

Trust as a key element in the exercise of agency and authority

Stream: Agency in Earth System Governance

Abstract

Agency and authority are either single or multiple modalities of power. As such, when they are exercised, the desirable outcome is some type of change. This change, however, may or may not be accepted by those who are affected by it, depending on whether they trust the actors exercising the power or the process by which the outcome was attained. Trust, and in particular active trust, is emerging as a key element in participatory governance.

Introduction

I introduce the concept of trust and its requirement for actors to effectively exercise agency and authority. Done properly, the exercise of agency and/or authority can also result in the creation of a strong type of trust, active trust. If the exercise of agency and authority does not result in the creation of trust, then the ability to have effective outcomes from processes where agency and authority are exercised is severely undermined. While several types of trust will be mentioned, this paper will concentrate on active trust.

The first section of this paper will begin with a brief introduction of individual and collective agency and the role that they play in Earth Systems governance. It will follow with a discussion of agency and authority as modalities of power using the concept of a networked theory of power. The networked theory of power helps us understand where active trust fits with the exercise of power. This section will conclude with a discussion of how trust and in particular, active trust plays a role alongside agency and authority in Earth Systems governance.

The paper then moves on to look at the roles that collective agency, authority and trust plays and how these relate to Earth Systems governance. This will be supported by some key findings from a local investigation on the Gold

Coast, Australia. The paper will conclude with some ideas of how to progress from the local to the regional and global spheres.

Actors and Agency

The actors that may be involved in Earth Systems Governance are widely varied and included national and sub-national governments, regional authorities, non-governmental organisations, private enterprises, other non-state organisations and potentially individual citizens themselves (Bierman and Pattberg, 2008). All actors, whether individual or as a group, have the ability to exercise agency.

A general definition of agency comes from Bierman and Pattberg (2008: 280) “[A]gency—understood as the power of individual and collective actors to change the course of events or the outcome of processes.” Using Lukes’ (1974) general idea that the fundamental notion of power is where an actor is able to do something significant or affect another in a significant way, in a general sense agency is the exercise of power. Whether agency is a singular modality or multiple modalities of power will be discussed further, including how this perspective can be used to better understand agency and its relationship with authority and trust.

There are two different ‘types’ of agency that need to be considered. The first is individual agency and the second is collective agency. This section will discuss what each of these types of agency are and how they relate to two key areas of governance that are crucial to the creation and maintenance of active trust – reflexivity and participatory engagement. When and how each of these types of agency are needed and used in Earth Systems governance will also be discussed.

Individual Agency and Reflexivity

Individual agency can be analysed from two vantage points – we can look ‘out’ and analyse agency from the perspective of how an individual has actually effected change in a tangible sense, but we can also look inwards and see how an individual has exercised agency to effect change within

themselves. While it is feasible, individuals have great difficulty, if not an impossibility to effect visible change in policies at a local level, let alone the global level. However, individuals are able to effect change within themselves and create what Maguire et al. (2001) call a new identity. This creation of a new identity is an important component in the creation and maintenance of active trust.

In order to undertake this internal analysis, there are a number of outwardly visible elements that start to build a web of links between reflexivity, agency, participatory engagement and trust. Reflexivity, according to Foucault (1990: 98), is a “theme of the flesh” where individuals use different forms of discourse, such as self-examination, questioning, admissions, interpretation and interviews to analyse the knowledge that they previously had, as well as new knowledge gained from outside sources, including other actors in participatory exercises. Reflexivity is then seen in the development of active trust as extensive communication, interaction and interpretation by actors. In other words, reflexivity can be seen as on-going interactions between actors (Möllering, 2006) or within actors. Reflexivity is not the whole of active trust, Möllering (2006: 106) states that there is “an important missing element which captures the true essence of all types of trust that makes it a unique phenomenon” – a “suspension of reflexivity” or leap of faith.

