

**Public Participation in Scottish Land-Use Planning: Empowerment
or Social Control?**

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Abstract:

It is increasingly common for environmental policies to contain commitments to public participation. It is widely presumed that greater public participation in decision-making processes will lead to more socially acceptable, and hence sustainable, decisions or projects. However, it is important to pay critical attention to what this participation entails, how it is facilitated and how it is experienced by both participants and facilitators. UK land-use planning policies contain strong commitments to public participation, and as such this is one area which allows exploration of these issues. This paper will present the findings of a detailed, multi-method case study of one particular planning application (for a renewable energy development) in order to explore how commitments to public participation are translated into action. In particular, it considers the roles which different actors play, and the power that they exercise within the planning process.

In order to understand the many different forms of power which are exercised the research employs Lukes' three-dimensional view of power as a framework of how the concept is to be understood. Through this framework, it considers the power of objectors and prospective developers but also the forms of power that are found within the structures of the planning system itself. Power is considered to be visible not only in the outcomes of decision-making processes but also in the processes themselves. It is shown that whilst planning processes are presented as being public and democratic, considerable power is exercised in controlling the participation that is allowed and ultimately the range of outcomes which can be achieved. Furthermore, it is shown that public participants play active roles in constructing and shaping their contributions. Thus, engaging with public views is problematic since these are not presented in straightforward ways. Participants' contributions are not simple responses to the opportunity of democratic involvement, but rather represent active attempts to present lay knowledge in 'credible' and 'legitimate' ways. Thus it will be shown that facilitating meaningful public participation is highly problematic, requiring openness and transparency from both facilitators and participants.

Key Words: Participation; Planning; Power; Renewable Energy; Social Control

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Introduction

It is increasingly common for environmental policies to contain commitments to public participation (Irwin 2006). The underlying presumption appears to be that greater public participation in decision-making processes will lead to more socially acceptable (Gregory & Miller 1998, Chilvers 2008), and hence sustainable outcomes. However, it is important not to presume that because a project, or decision-making process makes claims to being participatory that it accurately reflects public interests or that ‘participants’ play an influential role. Supposedly ‘participatory’ approaches can conceal undemocratic or unjust processes (see Cooke & Kothari 2001).

This paper presents the findings of a case study of a planning application for a wind power development, and seeks to evaluate to what extent the planning process represents an exercise in participation – entailing empowerment of participants – or rather in social control. It is suggested that, although planning processes are described as open and participatory, members of the public’s influence is highly restricted. Tension exists between commitments to public participation and desires to control decision-making processes. As will be shown below, locating where and through what means power is exercised is a complex task.

Public Engagement with Science

At the turn of the century the UK House of Lords Science and Technology Committee (House of Lords 2000) famously stated that there was a ‘crisis of trust’ in science. Science is no longer celebrated or viewed as holding a privileged position in (or above) society, but instead: ‘Scientific judgements may be routinely doubted and associated with vested interests. To say that something is ‘scientifically proven’ is now as likely to be voiced ironically as literally’ (Yearley 2005: *xiii*).

Gregory and Miller (1998) observed that the increasing scepticism of, and loss of deferential respect for, science did not go unnoticed by the scientific establishment.

They noted that in the latter half of the twentieth century science came to be perceived as ‘under threat’ since it was acknowledged that public acceptance of science was necessary for securing or maintaining research funds and support, as such ‘scientists around the world began to wonder if the relationships between science and the public perhaps needed a little attention’ (Gregory & Miller 1998: 3). The Public Understanding of Science (PUS) movement arose in response to this perceived threat to science. Essentially it was felt that in order to increase public acceptance or deference for science one need only ‘improve’ the public’s *understanding* of science. PUS has since become the subject of much criticism, in particular Jasanoff (2005: 252) notes that the numbers of bodies taking up PUS and the activities that are entered into ‘say less about how publics know things in contemporary societies than they do about the presumptions underlying scientists’ (and secondarily the state’s) expectations of what publics should know’.

