Beyond the rhetoric of community-based approaches to CSR and in the management of National Parks as tourist destinations.

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Abstract

In the context of National Parks and their management as tourist destinations, strategies for the area-wide design of projects focussing upon Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are essential and frequently result in tri-sector partnerships. These are in most cases led by the public sector together with representatives of tourism SMEs (TSMEs) and local residents. Participatory forums recognise that through a community's engagement, strategies can be designed locally and by means of public consultations, can be informed by the wider community's identification of their priorities and needs, information which is critical to the success of these initiatives.

This practice of collaboration is endorsed, yet is complex. Partnerships and consultations require institutions' adherence to governance principles and equally, a willing civic community, building on its inherent social capital. However, in reality the community's participation is commonly reported to be the engagement of the typical few and can never be assumed. Degrees of disengagement question the value of prescriptive policies and best practices that assume community engagement and a commonly recognised rhetoric is highlighted.

Research has generally focussed upon corporate dimensions of CSR whereas analyses of the public's social and indeed, civic responsibilities have primarily concentrated on understanding reasons for community engagement in the general socio-political context. Limited reviews exist specific to the protected area context and even fewer of these are based in the western context. This paper contributes to addressing these voids. Key findings from research conducted in a UK National Park are presented, based on an evaluation of the governance practiced and the level of social capital attained. Reasons are identified for both community engagement *and* disengagement in decision-making processes which form part of area-wide strategies. Best practices, policies and collective forms of networks and partnerships are questioned as also is the feasibility of attaining wider community engagement given the current UK Government regime. Recommendations for further enquiries on the practice of government with governance and on alternative forms of engagement in the protected area context are encouraged.

Key words: governance, social capital, CSR, local decision-making, reasons for engagement and disengagement, best practice, wider community, tourism destination management.

Introduction

National Parks are one of the most identifiable forms of protected areas with clear objectives of biodiversity conservation. Equally, the National Park Authority (NPA) has a key purpose to ensure that at a strategic level, outdoor recreation and tourism operate in as sustainable way as possible; ensuring that tourism operations function within environmental limits whilst maximising its social and economic benefits for local residents and business communities. The management of these areas has therefore become widely recognised as an integral component of sustainable development which is often supported by the prevailing political institutions.

The actions required to achieve a sustainable yield from tourism, acknowledge that no forms of tourism are without environmental impact or negative consequences for local communities. However, through a wide, strategic approach to destination management, collaboration with public authorities and in consultation with the wider community, TSMEs can recognise their corporate responsibilities (CR) by providing for low-impact development which is conducive to the National Park's environment and is equally integrated into the social and economic life of the wider community in accordance with their priorities and needs (Lyons 2006; Lyons Inquiry 2007). How successful this strategy is in increasing and enhancing CR objectives depends largely on how well it is planned, managed and how well the wider community is involved in decisions to be taken. For this strategy to succeed, communication amongst the parties is essential, through which, it is hoped that ultimately a greater community awareness and appreciation of the value of protected areas will be encouraged which will support the future development of the National Park concept (Phillips 2001).

However, wider community engagement is challenging to attain, reliant on a government context that genuinely aspires to consult with its citizens, on 'good' governance and on a motivated and able community willing to engage. Moreover, environmental imperatives statutorily take precedence; as such, key questions arise concerning just how much influence the wider community has upon decisions taken. Degrees of efficacy have been identified as critical as to whether or not community engagement takes place in decision-making processes in the general socio-political context (Parry et al. 1992; Lyons 2006; Vetter 2007). In this context, a number of studies have demonstrated that less rather than more participation is occurring (Mulvey 2003; IPPR 2004; Lyons 2006; White 2006) although in terms of the range of engagement and disengagement evaluated, caution in interpreting the findings is necessary. Studies evaluating the wider community's views are rare (H.O. 2004) and those that are available tend to focus on formal political involvement (Burton 2003). Nothing has as yet been demonstrated that specifically supports the growing discussions on protected area governance, particularly in a western context, and very little is known of wider community engagement, and especially of disengagement, in these settings.

Relevant texts report or infer that engagement is poor and that much needs to be done if the sustainability agenda is to be achieved (IUCN 2003 a, b & c; Parker & Selman 1999; Lockwood & Kothari 2006). This view, *if* founded has numerous implications. These include institutions' reliance on guiding CR activities towards local prioritisations and needs; and ultimately, on protecting the natural capital and common resource pool of the area (IUCN 2006); which is considered critical in terms of both supporting a thriving tourist economy in the Park while avoiding Hardin's tragic end to the Commons.