Reflexivity is tied to two components of active trust; communication and the creation of new identities. Möllering (2006) states that open and even intimate communication creates familiarity or the building of social relationships between actors. This building of social relationships between actors as they communicate and reflect on their and others’ communication and words is them actively constructing themselves and others, creating active trust (Maguire et al., 2001). This involves reflecting on their and others’ positions and adjusting their position to more accurately reflect themselves in light of other stakeholder’s positions or new knowledge. Gilson (2006: 369) also states that “Trusting relationships are the product of deliberate and reflexive strategies such as education, mentoring and supervision.” There are

however, some that claim that reflexive practice or reflexivity actually *reduces* levels of trust in participants (Swain and Tait, 2007).

Swain and Tait (2007) state that the underlying causes of reflexivity reducing levels of trust emerge from the rise of the Risk Society, noting that reflexivity allows actors to think of and highlight new areas and higher levels of risk. This, in turn, erodes the foundations of trust. While this may be true in the hierarchical planning systems that Swain and Tait (2007) discuss, there is substantial evidence that it is the contrary in participatory engagement processes. In this case, investigated at the local level, reflexivity is the opportunity to reflect on the positions, stances and ideas of the other actors and formulate a response. This response may be a further argument attempting to rebut the other position or it may be a response where the actor or stakeholder modifies their position slightly, starting to take on a new identity.

The foregoing suggests that reflexivity is contextual and that universal inferences are not indicative of what is actually happening in practice. Contextual information, however, is required to best understand each situation and provide the truest picture of what is actually happening in those situations.

In the 'inner' view of individual agency, individual actors are moving along a path towards trust. They are taking in, interrogating, researching and understanding multiple knowledges and this is shaping a possible new identity, a key component of active trust. The shaping of this new identity is also mediated through their involvement in a participatory exercise which all contributes towards the exercise of collective agency.

Collective Agency and Participation

Collective agency has been defined by Flora et al. (2004) as the ability of a group of people to solve a problem together, with these people believing that working together can actually result in a solution. In describing collective agency further, Flora et al. (2004) go on to mention the importance of

horizontal linkages between actors through communication and the improvement of knowledge in strengthening collective agency. These three elements of collective agency are also all elements of participatory engagement processes, where actors are brought together to collectively chart a course of action or provide a more grass-roots oriented solution to a problem.

Hence, participatory engagement processes are generally seen as a counterbalance to the typical hierarchical structure of government which are driven by experts and authority, with public involvement in participatory engagement processes being more horizontal, seeking to diminish the influence of this hierarchy of authority (Kettl, 2000). Through early public involvement, public officials, civil society and citizen participants are able to speak to each other in a horizontal manner, eliminating the hierarchy and the “us against them” manner (McCoy and Scully, 2002: 127).

These participatory engagement, community engagement or similar processes called a myriad of different names are demonstrating the value of participatory democracy especially at the local level in Australia. One of the more encompassing definitions of these processes comes from Rowe and Frewer (2004: 512) and can be applied at all levels of governance: “Public participation may be defined as the practice of consulting and involving members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making and policy forming activities of organisations or institutions responsible for policy development.” This definition would suggest that these types of processes can be used even at the global level.

Participatory engagement processes as a counterpoint to typical chains of government are evident in the participatory turn that planning and policy has started to take, particularly through increasing resistance to expert technical systems in politics (Bäckstrand, 2002). This has partially come out of the perceived deficiencies of representative democracy. With representative democracy there is no requirement for citizen participation between elections,

nor is there any guarantee that elected representatives will represent, consult or engage with the wider community (Kliger and Cosgrove, 1999).

Agency and Authority – Modalities of Power

While authority is a modality of power that often has negative connotations, it is a special modality of power that has been defined as the right to exercise power and can only be lent to those that exercise it (Parsons, 1986; Allen, 2003). This right to exercise authority is generally seen to be conferred through *universal* norms around educational credentials or experience. Only those that either had or claimed to have greater knowledge or expertise are lent the ability to exercise authority through their knowledge. This modality of power has relied on episteme, or scientific and analytic knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This modality of power, however, can easily be 'refused' to people that may wish to exercise it, based on the knowledge, information, experiences or values of others (Allen, 2003).