More recently, attention has shifted to public engagement or participation with science and technology. As Rowe *et al* (2005: 331) note within ‘contemporary democratic societies [there is a] growth in enthusiasm within policy circles for public “engagement” or “participation” as a means of approaching certain difficult issues like the management of risks’. The assumptions underpinning this new interest in public engagement are predominantly instrumental: ‘participation might bring beneficial outcomes, such as enhanced public legitimacy, credibility, and trust’ (Chilvers 2008: 155-156).

However, it is not clear that much has really changed in terms of the statuses accorded to expert and lay knowledges. Irwin (2006: 309) observes that recent policy announcements have included both commitments to public engagement and openness as well as to ‘longer-established notions of sound science [...] typically, one part of a document adopts the language of re-building trust while another is committed to an established economic and technical agenda’. While it is clear that there is a growing policy emphasis (at least in words) on public engagement relating to science issues Irwin questions the meaning and implication of this commitment. In his examination of the UK Government’s public dialogue relating to genetically modified (GM) agriculture, he noted that ‘the UK Government offered no guarantee during the exercise that it would act upon the report’ (Irwin 2006: 313). Furthermore, it was

noted that this public dialogue was part of a broader debate about GM which also involved (though not exactly simultaneously) economic and scientific strands of debate. 'It would appear that the construction of public debate, economic and scientific reviews as three separate strands inhibited the possibility of transparent public engagement in 'technical' analysis or of public discussion openly reflecting upon technical issues raised by the other streams' (*ibid*: 313).

Irwin (2006) remarks that initiatives such as this, whilst claiming to represent meaningful public engagement and a greater commitment to incorporating lay views into decision- and policy-making actually re-establish traditional dichotomous views of expert and lay knowledge. Expert and lay knowledges are kept separate and ultimately expert knowledge retains a more prominent position. Thus, as Chilvers (2008: 157) notes: 'Although participatory experiments have made some headway, it remains unclear as to where and how the public fits in to scientifically-framed issues'.

Public Participation in Scottish Planning

Commitments to public participation are prominent within Scottish planning policies (see for example: SPP1, SPP6). As such planning provides useful examples of public participation in action, and opportunities to assess the meaning and implications of professed commitments to public participation.

Within the planning theory literature public participation is a much-debated topic. Advocates of participatory planning have argued that: 'From our modernist reliance on state-directed futures and top-down processes, we have to move to more community-based planning, from the ground up, geared to *community empowerment*' (Sandercock 1998: 30). Incorporating the views of members of the public into planning decisions is seen to give greater legitimacy to those decisions.

It has been acknowledged that from the mid-1990's onwards politicians and policy-makers have come to make frequent use (and mis-use) of the term 'collaborative planning' (Healey 2003). Kaza (2006: 256) contends that 'The participatory approach in the public planning domain has become institutionalized as a method of good planning practice' and that 'democratic principles and public participation have become increasingly accepted as means for balancing and rationalizing multiple

interests and preferences'. Rydin (2007: 54) contends that within planning theory the 'new orthodoxy clusters around the idea that the core of planning should be an engagement with a range of stakeholders, giving them voice and seeking to achieve planning consensus'.

However, participatory approaches are not free of criticism. Particular concerns have been raised about the emphasis which is placed on process, it has been suggested that 'the focus on interaction directs attention away from the justice and sustainability of the material outcomes of planning interventions' (Healey 2003: 110). Furthermore, it is contended that significant attention must be paid to *who* participates, and simultaneously to who does *not* participate, and as such to which voices are able to dominate participatory processes (Kaza 2006). Within local contexts there can be many conflicting interests (Kaza 2006) and existing relationships of power play critical roles (Healey 2003). Thus participatory approaches to planning are fraught with difficulties and challenges. As March (2004: 412) contends; 'Democratic planning, then, must reconcile a complex of precepts which are desirable, but which pull in different directions'. Ultimately; 'an inclusionary collaborative process does not necessarily guarantee the justice of either process or material outcomes' (Healey 2003: 115).

Whilst public participation is described as highly important and valuable within Scottish planning policies, the role which members of the public play may be limited, this is well illustrated in the case of planning for renewable energy developments. In the Scottish Planning Policy relating to such developments it is shown that local objections to a planning application should present an opportunity for developers to address concerns and to modify their plans accordingly:

Where valid concerns have been raised as part of the planning process, the applicant will need to demonstrate how these can be overcome or how any detrimental environmental effects can be minimised, where appropriate advancing any material arguments which might outweigh objections to the proposed development.