Recent research in a UK National Park shows that degrees of community engagement and disengagement are evident and question the plethora of prescriptive policies, texts and best practices that aim for increasing community engagement and especially of those who are classed as the hard to reach. This paper contributes to addressing the void in protected area research by presenting reasons for wider community engagement and disengagement in decision-making processes for area-wide strategic plans in National Parks. Firstly, community engagement as a concept is examined. Subsequently, the key findings from research in a UK National Park are presented in consideration of best practice principles and of statutory demands. Finally, recommendations are made for encouraging wider community engagement.

Examining community engagement

Defining community engagement in itself is not straightforward. Firstly, there are various interpretations of the concept of community yet it is generally considered a positive, abstract concept representing interactions amongst people (Field 2008). A sense of collective unity, place and belief is conveyed through Tonnie's views of *Gemeinschaft* (Harris on Tonnies 2001) envisaged pragmatically by Putnam (1993) and Schuler (1996) to result in civic action of a collective format in the context of democratic governmental regimes.

The importance of this engagement is clearer and notably so since its encouragement through the Rio Earth Summit (1992), the emergence of Agenda 21 and a focus on social, economic and environmental progress and development (Speth 1997); all of which '…demand more inclusive forms of action, which bring the public to the fore…' (Stoker 2004 p10). This impetus for community engagement has meant that in stark contrast with previous 'top-down' working '**for** the people' development paradigms, that these have been replaced with 'bottom-up' approaches, where the focus is on development '**by**' the people (Hyden & Court 2002: Wahab & Pigram 1997).

Hence, engagement opportunities with the public and private sectors, access to information, and an equitable level of influence on decisions taken, all need to be provided to a community. In so doing, their views on their local needs and priorities can be asserted rather than, as in the past, be the recipients of '…predict and provide culture(s)…' (Weldon 2004 p23).

Key to articulating these priorities are communications with the public and private sectors in partnerships or through consultations. In so doing, the community's views on shaping strategies, inclusive of CR objectives that are truly designed to meet community priorities and needs, are developed from which, the community's value of the intrinsic and extrinsic qualities of the National Park is argued to be encouraged (Farvar 2002). This valuation process is considered critical. Increasingly, with decreasing public funds and services '…more for less…' is charged of public services (Cameron 2010); as equally could be said of the Big Society. Moreover, external challenges not least from socio-cultural and additional economic and political contexts are challenging the intrinsic values of these areas in favour of business decisions (Phillips 2001). As such, protected areas have needed to diversify '…to demonstrate their economic value to the wider community' (Dudley et al. 1999 p8). Without this, Phillips (2001) forecast that public support for protected areas will decrease, the political and financial support needed will also at the least weaken and ultimately, the very future of the protected area concept itself could be contested (Farvar 2002).

Consequently, community engagement has become an all-encompassing concern with projects, programmes, policies and with politics, and is considered **the** mechanism for '…getting this politics right' (Hyden & Court 2002 p5). This aim requires a socio-cultural context which encourages a civic community (Grootaert & Van Bastelear 2002; Putnam 1993) to participate through features of social capital. Yet equally, an enabling political environment is essential, emphasising the governmental context in which governance, as the institutional driver for community engagement, is practiced (Dorey 2005) and through which decisions taken in the name of the community can be legitimised (Beausang 2002).

While a democratic approach is critiqued (Santiso 2001), it is at the same time advocated with the caveat that development '…is the product of what people decide to do to improve their livelihoods…' (Hyden & Court 2002 p5). These authors (2002 p24) also emphasise a rights based approach through engagement as having many advantages not least of shifting the '…focus from government to citizen' and as a result, through engaging local communities, '…the pursuit of sustainability…', critical to achieve in the National Park, is progressed (IUCN 2003 a-c; Warner 1997 p413).