In the enlightenment, Bacon claimed that knowledge leads to power (Seini, 2003), however, with the current advent of the knowledge society and knowledge and information being much more available to those who are inclined to search for it and learn, there now would appear to be multiple points of authority, which can include governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private agencies and individuals themselves (Allen, 2003). This would lend credence to the fact that authority is a mode of power that is only lent; lent to the individual(s) or organization(s) that have the most *legitimate* knowledge. The exercise of power (authority) is still often predicated on the use of knowledge (Seini, 2003), there is some truth to this: Access to specific knowledge is still privileged for a time, but often others are able to access it soon after. This would suggest that the exercise of power (authority) through knowledge is only a temporary phenomenon.

Expert systems have been normalised as the dominant way of knowing and owning, while rationalising and legitimising action taken against other ways of knowing (Seini, 2003). Technical expertise and the authority associated with it is often used to rationalize policy and the legitimisation of power (Flyvbjerg,

1998). While authority can be seen as something relegated to experts, with the opening up of knowledge and information, it can now be considered a modality of power that lay people can use to challenge these expert systems (Parsons, 1986).

Often experts may have more knowledge about a subject, but this may be a more general knowledge, while citizens and lay people have extensive local and contextual knowledge. Munnichs (2004) suggests that the variety of knowledges and discussion/debates that surround them contribute to greater trust. This variety of knowledges where citizens are able to challenge expert authority also contributes to improved outcomes in participatory engagement practices through providing contextual information that may be lacking in 'official' realms, in addition to providing different perspectives that may lead to greater understanding of the situation by participants.

With the explosion of new technologies of communication and information dissemination, knowledge that was once the domain of a privileged few is now accessible to a much wider audience. The internet, as one example, has an added benefit in providing a wide range of views, different sides of the argument or different knowledges. With even lay people armed with this information as well as their own experiences, they are able to exercise authority on their own, in addition to challenging expert authority. This type of action can be seen in the local case study on the Gold Coast, Australia. While some members of the community did not feel comfortable challenging the authority of the experts, there were some members who did, and this was appreciated by most of the community members.

Participatory engagement processes, particularly if Habermasian principles and the further theories of Iris Marion Young (1995) are used, should allow participants to use their own arguments and knowledge to persuade others rather than relying on expert authoritative power (McCoy and Scully, 2002). This is an example of where a more negative modality of power (authority) can be transformed into a potentially more positive modality (persuasion), resulting in better and more inclusive outcomes.

Agency, both individual and collective can be seen as a 'collection' of modalities of power working together to achieve a particular outcome. This 'collection' of power modalities spans both negative and positive modalities (as termed by Litfin, 1994). In the case studied at the local level on the Gold Coast, Australia, it was found that some government participants used or attempted to exercise more negative modalities of power, including domination, coercion and manipulation to get the committee to effect the changes that they wanted to see. However, the community members generally exercised positive modalities of power to effect change – negotiation, persuasion and seduction (Edwards, 2009).

Collective agency is therefore closely related to participatory processes, where groups that desire a common outcome but are not necessarily like-minded, come together to work towards achieving this common goal. By equating collective agency to participatory engagement processes and looking at the exercise of power within these collectivities, we should turn to Manuel Castells' (2006) theory of the networked society to understand how power and trust work in this situation.

Networked Theory of Power

Networks are, according to Castells (2006) the most adaptable and flexible forms of organisation, transcending boundaries and have been seen to be forming a new type of state beyond the nation state. Because a network is made up of interconnected nodes (in this case people or groups), there is an element of social relationships between these nodes, and hence power enters into the equation. The idea of a networked or spatial theory of power comes from authors that have a broader view of power than those that advocate a sovereign state view.

This view begins with the idea that power is not something that can be held, and further, that power comes from the ground up and can be considered a system that is exercised by a group of people collectively coming together, and legitimized by the fact that this group has come together (Lukes, 1974).

Thinking in human terms, a network can be considered individuals or groups of people that are connected through their interactions, relationships, views and/or values. These networks that are formed through interaction and association then bring together particular actors or groups in order to pursue a particular outcome or outcomes (Allen, 2003). These networks need not be static; actors or stakeholders are able to move between networks, change networks or belong to multiple networks depending on the specific or particular outcomes they desire. In this way, individuals acting together or sharing a resource are able to collectively exercise power.