(SPP6: 14)

A bias in favour of renewable energy developments is apparent. Under this system it is anticipated that objections can be overcome or outweighed by benefits. Scottish Planning Policy One sets out some examples of the range of possible considerations

which might be taken into consideration when determining a particular planning application. These are:

- Scottish Executive policy, and UK Government policy on reserved matters;
- National Planning Policy Guidelines, Scottish Planning Policies, Planning Advice Notes and Circulars;
- European policy, where relevant;
- a draft structure or local plan;
- a National Park Plan;
- Area Waste Plans;
- Community plans;
- the environmental impact of the proposal;
- the design of the proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings;
- access, provision of infrastructure and planning history of the site;
- views of statutory and other consultees; and
- legitimate public concern or support expressed on relevant planning matters.

(SPP1: 17)

Great weight is attached to policy (Scottish, UK and European), technical assessments (including for example, environmental impact assessments), and the views of experts (*i.e.* statutory consultees). Public concern/support is, perhaps significantly, last on this list, and even then it is qualified as being *legitimate* public concern or support and only that expressed on *relevant* planning matters. Importantly, which aspects of public concern are considered 'legitimate' and which planning matters are considered 'relevant' are determined by decision-makers. Therefore, whilst public participation is described as being of great importance within planning policies there is some doubt as to how meaningful or influential such participation can be. This paper represents an attempt to address such doubts and examine how public participation in the Scottish planning system is actually experienced.

Power

Meaningful participation entails empowerment of participants; as such any evaluation of participatory activities must consider where power is found and how this is deployed. There is a vast array of different theories which attempt to define or explore the concept of power. This paper cannot possibly consider all the relevant literature on this topic; instead some key theories will be briefly discussed in order to set out how the concept is understood in this research.

Firstly, Dahl (1961) conceives power to be present where A gets B to do something which B would not otherwise do. Thus, power is visible in overt conflicts and decision-making arenas and can only be identified through ‘careful examination of a series of concrete decisions’ (Dahl 1958: 466). Dahl’s theory provides an example of what Lukes (1974 [2004]) described as the *one-dimensional view of power*. This view is essentially concerned with power as it is exercised in formal institutions and made visible through overt conflicts and decision-making outcomes.

Bachrach and Baratz (1970) built on and critiqued the work of Dahl (and other pluralists). They argued that the pluralists’ view of power ‘unduly emphasizes the importance of initiating, deciding and vetoing’ (Bachrach & Baratz 1970: 6). They acknowledged that not only does A exercise power over B when A makes B do something that they would not otherwise do, but A can also exert power over B through institutional means. Such means limit the scope of political processes and hence can be used to achieve aims which are in the interests of A. Bachrach and Baratz’s theory fits what Lukes refers to as the *two-dimensional view of power*. This recognises the role of power in formal decision-making, but also within informal settings and in less visible activities such as agenda-setting. Conflict according to this view can be covert as well as overt, but importantly conflict remains a crucial element in the exercise of power.

Lukes (1974 [2004]) critiques both the one- and two-dimensional views, in particular he contends that neither conflict (whether overt or covert) or decision-making (and nondecision-making) are necessary for power to be exercised. He therefore proposed a *three-dimensional view of power* which took into consideration not only how power is exercised within conflicts but also the role of power to prevent conflicts through shaping people’s interests and beliefs: ‘To put the matter sharply, A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants’ (Lukes 1974[2004]: 27). In this way neither decisions nor conflict are required in order for power to have been exercised. According to the three-dimensional view, power is exercised in many ways which are not easily observed – even to those upon whom power is exercised.