However, the practice and use of community engagement is often questioned as to its being little more than a rhetoric due to '…gaps between theory and practice…' considered to result in 'a tokenistic nature of the process' (Ledwith 2005 p19). Consultations are perceived as disingenuous (Arnstein 1969; Pimbert & Pretty 1997; Richardson & Connelly 2002) and partnerships often portrayed in the literature as being inequitable, with the balance of power perceived in the hands of the private, and especially the public sectors (Frederickson 2004; Graham et al. 2003) Simultaneously and providing support for these claims, an increasing number of reports worldwide emphasise community disengagement (Debicka & Debicki ca 2005; Kavanagh ca. 2006; Moran 2005; Mulvey 2003; O'Toole ca. 2004; Travis & Ward 2002). Moreover, increasing arguments as to the growth of a new democratic model of active individualism (Barnett et al ca. 2006; Braun & Giraud 2001; Moran 2005), underpinning the practice of a participatory democracy ideal, has raised concerns for encouraging collective community engagement in what are acceptable and traditional forms of participation such as through networks and partnerships (DCLG 2006a; DCLG 2008; Moran 2005; Witasari et al. 2006).

These institutional concerns are perhaps unsurprising as both governance frameworks and social capital are founded on the practice of collective community engagement. They are further related to the representative democratic model and 'officially' pluralist structure in the UK context (Hill 2005; Moran 2005 p16) in which tensions exist between representative and participatory models of democracy in both practice and policy (Richardson & Connelly 2002). This conflict of two dichotomous forms of democracy holds implications for increasing wider community engagement, should indeed disengagement and individualism be increasing. How realistic therefore, the parallel working of a participatory model of democracy is with that of a representative format is questionable given the UK is fundamentally a centralist regime (John 2001). This consideration alone holds numerous implications for aspirations to increase community engagement and further questions the legitimacy of decisions taken in the name of a community based on a minority of citizens engaged in public-private sector discourse.

In the UK, research on this subject has primarily been undertaken by National Government since 2000. These studies evaluate community engagement nationally, and although they incorporate an assessment of a broad range of governance and social capital principles, appear to have focused on community leadership roles and those who engage collectively. As individual engagement is amalgamated within the collective engagement findings and given that individualism is denoted by an individual's action aside from a collective group (Debicka & Debicki ca. 2005) means that the results require cautious interpretation. Moreover, research on disengagement does not appear to have been considered other than, ironically, through including responses of disengagement with those who do participate albeit infrequently! (DCLG 2007)

Such anomalies of research in this subject could quite feasibly explain the degrees of contradictory reporting on the amount of participation occurring in the UK. Moreover, research as to '…the more prosaic but nevertheless significant everyday acts of involvement, such as going to meetings…' are rare (Burton 2003 p12), and imperatives for local contextual evaluations are few (Adam & Roncevic 2003; Grootaert & Van Bastelear 2002 Hyden & Court 2002; Krishna & Schrader 1999;Graham et al. 2003;Putnam 2002). Thus the transferability of these studies' findings in the protected area context is highly questionable, not least given National Parks are designated for their unique social, cultural and environmental characteristics.

Research imperative: the case of the New Forest National Park in Southern England.

Whilst engagement is universally agreed as an imperative, and especially so in safeguarding the very future of the protected area concept, research in this context is particularly limited and especially so in the western context. This is additionally notable as any evaluations of engagement fundamentally require case study analysis at the micro *and* macro levels in recognition that both a community and their engagement is both locally and nationally defined (Barnes 1999; Jacobson 2007; Krishna & Schrader 1999; Roberts & Roche ca. 2001).

The paucity of data available encouraged research on a National Park in the UK. This was completed in 2010 with key aims to identify the amount, the range and reasons for wider engagement *and* disengagement occurring in decision-making contexts. The New Forest was specifically selected due to its most recent designation, its development of best practice governance frameworks and its long history in tourism, recreation and in public engagement. The conceptual framework comprised governance, government, and social capital and in context, the protected area. Analysis of previous research conducted in the general context demonstrated that engagement can be quantified but it is also highly political, subjective and based on public perceptions. As such, numerous philosophies underpin the practice of engagement. A merger of ideologies resulted and a Mixed Methods approach was taken. This resulted in a series of research stages which were progressed in collaboration with the New Forest National Park Authority and the New Forest District Council. At the exploratory stage, observations of consultative panels were made and seven interviews conducted with leaders of community groups in the area. Subsequently, a total of 2,194 questionnaires were distributed across the National Park encompassing key questions to evaluate the practice of governance and local views on social capital criteria associated with respondents' perceptions of their local community. Of these, 1,244 were sent to a random selection of households in the Park boundary and 950 to members of a known group of regular participants. A total of 744 questionnaires were returned. To enrich the survey responses, a further random selection of respondents resulted in twenty semi-structured interviews. The interviewees represented members of the community who did engage to varying degrees and those who completely disengaged. Finally, and to balance responses, interviews were conducted with representatives of the key leading authorities in the area. All qualitative and quantitative

data from each stage of the primary and secondary research was cross-referenced thus, the validity of the research was further enhanced through triangulation.

