “Engaged Governance” on public policy/programmes

One of the more tangible outcomes from engaged governance practice is the development of expectations among actively participating civil society sectors and actors that they will be engaged more often and in more meaningful ways. The development of the capacity for citizenship is an interesting phenomenon. It is not pervasive and not well understood. It is, arguably, of significant public good. What are the best pathways to developing this capacity by design and what are the best investments that can be made in a governance system to sustain or strengthen existing stocks of citizenship? I would like to explore some of these ideas here as a last point as the issue certainly has relevance for what is/should be of concern within public policy and what resources within a public programme should be invested in areas of capacity strengthening.

Notions of citizenship often become conflated with narrow conceptions of ‘mutual or reciprocal obligation’ and ‘responsible citizenship’, which are undoubtedly aspects of citizenship. However, citizenship is also about developing individual and group capacity for participation in public life which, in turn, depends on (a) opportunities for participation and (b) knowledge of the issue(s) at hand and their implications in terms of the public good. To be able to effect some measure of control over how one’s life is defined and one’s experiences shaped is to become empowered through the capacity to act. From a psychological perspective, feelings of personal efficacy are significant determinants of mental and physical well-being, certainly a public good.

5.1 Developing the capacity for citizenship

A beginning point in developing civic equality according to Green (1985) is for the state not to appropriate activities that provide opportunities for communities and citizens to act and, in fact, to return some functions to communities so that they may be regenerated. Green mentions the case of Denmark where communities can decide how to spend their educational budgets within state guidelines. Etzioni (1996) discusses community building interventions such as strengthening local institutions that figure strongly in identity-making. Rwanda’s commitment to
strengthening traditions of involvement in public projects, mutual assistance and support are about the capacity to act, identity and community building.

Some extremely interesting examples of the development of citizenship capacity have occurred in remote rural areas in Queensland where individuals who have found themselves locked into economically depressed industries with few exit choices have decided to act collectively to do something about local land degradation, non-productive property sizes and a declining local rural economy. From small beginnings in 1994, a group of like-minded people organised, advocated, applied for grants and over the period of 4-5 years attracted up to $6million in devolved government grants to address rural readjustment issues. The group incorporated (the Desert Uplands Build-Up Committee), built an administrative capacity, and embarked on projects from which significant public goods flowed such as the development of Geographic Information Systems, Carrying Capacity studies, diversification trials, establishment of a resource centre, on ground nature conservation programs, a regional cultural festival, a feasibility study for a native timber business to name a few. Taken together, these projects had significant triple bottom line impacts in the local/regional area and contributed substantially to the capacity of State government agencies in the region to provide public services. The irony is, that with the exception of the Department of Natural Resources, no State government departments sought to work in an innovative manner to collectivise funds and invest in the group’s work despite benefiting from the group’s products.

Governments need to think strategically about how to invest in their regions to enhance the capacity of civil society’s sectors and actors to address local issues of concern. In doing so, Governments need to avoid pump priming initiatives where grants are devolved to groups that coalesce around funding opportunities and, instead, favour investment in the enduring coalitions and networks of sectors and actors in ways that address long term capability development in the local area. Once again, Rwanda offers fine examples of committed partnerships for development over the long term.

Governments need to investigate the potential for collectivising resources to invest in their local/regional systems. There is a pervasive risk aversion and/or apathy to working in these new
ways. Central agencies need to develop incentives that motivate public administrators to innovate in their public programmes by annexing a certain percentage for capacity investments. The Participatory Budgeting process achieves just that on two levels: (i) by empowering citizens to act in their own lives; and (ii) enhancing the distribution of public goods in such a way as to make positive, disproportionate investments in those with least capacity to act. These are inversions of traditional spending priorities (as described in Porto Alegre) and do require public administrators to work in new ways and see investment opportunities in the most unlikely places.

The contribution of an Engaged Governance approach to encouraging public service administrators to invest in their communities is that it provides a governance logic for resolving management questions about capacity building. For example, it would enable the public service administrator to identify how investments in engagement infrastructure can actually deliver on the portfolio’s and Government’s development policy. However, a managerial analysis alone is not sufficient to encourage innovation, as the Desert Uplands Build-Up Committee case showed. It is the link to a political vision for community that pulls the Engaged Governance system together. Central agencies must provide the legitimacy for investments in capacity building.

5.2 Democratisation of information for knowledge-building

A major strategy for building capability for participating in a governance system is knowledge building. Government-civil society engagement as an example of democracy in action is enhanced by an informed citizenry and community learning about economic, social and administrative issues that affect their well being. While government learning is also critical to the quality of the governance system (and one of the prime catalysts for engaged governance approaches), space here does not allow a discussion of knowledge building and management in Government (see OECD 2001b, policy brief PUMA/HRM).

The quality of information brought to bear in an engagement process will determine the benefits of the process for participants but it is the quality of the engagement process that will determine whether information is transformed into knowledge. There is more likelihood that both government and non-government sectors and actors will build greater understanding and knowledge of each others’ needs, aspirations, resources and limitations, as well as options for
resolving policy challenges, where they are engaged in well planned and resourced and monitored engagement processes. Further, some engagement processes (e.g. planning partnerships, deliberative processes) have the potential for participants to develop a strategic awareness of local and regional issues and an understanding of the technical considerations.

Knowledge has been described as a public good. Thus, the adequacy of information provision and the quality of the engagement process can make or break a public program (as seen in the PRSP case discussed earlier). The public administrator is considered to be an appropriate active agent for promoting the production, use and transfer of information for knowledge building (OECD, 2001b). Connecting political, administrative and civil society participants throughout the policy cycle is likely to involve the production and transfer of information of various types, such as:

- Strategic knowledge;
- Public concerns and priorities;
- Scientific and technical knowledge;
- Evaluations;
- Performance data (Mulgan cited in OECD, 2001b, p. 24)

Information needs should be considered in conjunction with descriptions of the policy task and how the task network is distributed. In this way, questions of who needs what information when and in what format can be addressed. Further, where community is engaged in technical policy discussions, Government needs to provide support (either from within or through CSOs/NGOs) to build the knowledge base of the civil society sectors and actors involved. The Noosa Shire Council’s investment in a project manager for their Community Governance Model was undoubtedly of major benefit to the system given her assistance to the Boards in building up a comprehensive data set for the district on all manner of economic, demographic and social statistics. These data sets were mined extensively by the Boards in the development of their methods for achieving a district vision.
6 Conclusion

This paper has proposed a means of locating government-civil society engagement within a broader context of institutional values and arrangements. It is argued that the effectiveness of an engaged governance approach is dependent on attention to political vision, expanding the opportunity structure for civil society involvement across the policy cycle, building the kinds of organisational arrangements that support civil society involvement and investing in citizen capabilities for acting in their own lives.

The framework presented here describes a conceptual and methodological map for investigating elements of an engaged governance system and framing questions that tell us more about the way a public administration governance institution functions. Ultimately, the goal is to make the system a more reflective one in the interests of strengthening it.
References