Lukes' three-dimensional view of power is not without its criticisms (see for example; Hayward 2006, Morriss 2002, Shapiro 2006). In particular, it has been contended that 'his posited third face of power defie[s] the possibility of scientific evaluation on the grounds that it depend[s] on unobservable real interests' (Shapiro 2006: 146). The practical value of Lukes' theory has been questioned given that the three-dimensional view is seeking to observe something which is by definition covert or unobservable. Furthermore, critics have questioned whether it is ever possible to identify what an individual or group's 'real interests' are. There have been few empirical studies conducted to test the practical value of Lukes' theory (however, one strong example is Gaventa [1980] who examined power relations in a Central Appalachian mining community). Shapiro (2006) has called for further empirical work to be done to test the limits or relevance of the three-dimensional view of power. This research therefore represents a valuable opportunity to demonstrate the relevance and value of Lukes' theory.

Public Inquiries

The case study considered in this paper relates primarily to how a planning application was considered and determined within a public inquiry. Public inquiries are adversarial events at which different parties present their case relating to the planning application. Witnesses representing these parties are cross-examined by lawyers who also represent the different viewpoints. The process is overseen by a 'Reporter' from the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) who evaluates the evidence and presents his/her verdict in a written report. Given that public inquiries are by definition public events, and that participation within them is highly visible they present a valuable opportunity to consider how members of the public participate and to what extent they are empowered through this participation.

Previously, Wynne (1982) conducted a case study of a public inquiry into the proposed development of a plant to reprocess spent nuclear fuels. Through this study he presented public inquiries as exercises in social control. The inquiry was described as 'projecting a particular model of democracy – one that required only the expert discovery of objective facts about a narrowly defined question' (Wynne 1982: 10). Wynne argued that social control comes through public knowledge – and in particular

scientific knowledge. 'The demand for 'hard facts' alone excludes debate about the interpretive social frameworks within which those facts have meaning' (*ibid*: 3). Thus what counts as 'fact' is defined by an elite who consequently impart political meaning onto these 'facts' and simultaneously serve to classify all alternative perspectives as irrational and hence irrelevant for consideration within decision-making processes. Accepted knowledge is then hegemonic and beyond (legitimate) refute. As such one can either defer to this knowledge or be labelled as irrational and/or emotive.

Wynne suggested that public inquiries represented rituals in which exercises in social control are played out by reinforcing the dominance of expertise and marginalising alternative voices. Through requiring members of the public who wish to participate in inquiries to couch their arguments in the language of scientific or technical expertise and 'facts', they force individuals to conform to the procedures set out by those in control of the process. Furthermore, Wynne suggests that inquiries send messages to broader society about the importance of 'hard facts' and the limited (even negligible) role of subjective values or alternative knowledges within decision-making (or indeed policy-making). Such messages ultimately serve to protect the *status quo* and maintain social order. As such inquiries are seen to serve a far wider role than merely determining the fate of particular proposed developments.

Wynne's account of inquiries as exercises in social control is supported in other studies of public inquiries. For example, Brown (2003: 108) contends that the role of a public inquiry 'is to investigate those problems that threaten the state with a legitimisation deficit, [and] to re-establish and justify state authority'. Similarly, Kemp (1987: 177) asserts that: 'Outcomes of public hearings are rarely objective, rational, and egalitarian; they are manipulated to further the interests of both state and capital', and that; 'public inquiries are seen to legitimize controversial decisions taken in several important areas of governmental planning activity' (*ibid.*: 179). Equally, Gephart (1992) in a study of a public inquiry into a fatal pipeline accident concluded that the inquiry was used to distort local logics of safety and to legitimise state regulation and state actions in disaster control.

Public participation is clearly perceived very differently now than at the time of Wynne's case study. This research therefore represents an attempt to evaluate

Wynne's arguments along with recent commitments to public participation set out in policy documents discussed above. The paper aims to determine to what extent Scottish planning processes – and public inquiries in particular – can be viewed as providing meaningful opportunities for public participation and whether Wynne's argument retains salience.

Case Study

The case study examines a planning application to build a wind farm in a rural area of central Scotland. The planning application, due to its capacity (under 50 mega watts) was originally to be determined by the local authority, however it was refused bringing about an appeal by the developers meaning that the application was eventually determined through a public inquiry. The history of the planning application is discussed in more detail in Aitken (2009).

The planning application was formally lodged in 2003 (three years after the site was originally identified), and negative community feeling had already formed by this point. Once the application was lodged a local campaign group organised to oppose the proposed development. The group disseminated leaflets and prepared proforma objection letters to facilitate representations to the council (for a discussion of these letters see Aitken *et al* 2008). The result was that the council received an unprecedented number of objection letters.