Allen (2003), in particular, has a positive view of power, where it is seen as something that is a collaborative exercise that can enable outcomes. Like Foucault, Allen (2003) finds that power comes from social interactions and relationships, and these interactions and relationships allow individuals or institutions to exercise power. Unlike Foucault, however, in a networked theory of power, the exercise of power does not need conflict or opposition; it is simply a means of getting something done (Arendt, 1977; Allen, 2003). These social interactions and relationships can be seen as networks that not only allow power to operate (Allen, 2004), but also allow for the mobilization and flow of resources. How, though, is power produced through these social interactions?

The idea of spatiality and power is closely linked to participation in participatory engagement processes, and has a number of potential links to trust as well. Huxley (2007: 190) states that “space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power.” Other authors in other areas, including human-ecological resilience have also found dialogue, trust and social relationships (power) are integral, particularly in the transition to participatory engagement processes, especially when actors, stakeholders and organizations are spread across scales (spatiality) (Folke et al., 2005).

Networks, Resources and Power

Intimately connected with the networked theory of power are resources. What resources are and how they are mobilised is different than the actual exercise of power. Resources are, for the most part, 'things' or capabilities that can be mobilized and flow across these networks and enable people to exercise power. In this sense, even the collective itself can be considered a resource (Arendt, 1977; Allen, 2003). The quantity of a resource does not necessarily have an influence on how power is exercised. For example, the collective power discussed by Arendt comes solely from association and/or other qualitative resources, not sheer numbers (Allen, 2003: 53). This allows even small or weaker organizations to exercise power in many cases. However, as Allen (2003: 5) notes, as one has an expansion of resources, in this case not only the amount of a particular resource, but the number of different resources available, one can then exercise power over an extended space or time frame.

In a paper presented at the International Association for People-Environment Studies conference in Rome, 2008, I described a number of things or capabilities that can be mobilised as resources in the exercise of power through a network. Some of these possible resources include communication skills and styles, knowledge, commitment, relationships and trust. Trust, however is postulated to be a 'special' resource. Trust or distrust is often the outcome of the mobilisation of resources and the exercise of power. However, trust itself can then be used as a resource to be mobilised for the further exercise of power. In this way, trust, and in particular, active trust is a key element that must be considered with the exercise of agency and authority.

What is Active Trust?

Trust in general has been defined by a number of authors as a psychological state comprising of the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another (Rousseau et al., 1998; Bijlsma-Frankema and Costa, 2005; Möllering, 2005a; Connell and Mannion, 2006; Santos-Granero, 2007). This definition covers some of the major dimensions of trust and starts to contextualise trust as part of social and

interpersonal phenomena, where one party who is 'doing' the trusting, (the trustor) is taking a risk or leap of faith or going beyond what one would normally do (Bijlsema-Frankema and Costa, 2005: 261) with another party who is being trusted (the trustee) with the future expectation that they will fulfil their end of the transaction (Kasperson et al., 1992).

Key elements of active trust can be found in components of participatory engagement where diverse groups of stakeholders are invited to participate. Maguire et al. (2001) assert that active trust does not emerge where there is a single, collective identity, but arises from a number of complementary, different identities. Gilson (2006) also contends that to move towards active trust, organisations will have to include those whose trust they seek in the dialogue, further diversifying the participating stakeholder base. Trust can then be created through new similarities that are discovered or created by stakeholders interacting (Bijlsma-Frankema and Costa, 2005), or as Maguire et al. (2001) call this, the creation of new identities. This active trust arises from new forms of social or collective solidarity (Banks et al., 2000). Lewicki and Benedict Bunker, (1995: 152) share this theory by describing active trust as trust that is based on a newly created collective identity, involving the creation of joint products or goals. This changing of individual identities must be finely balanced so that participants do not lose the identity that they share with their constituent group or social network (Maguire et al., 2001; Casagrande et al., 2007).