Key findings

As with nationwide studies, distinguishing characteristics of engagement and disengagement were deduced and primarily distinguish 'levels of education' and 'length of residence in the area' as key determinants of those who do or do not engage. Yet, of particular interest and related to governance, are degrees of the community's political efficacy and their trust of local institutions (Arnstein 1969; DCLG 2006 a- g; Parry et al. 1992) and concerned with social capital, of the community's trust extended towards their fellow citizens (Grootaert & Van Bastelear 2002; Parry et al 1992; Van Schaik 2002; Vetter 2007).

A pattern was evident in that increased levels of engagement could be related to greater levels of trust in organisations and of perceived influence on decisions taken. This was especially marked in comparing those who engaged in partnerships and/or took leadership roles with those who completely disengaged from any decision-making processes. With the disengaged, their perceived lack of influence further related to degrees of cynicism which are closely related to the principle of trust (Parry et al. 1992). Rather than features of 'good' governance, the existence of these negative perceptions could suggest a lack of governance is ultimately practiced and as demonstrated by Parry et al (1992) associates with the amount of community participation occurring (Grootaert & Van Bastelear 2002; Graham et al. 2003; Putnam 1993; Vetter 2007).

However, unlike nationwide studies, with more than three-quarters of the New Forest population engaging in decision-making processes of varying degrees, high levels of participation are demonstrated. This result was a key finding as protected area literature infers and reports assumptions of a general malaise on the part of communities in participatory processes, (Buckingham-Hatfield & Percy 1999; Parker & Selman 1999; Richardson & Connelly 2002). It is suspected that the amount of participation indicated maybe seen as supportive of the relatively recent attention to protected area governance that has emerged at an international level (IUCN 2003 a, b and c; Borrinni-Feyerabend 2005 a and b). This international concern, together with an increased statutory emphasis, since 2000, on and opportunities for community engagement in any context in the UK, may have further enhanced levels of participation.

The relatively high levels of participation demonstrated in the New Forest, maybe due in part to a very strong sense of community and place which have been shown to characterise rural and forest locations

(Witasari et al. 2006; Harmon et al. 2006). This was equally demonstrated in the New Forest with motivations to engage for the good of the community rated second to those concerned with environmental motives. This attachment is based on the distinctive historical, cultural, and environmental features of the National Park that underpin the formation of the Park's society, its experiences and traditions, values and ways of working and are further enhanced through the numerous opportunities for the community to integrate (Buchecker et al. 2003; McGrory Klyza et al. 2004; Putnam and Goss 2002; Wuthnow 2002). Such social opportunities, co-joined with the range of special interest groups, forums and consultative panels, effectively bridge community interests in networks (Halpern 2005; Heywood 2000; Moran 2005; Tansey 2004). A deepening of the collective consciousness is argued to ensue, encouraging social capital and ultimately results in greater collective engagement amongst community groups and with governing institutions (Vetter 2007).

Nevertheless, as Portes (1998) reports, there is a dark side to social capital. Although few, studies in other rural contexts concur with the findings in this case study that the communitarian foundations of social capital can exclude individuals in a community and can be notably associated with how long an individual has belonged to a community (Bucheker et al. 2003). The research showed that in comparison with those engaged in collective forums/partnerships, the disengaged were the relative newcomers to the area. However, they identified with and demonstrated a desire to belong in the local community. Yet, due to a fear of rejection or of expressing a voice perceived not to be collectively shared, many did not involve themselves in any forms of collective organisations be that social, for business or purely community or environmentally oriented groups.   Therefore, they either disengaged completely or if they did so, engagement was conducted privately and represented in practice, an individual's views and aspirations. Whilst these citizens constituted just a third of the total surveys' respondents, both of these groups have the right of expression and voice that liberal democracies aim to attract. Nevertheless, the UK regime is fundamentally a representative democracy, thus a collective view is practiced and primarily, it is advocated, heard in what can be considered as quite limited, albeit commonly used, governance frameworks and in turn, forms of engagement.