The planning application was originally due to be determined at a meeting in August 2004, however, a decision was deferred until January 2005. At this later meeting the council then voted to refuse the planning application. An appeal was lodged some six months after this and took place by means of a public inquiry. At the inquiry a reporter from the Scottish Executive Inquiry Reporters Unit (SEIRU) (now renamed as the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals [DPEA]) was appointed to oversee and adjudicate the proceedings and evidence. The final outcome was that the appeal was upheld meaning that planning permission was granted.

Methods

The case study was conducted in several stages. The initial stages involved a review of secondary material (press coverage, planners' reports etc) and a thematic analysis

of objection letters. The thematic analysis of objection letters examined arguments made in objection letters written to the local council, it also considered the different forms that these objection letters took (see Aitken *et al* 2008).

The next stage was a period of observation at the public inquiry. During this stage data was collected both from the evidence and cross-examination which played a significant part in the public inquiry process, and also through observations of, and conversations with local community members attending the inquiry, and additionally with representatives of the developers and numerous 'expert' witnesses.

The penultimate stage was a thematic analysis of the eventual inquiry report (in which the outcome of the appeal was announced). This was conducted in order to evaluate how the decision-maker's rationale and perspective compared with that of the objectors and developers (Aitken *et al* 2008). Finally a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted. The analysis of the data collected through the review of secondary material, thematic analysis of objection letters and observation at the inquiry informed the selection of interviewees and also the design of the interviews. Interviewees were both in favour of, and in opposition to the proposal, and had both professional and personal interests.

Findings

In the initial stages of the planning application process, local community members were frustrated by the planning process and expressed very vocally their discontent with the local authority which was seen to have mishandled the planning application. However, community members did appear to be influential within the planning process. There were no formal objections from statutory consultees, and the council had stated it was 'minded to approve' the application, thus the local opposition campaign group appear to have played a key role in influencing the decision to refuse planning permission for the proposed development. However, this 'people power' was somewhat diminished in the subsequent public inquiry process.

The public inquiry largely consisted of evidence from witnesses representing the developers and the local opposition group and subsequent cross-examinations by lawyers. Expertise and credentials were very important within the public inquiry and

cross-examination of witnesses (especially by the developers' lawyer) typically focussed on discrediting those of the opposite side. Without exception the developers' lawyer attempted to demonstrate that each of the opposition group's witnesses were less qualified or appropriately experienced than those giving evidence on the same topic for the developers. Through such methods of cross-examination the boundaries of what was to be considered legitimate knowledge were clearly signalled and the perceived importance of expertise was highlighted.

Interviewees who had given evidence on behalf of the opposition group noted that they felt they had to temper their views so as to only include concerns which they could back up with 'scientific' evidence. Witnesses representing the opposition group were largely lay people from the local community, whereas those representing the developers were professional consultants. As such the emphasis on credentials and expertise worked in favour of the developers.

The efforts which were made to discredit witnesses illustrate the importance of expertise to the inquiry. It was clearly felt that credible experts provided reliable evidence and hence that the credibility of experts was a key concern. However, this meant that whilst the inquiry had come about largely as a result of community members' – lay people's - concerns and apprehensions, the inquiry itself was not focussed at this level. Issues were discussed by recourse to expert opinion and knowledge, and debates invariably called upon complicated technical or specialist information which was largely incomprehensible to members of the public.

The following is a brief illustration of inquiry debates around two key topics, notably Transport and Roads and Visual Impact.

Transport and Roads

Transport and roads were discussed early in the inquiry proceedings, however references to perceived dangers or risks relating to this topic continued to arise until the very end of the inquiry – particularly in evidence presented by members of the public in opposition to the development. The main issues discussed were the need for road alterations and closures during or prior to the construction process, and the

ability of abnormal loads carrying turbine components to navigate the route – particularly their ability to negotiate certain corners.