Active trust breaks down barriers between sectors and interests, then starts to build new and creative collaborations, reducing risk in new and different ways (Banks et al., 2000) and opening up opportunities to perform truly transdisciplinary work (Ramadier, 2004). Active trust is thus a social construction that is gradually and actively built up by the actors or stakeholders involved through processes of continuous communication and reflexive familiarisation (Child and Möllering, 2003; Möllering 2005a; 2005b; 2006). This suggests that there is a substantial amount of work and effort involved on the part of actors to ensure that this strong type of trust is energetically built and sustained.

Active trust is very similar to intercultural trust in several ways. First, participants generally do not initially know the backgrounds and values of the other participants. Second, they need to make a concerted effort to get to know and understand actors from other cultures. In participatory engagement processes a similar thing happens. As participants work constantly towards understanding through communication, spending time together and sharing experiences, in this case through a public participation or community engagement process, relationships are formed and active trust is created (Möllering, 2006).

Active trust is a particular type of trust that is interesting from a perspective of power (in this case agency and authority), as it has a number of commonalities between the individual, group or individuals or groups exercising agency, the exercise of agency itself and the outcomes.

How do Agency and Authority Engender Trust?

The provision of knowledge can be divided into two separate categories – lay knowledge and expert knowledge. There is a distinct connection between people's trust in experts and the emotional connection that they have to those experts (Fossato, 2001). This seems to connect directly to the faith (an emotional connotation) that people put in those experts being 'right' (Kasperson et al., 1992) as well as how the experts present that information – the ideas of eloquence and charisma that was presented in the previous chapter in the discussion of legitimacy. On the other hand, by having contradictory or conflicting information presented by both experts and lay people, a variety of views are presented. Trust may then be enhanced by allowing citizens to look at this broader perspective and engage in reflexive practice, another key element of active trust (Munnichs, 2004).

While not directly studied, there are a number of ways in which agency could engender trust. By continuing to think of agency in terms of a collection of positive modalities of power (at least at the individual level), there has been a correlation between the creation and maintenance of trust with the exercise of

positive modalities of power. I will go through several positive modalities of power that would be at the heart of exercising individual and collective agency and how the exercise of the totality of these modalities of power engenders trust.

The modality of power 'seduction' is seen as something spontaneous or impulsive. In general, seduction uses curiosity to arouse interest in something being considered by actors. This modality however, does not introduce anything new to the process (Allen, 2003). There may be a fine line between seduction and manipulation, where manipulation is the pre-planned hiding of intent, seduction is more spontaneous. When exercised in a spontaneous way during a robust participatory engagement process, seduction can be valuable. By provoking curiosity in participants from the way issues are communicated or through the types of information that are presented, participants can begin to question information. By questioning the information presented and how it is presented, the participants may gain a deeper understanding of other knowledge and knowledge systems. This builds on reflexivity, allowing the participants to reflect on these different knowledges, possibly leading them to choose to create a new identity (Maguire et al., 2001).

The exercise of seduction in this way also has ramifications for the creation of Active trust. By generating questions and allowing participants to gain a deeper understanding of the issues present, the reflexivity involved allowed participants to move towards creating a new identity along the path to creating Active trust. This modality of power appeared to have been poorly represented in the local case of the Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategy.

The second modality of power that plays a role in the exercise of agency is negotiation. There are some authors who question whether negotiation is actually a modality of power, but in this work it will be considered the exercise of two-way power that can lead to reciprocal benefits for both parties (Allen, 2003).

At the first meeting of the Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategy Community Advisory Committee, the members that had been identified by the Project Team were asked to identify any possible gaps in the representation on the committee. This was done with several gaps identified. The Community Advisory Committee members, the Project Team and Gold Coast City Council agreed to add several members to the committee to fill the identified gaps – industry and business (Gold Coast City Council, 2004b).