However, there is a further weakness in this system which has the potential to exacerbate the negative aspects of social capital. This claim associates with the Institute on Governance's caution that the '…devil is ….in the detail.' (Graham et al. 2003 p ii) and is ultimately considered through two best practice principles of *'Legitimacy and voice'*.

These fundamental objectives of both governance and social capital are being met through the participatory culture promoted and by the representative culture apparent in the UK governmental regime. This is

considered through the institutions' efforts to develop a community voice predominantly through collective action and an orientation to decision-making by consensus (Graham et al. 2003).

Examples of participation are evidenced through the range of engagement processes employed by the institutions from surveys and consultations through to the formation of partnerships. However, whilst positive in the amount and range of opportunities created, both institutions and communities consider the sheer quantity of engagement processes, especially of consultations, to be an issue. Moreover, concerns are raised by communities that their inclusion should be made far earlier in decision-making processes suggesting potentially that consultations, for example, are based on objectives devised **by** institutions as opposed to **with** communities.

In addition, working by consensus is considered problematic. For the institutions, issues include the diversity of agendas presented and for communities; an additional concern was associated with the institutions' statutory duties perceived to have the potential to conflict with community aspirations. Nonetheless, whilst every effort appears to be taken to build on creating and enhancing community engagement, a *tiered community engagement process* is evident in practice. This can be further associated with the degrees of engagement and disengagement and ultimately, is considered to be related to public perceptions of the institutions and of the form of governance and community engagement practiced.

The highest tier of collective action is indicated through the two-way communication demonstrated in forms of partnership working including Consultative Panels. As an example, these Panels, whilst open to interested members of the public, require application for membership and, as with other key forums, attract the leaders of local groups, experts, other governing partners and parish councillors and are led and administered by the institutions. This tier of community engagement reflects the extent and design of the UK's centralist government system that operates simultaneously behind and within governance processes (Dorey 2005; Hill 2005; Wilson & Game 2006). As such, the form of governance practiced does have the potential to deliver on top-down agendas, rather than as advocated in governance theory, (IUCN 2003 c; Long 2000), the development of agendas across the forum members.

However, although a broad selection of community representatives is apparent, attendance at these forums is considered to be evidence of the interest that is shown by 'some' local and it is asserted, informed people. This practice can lead to consulting with the same citizens each time and is considered to further associate with a disinterested public reflecting general difficulties experienced in engaging with this wider

community. Yet, key subjects of discussion at these forums concern environmental objectives, which were cited as a key motive for people's engagement. Whereas interest in what is basically a politically designed model of engagement are substantially lower and especially distinguish, in terms of disinterest, those who disengage from those who do engage to varying degrees. Thus claims of disinterest may not be necessarily an appropriate justification for the non-attendance at these forums by the wider community.

Of further consideration is the very act of community integration in forums which could be associated with a potential to be coercive; a further assertion highlighted in alternative observations by Sanginga et al. (2007) and Bucheker et al (2003). This claim is particularly considered with the disengaged or those who only do so independent of any group to avoid agreement with and adherence to collective majority pressures. Therefore, the forum model as a key demonstrative feature of social capital, of UK-style communitarianism, and of a representative democratic regime, could in itself be perceived as inadvertently creating designs of exclusion rather than inclusion (Lyons 2006) thus '…places a limit on participation by the people.' (Parry et al. 1992 p5).

To engage with the wider community, a second, bottom tier of engagement is evident. Key mechanisms used include 'surveys' and 'consultations'. These methods are characterised as being of one-way communication rather than the two-way dialogue advocated in best practice (Govan et al. 1998; IUCN 2003 a and b). This outcome is considered to exacerbate the negative perceptions of especially the hard-to-reach in terms of their less positive or negative views on particularly, their political efficacy. However, there are additional issues to consider. Whilst notification of these opportunities can be advertised, in comparison with the first tier of engagement, second tier engagement processes are not as widely broadcast as they are for those members of the many forums at the higher and first tier of engagement. Assumptions are made that knowledge on an issue, a consultation, of a forum or a public meeting will be notified to the wider community through, for example, the many local interest groups established in the area. For those who are members of such groups this could be a reasonable presumption. Yet, as previously indicated, for the hard-to-reach, such mechanisms of socialisation and integration are not as attractive for these citizens as they are for those who do engage with institutions. Moreover, degrees of negative perceptions on political efficacy are especially notable with the disengaged. Mistrust was particularly conveyed towards local councillors, councils and MPs, who in the former two cases, make use of public meetings to engage with the wider community, and the councils additionally use public consultations. Given the negative views of the hard to reach, their engagement with these institutions and processes are questioned.