Whilst the opposition group's witness contended that the works required to make the road suitable for the necessary abnormal loads would inevitably require significant road closures and consequently disruption to local users, the witness giving evidence on behalf of the developers asserted that he did not perceive that there would be more than three or four road closures of no more than a couple of hours each. The general sentiment amongst members of the public in attendance was that 'of course' there would be significant disruption; technical arguments did not alleviate the concerns of those appealing to commonsense and local knowledge.

This was again the case with discussions relating to the ability of abnormal loads to navigate a corner in the road by a local church. Concerns were raised about damage that would be caused to the church wall. The opposition group's witness referred to diagrams of the route which clearly showed that it was impossible for the abnormal loads to get around the corner without colliding with the wall. However, his counterpart stressed that the diagrams should not be taken at face value and that they did not take into account the mechanisms of the vehicles which made the corner feasible despite its apparent impossibility. This again, inevitably, led to highly technical arguments and it was suggested by the developers' lawyer that the opposition group's witness was ill-qualified and therefore unable to comprehend the issue properly. The opposition group's witness repeatedly argued that he was presenting evidence based on the information provided in the diagrams and documents, whereas the developers' lawyer and witness argued that this was insufficient.

Consequently, the debate was far-removed from local people wanting to understand the issue in terms of its impact on their life and locality. Much of the cross-examination by the developers' lawyer focussed on discrediting the opposition group's witness and showing him to be unable to understand the evidence presented by the developers' witness. The implication was that only experts – and moreover only experts with very particular skills and training – could fully understand or engage with the issues.

Visual Impact

The debates surrounding the issue of visual impact again focussed primarily on process and expertise of witnesses rather than the evidence itself. The local opposition group's witness was subjected to a gruelling eight hour cross-examination by the developers' lawyer who appeared to be aiming to thoroughly discredit him. Some six of those hours dealt only with his qualifications and credentials as opposed to the substance of his evidence. The comparatively small amount of time which was devoted to his actual evidence can be viewed as an attempt to minimise the weight which it was to be accorded. Within interviews local objectors used this as an example of where the developer's lawyer's approach was inappropriate and excessively brutal. The treatment of this particular witness angered many local objectors.

Where cross-examination did focus on the evidence that was being presented, the attention was on the tools employed in assessing likely visual impact. Photomontages which had been produced by the developers for the ES were heavily criticised by the opposition group's lawyer and witness, who deemed them unrealistic. However it was argued by the developers' witness and lawyer that photomontages were not intended to be understood as exact representations of the proposed development and that their limitations must be recognised. It was stated that landscape professionals would use them in conjunction with other tools and bearing in mind multiple factors. The implication was that without necessary expertise and training one could not appropriately interpret the photomontages, and that one could not simply consider them as representations of the proposed development. The result was that an issue which might have been expected to be comprehensible to members of the public, and particularly local people familiar with the landscape, was firmly positioned as one which could only be understood by experts with adequate professional training. Lay people concerned for their local landscapes were left feeling belittled and bemused.

Discussion

It appeared that the power which the local opposition campaign group possessed did not extend to influencing what the final outcome was. As Bell *et al* (2005: 463) have noted; 'The structure of the planning system may encourage 'oppositional'

participation but planning policy and government support for wind energy may make successful opposition increasingly difficult'. In this case objectors were able to effectively express their concerns within the local planning system and as such to have the planning application refused, however the result of this refusal was an appeals process which served to sideline the very concerns which had brought it about.

If one considers this case study according to a one-dimensional view of power (i.e. according to the outcomes of the formal decision-making process), it would appear that the objectors, whilst powerful in the initial planning application stage, had little or no power at the later public inquiry. However, by considering Lukes' (1974 [2004]) three-dimensional view of power some alternative perspectives are possible.

It cannot be denied that the opposition campaign group exerted significant influence up until the point of the public inquiry, and as such were powerful actors in the early planning application process. An observable outcome of this was that the approval which was eventually secured by the developers was significantly delayed and the process cost the developers, planning bodies and local council considerable time and money. Thus, the campaign group might be considered to have exercised covert power in ensuring negative consequences for the developers as well as creating negative publicity about the development, and wind power generally. The campaign group's publicity may have influenced other members of the public's views about wind energy and could potentially have negative consequences for future developments. It may also be envisaged that such costly delays and negative publicity might influence future prospective developers either by making them reluctant to construct wind farms or to be sensitive and responsive to campaign groups' arguments.