I think it was, I think it was pretty well structured. I know, initially there or if you there are a few people that were added to the committee after the first or second meeting, and we had the discussion about who else should be involved. *Committee Member 2.*

So, you will find the committee was a lot smaller at the start, and it grew, so I think we identified people as this process went a long that we were able there was a need to bring a few more on than there was. *Committee Member 3.*

While the actors involved in the first meeting put forth persuasive arguments, the agreement reached seems to demonstrate negotiation as it had reciprocal benefits for three 'parties'. First, the benefit for the members of the Community Advisory Committee and to some extent the Project Team, was that they would get access to new or different information, ideas, views or positions which would improve understanding and provide increased breadth during reflexive practice. The community at large would also benefit, even without being a party to the negotiations. The community would benefit from having a broader representational base on the Community Advisory Committee and also potentially benefit in the end from a better outcome that had considered additional information and knowledge. Finally, the Gold Coast City Council would have benefited from a perception of increased legitimacy for the process. James and Blaney (1999) put forward that legitimacy can be directly related to the number of people that participate in a participatory engagement process. By increasing the number of people involved in the Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategy, the strategy could be perceived as having greater legitimacy.

The second area where negotiation can be seen is in the development of consensus during the Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategy. A number of the

Community Advisory Committee members mention how actors pushed their positions quite forcefully, but usually in the end the group could agree on a consensus.

They often pushed, but as I said, if it wasn't the general consensus, then it didn't get too many legs or some people gave them a little bit of we acknowledge that is your point of view, and we will agree to disagree on five of your 10 points. But we take on board your other five, and we've moved our views a little bit more central. *Committee Member 3.*

Consensus, achieved through negotiation and discussion is not necessarily a good thing for participatory engagement processes, although it would represent a 'bonus' for the exercise of collective agency. On the other hand, it could have positive impacts on the creation of active trust. By negotiating a consensus within the group, actors are demonstrating that they have reflected on the information presented by all parties and in consultation with their constituent group are willing to change their identity slightly so that a common decision can be made. This changing of identities is one mechanism that works to create active trust.

The final modality of power that will be analysed as part of the exercise of agency is persuasion. Persuasion is one of the main modalities of power exercised during robust participatory engagement processes. Persuasion works where actors have choices and where arguments are used to change positions that actors may have previously held (Allen, 2003). The exercise of this modality of power is the prime location where Meadowcroft's (2004:184) force of the better argument can be found.

Well, we had a chairperson, who was extremely good, and we all went through the chair when we spoke on different issues. We weren't held back on time at all or anything like that, we would say what we wanted and try to get our message across and have, people would reply to it all or add to it or say whatever they liked. *Committee Member 1.*

The members of the Community Advisory Committee were able to communicate their ideas or positions freely. Debate and discussion about these ideas was welcomed in what would be an open process. This statement by Committee Member 1 starts to set the scene for the use or force

of the better argument, discussed below. The presentation of arguments to persuade other members of the committee could be done in whatever media or way the proponent felt comfortable or was appropriate.

Some, we had verbal presentations, some people had put some written letters to gather and some, and there were others. Also other people outside the committee itself from the general public who were able to, to put presentations forward into the committee structure as well. They were handled in various ways, but yah, there was certainly, or I had the feeling that there was ample opportunity for them. Members of the committee, to put forward their thoughts in whatever media they thought was appropriate for them. *Committee Member 2.*

The ability of the actors participating in these types of processes to express themselves in their own, culturally relevant way is part of their ability to exercise agency.

The presentation of these multiple 'truths' as Munnichs (2004) calls multiple knowledges, also allows the participants to reflect on all of the arguments and their own position through reflexivity, another component of active trust.

There was one guy, he used to be an ex-plumber, he really hated water tanks, and I really believed, this was early, before water tanks, and we would argue, this is a resource, why let the water go down the drain and go out to the ocean, and he would argue this point and it was good healthy debate you know. Um, but it was really good, and then, ah, we would just say something like we agree to disagree, and that's fine, that's ok. You don't have to agree with someone. And um, so that was, to me that is healthy you can debate a point. *Committee Member 11.*

The exercise of persuasion is able to strengthen Active trust and participatory engagement processes in several ways. With respect to Active trust, the presentation of multiple arguments or truths in order to persuade others that one position or view is better than others allows committee members to engage in debate and in reflexive practice leading to Active trust. Persuasion also plays a role in the changing of identities (Maguire et al., 2001). By engaging in debate and hearing multiple positions after engaging in reflexivity, actors are able to adapt and adjust their positions, moving closer to consensus.