From these discussions, consultation on what could be seen to be based on predetermined objectives, ironically of some influence by the first tier of community engagement, could additionally be associated by the wider community and second tier, with perceptions associated with their tokenistic engagement. This is commonly labelled in perceived disingenuous consultations (Arnstein 1969; Pimbert & Pretty 1997) that can further result in pejoratively affecting the level of public trust towards the institutions (Weldon 2004). Yet ultimately, it is a key example of the rhetoric of governance that can be practiced within a centralised government regime such as is apparent in the UK context (Dorey 2005; Game & Wilson 2006) whereby control over the public is apparent (Frederickson 2004). Yet through the engagement process selected, the more acceptable method of '…steering…' public affairs through governance can be deployed (Graham et al. 2003 p2). These claims amount to cynicism which is notable amongst the disengaged and further emphasised in their degree of personal political efficacy. Such weaknesses in participatory processes have been cautioned in theory (Adger et al. 2003; Arnstein 1969; Ledwith 2005; Pimbert & Pretty 1997; Richardson & Connelly 2002), voiced by national institutions (Lyons 2006), at international level reproached in best practices (IUCN 2003a-c) and emphasised as contributing to the disengagement of the wider community.

Conclusions and recommendations

Whilst it is recognised that wider community engagement may not always be possible due to environmental imperatives and the time required reaching consensus (Borrini-Feyerabend 1999; Richardson & Connelly 2002), the stance maintained follows that of the IUCN and CBD. Both emphasise the futurity of biodiversity conservation and the protected area concept, have the potential to be enhanced through increasing wider community engagement and by making public participation more effective.

This view has also been demonstrated by the NPA and other public agencies resulting in more than three-quarters of the respondents having participated in some form of engagement. However, although in the minority, the degrees of disengagement reported raise concerns as to whether institutions' aspiration, at both the local and national levels for enhanced wider community engagement, is an attainable objective. There are clearly community concerns as to their political efficacy, degrees of cynicism towards and mistrust of institutions which are related to degrees of engagement with lead institutions. These show that with more positive perceptions, a greater degree of engagement appears to follow, and with disengagement, more negative views or less positive perceptions ensue. This same pattern was also notable with the negative views held by the public towards their local community, with the disengaged having the most negative perceptions: argued to derive from feelings of exclusion and/or fear of rejection if their views are not considered to concur with the majority's collective perspectives. In consideration

that 'length of residence' also distinguishes especially the disengaged from those engaged in leadership or partnership roles, a decreased 'sense of belonging' to the local community is also evident in many cases.

Yet, the situation for the excluded and their progression from inter- to intra-community relations is further exacerbated by the two-tiered engagement system practiced, resulting in a segregation process of those engaged at the first tier with institutions and those at the second tier, who are not. This format is at best designed on top-down agendas, is considered grossly inadequate, (Richardson & Connelly 2002), not least due to a lack of institution-community discourse created but ultimately has the potential to be associated with claims of superficial consultations (Arnstein 1969; Pimbert & Pretty 1997).

This is not to suggest a negative connotation to the management of this nor any other National Park in the UK at the area level. However, these institutions are inherently political bodies, directly linked to the Secretary of State, thus guided by National Government policies, statutes and strategies which the NPA is charged to implement. Further influence on the NPA's activities derives from EU environmental directives, and at an International level, via numerous environmental conventions and treaties. This political and legislative complex context demands that the NPA works within the parameters of numerous governmental stakeholders yet further has to integrate local aspirations and priorities into area-wide plans. There is therefore, an inherent institutional agenda constituting the design of key themes for strategic development. As such, government **of** at worst and at best, **with** the people is suggested, rather than **by** the people as required in governance contexts (Hyden & Court 2002) is overt. Therefore, unlike national levels of engagement, whilst the overall number of participants is healthy, the issues arising are not unusual. Thus, the very spirit of community inclusion and equitable discourse required amongst parties is diluted as equally so are opportunities for the wider community to influence the design and objectives of CRs that are truly oriented towards local definitions of social and/or environmental priorities and needs.