It is interesting to note the role played by the opposition campaign group in reshaping the nature of objections that were presented. Objection issues which were expected to be accorded greater legitimacy were prioritised within objection letters, and particularly through the proforma letter created by the campaign group (Aitken *et al* 2008). This may be perceived to have contributed to the prioritising of perceivably 'objective' issues, and might be viewed as an example of agenda-setting power.

However, this can alternatively be taken to represent objectors acting in accordance with covert power exercised within the planning process. The three-dimensional view of power acknowledges the power to shape people's beliefs and ideologies. In this case we can see that objectors' beliefs about what constituted 'appropriate' objections were in line with those set out in the planning system.

However, whilst it might be seen that the central position of expert knowledge within the public inquiry served to marginalise lay knowledge – and consequently much of the local opposition's argument – the construction of expert knowledge as central was maintained by all parties (Aitken 2009). Lay opposition witnesses became disgruntled with the inquiry process and the difficulty that they experienced in presenting evidence. Yet it was not just the developers but also the opposition campaign group which relied on expert witnesses and who were represented by lawyers referring to credentials and expertise as key factors in assessing the legitimacy and credibility of evidence. Representatives of the opposition group actively tried to present their evidence in as 'expert' ways as possible. A more nuanced understanding of what constitutes legitimate knowledge, and a greater appreciation of the value of 'lay expertise' may have benefited the local opposition group's case. However, it was in part the opposition group themselves who upheld the constructed distinction between expert and lay knowledge.

It is interesting to note that these boundaries were not fixed at the beginning of the inquiry and there may have been greater scope for lay knowledge to be influential. Prior to the inquiry there was not a fixed notion of who counted as an 'expert' or what constituted 'legitimate' knowledge, but through the inquiry process participants (whether lawyers, representatives of the developers or local objectors) actively constructed these boundaries and defined certain individuals as 'experts' and certain (in some cases only very specific) knowledges as 'legitimate'.

Given that these dichotomies were constructed and upheld by individuals representing all sides of the argument the proposition that this took power away from local objectors (or that it represented an exercise in social control) must be re-considered. Within interviews whilst objectors were sceptical of experts and the evidence they presented, they acknowledged a need to present their own case in the language of

expertise. This may be taken as an example of the power present within the planning system to shape people's beliefs and ideologies. As Luke's (1974 [2004]) set out, according to the three-dimensional view of power, the exercise of power does not require overt conflict but rather can take place through shaping people's worldviews so that conflict does not arise. For example, objectors do not protest (within the inquiry setting) that their lay knowledge is being sidelined in favour of expert knowledge, or that their concerns are being overlooked, because they have been socialised to accept that expert knowledge exists in a 'real' sense and that it should be given a central place within decision-making arenas. This also accords with Wynne's (1982) proposition that public inquiries transmit signals to wider society about what constitutes legitimate knowledge. Thus, objectors may have been acting in response to signals received through their knowledge of previous planning (or other decision-making) processes.

The three-dimensional view of power is extremely interesting when used to examine the power present within the planning system and policies themselves. For example, the role of members of the public is severely constricted by setting limits as to what is 'acceptable' evidence to be presented within the inquiry and by favouring expert knowledge over lay knowledge. Furthermore, national policies relating to renewable energy are not allowed to be challenged within inquiries; this can be viewed as a clear exercise of agenda-setting power.

Such observations resonate with Wynne's (1982) assertion that the public inquiry represents an exercise in social control whereby individuals must express themselves in accordance with accepted knowledge or be categorised as irrational. In this case study it was clear that witnesses who could not back up their evidence with 'reliable' data or scientific reasoning were discredited as illegitimate and as having little to contribute to the inquiry process. This was also a powerful means of removing social or explicitly subjective matters from the public inquiry discussions. However, as Wynne (1982) noted such matters were potentially of considerable significance. Within this case study it was found that lay witnesses were concerned with questions of who would be held accountable *if* negative impacts occurred as a result of the development (Aitken 2009), however, despite allowing these questions to be put forward in third party evidence the inquiry never explicitly dealt with these issues or

attempted to answer these questions. Instead, the inquiry (and the resulting inquiry report) focussed predominantly on 'objective', 'scientific' and quantifiable issues and concealed any evidence of subjective judgement.