In terms of participatory engagement processes, persuasion can strengthen these practices in two different ways. The first is through allowing for multiple modes of communication. As mentioned by some participants in the Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategy Community Advisory Committee, all participants were able to present and argue their positions in ways that best suited them or their group. Second, through allowing actors to bring along others to help present ideas or positions, the process became more inclusive and representative of the community.

Turning to authority still through the local perspective, The Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategy Project Team engaged a large number of experts in particular fields that were called upon to provide further information and detail on previously presented information. These experts were lent and exercised authority when called upon, based on their education and/or experience. Because these members had numerous credentials and were presented as experts, there was an unequal power relationship between them and the Community Advisory Committee members. At least one member of the Community Advisory Committee felt almost helpless in the face of these experts and their authority

Like it was more they told us like okay, okay, like they told us and we sort of assented to what they what the experts sort of presented to us, because like come to think of it there was no one really in a position of like that kind of authority, to say well, I don't really agree because everyone just sort of assumed that [S] or [N] or whoever was speaking that they, that they obviously knew what they were talking about, and no one was, no one had the authority to go and say actually, that's not right. Do you know what I mean? *Committee Member 9.*

Despite the feelings of helplessness on the part of this committee member, authority and the comprehensive information that was presented by the experts allowed them to have enough knowledge to make a leap of faith and trust those experts. This member went even further, finding that the professional set up and organisation of the process also engendered trust.

[J]ust probably the professional set up of everything, yup, it was always, it ran smoothly, and it was something authoritative. You always sort of trust in authority, something that has been really so well organized, people put money,

like time and money into, people are often more willing to trust something like that that seems to be like correctly set up, obviously it is worth it if someone put in the time and money to make something work, it's probably worth it.
Committee Member 9.

On the more positive side, the exercise of authority provided some benefits for the participants. While some of the participants felt overwhelmed in the early stages of the process, this did not mean that they did not have anything to say or contribute to the discussion; they simply did not feel comfortable in presenting their views or thoughts. However, the independent chair of the Community Advisory Committee was able, for the most part, to detect this, and use his authority to 'break in' and lend members enough authority so that they could express their views.

I would say that, I would say that within two meetings. They were, they were on fire. They were feeling empowered even those that didn't normally express themselves in public were able to put their hands up and even, even with their body language, or whatever. We would try and pick up, I would try and pick up if they were needing to say something. And it's about generally cutting people off if they are banging on too much. *Committee Member 12.*

By ensuring that everyone was able to speak when they needed or wanted to, in an appropriate manner, the independent chair ensured that the participants were and felt included in the process. To have this ability, the Gold Coast City Council took a huge step and agreed to an independent chair, lending this individual authority to act in the best interests of the committee:

By allowing all members of the committee to speak and explain their view or positions, they are providing knowledge and information about themselves, their group and their values. This can contribute to knowledge-based trust. Further, by discussing and debating this information and the issues, participants are able to gain a better understanding of each other, perhaps finding that they have areas of common interest or common values and can build or further develop strong social relationships, leading to active trust.

You have got the structure with an independent chair that is able to defend the committee and the process against all comers, including Gold Coast Water. And you have got to understand that it was in very big risk for gold coast water, putting an independent chair, in. Huge risk. Not, not, this is something that they had never done before. Pimpama Coomera Waterfuture was not

independently chaired. But for them, it was a, this was a big risk. I was given the authority by Council resolution to deal with the council officers, to deal with the press on behalf of Council, even though I was the independent chair, by resolution, I was given that authority and, and that made the process, the committee process actually a lot easier. *Committee Member 12.*

The independent chair also used their authority to invite members of the community at large to participate and present their ideas and proposals to the committee in addition to the Project Team and committee members' own ideas (Gold Coast City Council, 2004). One of the committee members remarked:

At the committee meetings with members of the public were there, we invited them to dinner as well, was always food at the committee meetings. If people had a brilliant desire to ask questions from the public gallery than we would let them ask questions and we would always invite them to come and eat with us, and sit with the committee members as well and so it was as inclusive as it could be for the whole Gold Coast community. *Committee Member 12.*

This particular exercise of the independent chair's authority had two large impacts for participatory engagement processes. The first is that it did open it up and make it inclusive for a wider number of people from the Gold Coast as certainly not all of the community would have been represented by the stakeholders present on the committee. This then leads to one of Tebble's (2003) critiques of Communicative Democracy: that the stakeholders officially involved in any participatory engagement process are not the entire repository of knowledge in the community. By allowing not only the official stakeholders to participate, but also the members of the wider community to present their ideas, the Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategy (or any participatory process) can get closer to the ideal of considering the knowledge of the whole community.

This second aspect of how authority was exercised had several positive impacts on active trust and participatory engagement processes. In relation to participatory engagement processes, this exercise of authority allowed all of the members of the Community Advisory Committee the opportunity to present their views and be able to use other modalities of power, for example persuasion or negotiation, and allowing the other members to reflect on that particular view and respond. This would have also allowed those that did not

feel able to speak out initially the confidence to ask questions and clarification from the other members as well, leading to greater understanding.

Third, reflexivity as a component of active trust is a point that should be made here. By giving people the authority to speak up, the independent chair allowed more and/or different information to be presented, allowing a greater range of information that the participants could reflect on. The following example shows that some actors used the authority that they felt the independent chair had vested in them to speak up on behalf of themselves and others to, in the end, provide a more robust understanding of certain issues.

The committee chair also ensured, where they could, that all of the members present at any given meeting were able to understand what was being presented. The role of the State Government committee members is also highlighted in that they questioned the Project Team and other contracted experts at great length, ensuring that the Project Team and the organizers could not hide in the immense technical detail.

You know, we have a number of presenters, who just couldn't explain themselves. And we would have to say stop, what he means is this, does everybody understand this? And they would say, woops, he wasn't saying that at all. He was saying this, he's got the wrong end of the stick because no well, the figures say this so it was. I know enough to know that we are not being smokescreened on, because there was a very robust debate and the, and, and the DNR officer really gave the KPMG consultant a very difficult time over the issue of net present value, there was blood all over the floor, and now that is what the community wants to hear, that somebody is looking after their interests, and they had to go away redo the modeling because so and so says that it was, it was all wrong. *Committee Member 12.*

Fourth, the perceptions and experiences of each individual actor highlight the importance of contextualism in participatory engagement processes. As the two examples show, actors had different perceptions about accepting authority and using that to determine whether they would take the leap of faith and trust. Contextualism in participatory engagement processes forms part of what Young (1995) argues, that every participant should be allowed (within

reason) to express themselves and communicate in a way that they feel comfortable.

Summary

One of the positive benefits of the networked theory is that it can span the entire spectrum of local to global. Each individual node (a particular individual or group) can go about their business in a contextually appropriate way but are able to share their information and experiences with other nodes. These other nodes can then take the experiences of others and if necessary, adapt them to fit the particular context in which they find themselves. This is also true for larger scale issues where multiple nodes may come together with their experiences and custom build a 'process' from all of their experiences to deal with a larger problem that spans multiple contexts.

When actors have trust, one of the outcomes of the exercise of power (in this case agency and or authority), trust can then be used as a resource in a further exercise of power at a larger scale. This could potentially be used at a global scale to subtly shift people to new identities for the benefit of greater numbers. Trust is an often overlooked aspect of governance, decision-making and research in general that is so crucial. Möllering (2001) goes so far as to state that the absence of trust leads to an ultimate degeneration into terrorism.

One of the future directions in which trust and governance research should follow is to investigate the links between trust and legitimacy. Processes and outcomes may appear legitimate to academics and practitioners, but other actors may have different thoughts based on their perceptions of the particular context in which the process has taken place. It would seem reasonable that without the trust of all actors involved and the wider public, the process and its outcomes may not be seen as legitimate in their eyes.

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