Should fundamental changes at a national level, from politics to politik ever be progressed, truly engaging models of participation at an area level will require time, sound facilitation skills amongst lead authorities, and in turn, funds to reach consensus amongst the public, private and community sectors aims and visions. However, as is equally recommended in best practice worldwide, a degree of independence for an NPA from National Government is advocated. This would require a greater degree of decentralisation in governing processes, which will be a challenge in the centralist UK government regime that works behind governance processes (John 2001; Dorey 2005; Hill 2005; Wilson & Game 2006) but is strategically vital to convey genuine political aspirations for community engagement and their influence on decisions to be

taken. Further benefits in practical terms, concern the more autonomous NPA deciding with local communities key local priorities to a greater degree, for which, increased freedom in creating more innovative forms of engagement could be devised.

However, should more attractive engagement processes be designed, it is further recommended that the use of these is limited. A key observation made during this research emphasised that ironically, compounding the viability of increasing engagement was the sheer numbers of organisations consulting in and on the management of the National Park, the range of national and local government objectives to be addressed and the complexity of lines of accountability. Whilst numerous opportunities may increase current rates of wider community participation, as has been demonstrated, combined, the quantity of consultations, creates an unattractive setting for engagement and an amalgam of ambiguities not least in terms of understanding and 'keeping up' with information required to participate. Thus, as articulated in the Lyons Inquiry (2006) members of the wider community may, inadvertently, feel further excluded from current participatory processes. Recognition for this issue is indicated in best practice for which in the UK context, increased joined up working '…regardless of the organisational structure of government.' (HMSO 1999 p 10) has and still to this day is emphasised.

There is undoubtedly clear recognition of some of these issues in the National Park management context (IUCN 2003a, b and c) and an increasing emphasis on features of best practice to enhance both the quality and depth of engagement (Burton 2003). However, whilst 'good' governance is equated to community engagement and participation (Kofi Annan in UNDP/UNESCAP/ADB., [ca. 2004]. p1), nothing has been found to date that specifies just what constitutes precisely or is quantifiably universally agreed as 'good' governance as such its measurement is further complicated (Hyden & Court 2002). It is argued that without at the least a measurable target by which to monitor both the **number of citizens engaged** and the **level of actual political efficacy** attained, the practice of community engagement and indeed, research in this subject, that is inherently context specific and value-laden, is and will continue to be measured in relative terms. Furthermore, the current practice of engagement deployed has the clear potential to become a directly or inadvertently created vehicle for rhetoric which clearly relates to cynicism, and in turn, exacerbates decreases in community engagement. Without the engagement of the disengaged, '…opportunities (are being) missed..' for communication with the breadth of the community on sustainable development activities and increasing the positive outputs of TSMEs and their CRs be that of social or environmental orientations (Campbell & Vainio-Mattila 2003 p. 417).

The views of the *demos* and the increased breadth of citizens achieved, fundamentally relate to aspirations for a direct democracy. This could be ridiculed in the UK context, whereby the very design of a representative democratic regime is not suited to broad community engagement. However, increased engagement and research in this subject could ironically underpin political visions in the UK that purport support for both governance and social capital, as: '…Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power…' (DCLG 2008); and of more recent doctrine of a '…society where the leading force for progress is social responsibility …' and where trust is rebuilt in politics (Cameron 2010). With a potential for tension between participatory and representative democracies, (Parry et al. 1992), together with current political and economic events resulting in increasing public cynicism and mistrust of institutions, the rebuilding of trust and increase of wider engagement are not feasibly considered to be attained.

Implications and future enquiries

These findings have implications for the design of community engagement strategies and for additional research into community participation. They suggest that if further progress is to be made in understanding community participation in the protected area context, three challenges need to be confronted: agreement on a definition of 'good' governance, on justifiably acceptable levels of engagement and research as to how participatory democratic principles envisaged by institutions can feasibly be achieved in fundamentally a representative democracy. Moreover, research based on single, comparative and longitudinal case studies in other protected areas are recommended and considered priorities, given the dynamic nature of the political environment in which engagement is designed. More specifically, research on disengagement and individualism is emphasised, and especially so in terms of their degrees of social integration, due to the potential such an inquiry holds for informing the design of innovative and effective forms of engagement aimed at genuinely encouraging the wider community in public-private sector discourse.

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