The notion of social control discussed by Wynne (1982) raises questions as to the implicit role of planning appeals. The fact that relevant policies could not be debated strongly limited the scope of objectors' influence and silenced a great deal of criticism which might otherwise have been expressed. Moreover the constant need to be able to back up statements with proof, or to provide 'facts' meant that the subjective realities of individual people and their concerns could not be expressed. Thus the inquiry rules and structure effectively served to silence much of the opposition's voice and to weaken its influence. This might be seen as a means of controlling 'democratic' processes so as to secure outcomes which reflect the aims or interests of the decision-making elite.

Conclusions

Within the case study it was found that although lay people were given opportunities to speak at the public inquiry, their voices were easily overlooked. Expert knowledge was privileged and lay knowledge was instead treated as extraneous and largely immaterial. Thus, one cannot conclude that the case study illustrates a democratic, participatory planning system in action. However, lay people were not entirely powerless – instead conflicts of power and interest were present throughout the inquiry.

Wynne's (1982) argument that public inquiries represent exercises in social control appears to have merit. The exertion of social control can be found within the case study in a number of ways. Firstly, the inquiry required evidence to be given in a factual manner and reified the position of experts, thus minimising the input or influence of lay people and sending powerful messages about who is deemed competent to take part in decision-making processes. This encouraged lawyers conducting cross-examination to focus more on the credentials of witnesses than on the substance of the evidence they presented. Ultimately, this can be seen to work to the advantage of developers since, as has been noted in this case study as well as by Wynne (1982), opposition groups typically do not have the same level of resources as

developers and hence are represented by some experts but mostly 'enthusiastic amateurs' from the local community. Inevitably such 'enthusiastic amateurs' will not have the same level of qualifications or experience as the developers' experts.

Secondly, policy took on a central legitimating role within the inquiry decision-making. The importance of policy, and the way in which it was guarded against challenge at the inquiry highlighted the conviction that existing policies adequately reflected 'the public interest' and that lay people were ill-qualified or inappropriate to engage with such matters. Thus, whilst its outputs affect members of the public's lives, policy is kept strictly in the realm of policy-makers. The creation of boundaries of what is permissible and what is improper for inclusion at the inquiry controls the participation of members of the public and effectively sets limits to democracy.

Conversely, it has been shown that lay objectors played active roles in shaping the evidence and debates at the inquiry, and constructing boundaries between expert (legitimate) and lay (illegitimate) knowledge. It is far simpler to suppose that lay voices are excluded through the actions and rules of decision-makers and powerful elites than through their own actions. Such simpler conclusions may be reached in examining processes through a two-dimensional view of power. This would lead one to suggest that elites need to become more flexible and accommodate a wider variety of knowledges. However, by referring to the three-dimensional view of power the issues become more complex. One must acknowledge that lay actors are not only responding to visible signals of what is desired (*i.e.* that they are being invited to participate in a decision-making process), but also to less obvious influences which have shaped their expectations of the process and their perceptions of what a legitimate contribution would be. The case study has highlighted that there may be greater opportunities for public participation in the inquiry but that lay people actively construct boundaries to their own detriment. Such boundaries might on the one hand be seen as necessary for expedient decision-making, but on the other hand serve to limit the scope and influence of public participation. The active roles of lay people in interpreting what is expected or required of them, and presenting themselves in ways perceived to lead to optimal benefits must be acknowledged. Even if greater opportunities for public engagement and inclusion of lay knowledges existed, it is likely that lay people taking part would perceive a need to present their knowledge in

'expert', objectified ways. Thus, engaging with the opinions and knowledge of lay members of the public is more problematic than simply setting up encounters or opportunities. Rather it requires a fundamental change in the ways by which expert and lay knowledges are presented – and subsequently perceived – within society.

This casts some ambiguity over to what extent planning processes engender opportunities for public participation or serve as exercises in social control. At first sight they may appear to facilitate participation, however in reality they exemplify and simultaneously reinforce the results of powerful, ongoing social control existing in broader society.

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