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Power, Participation and Representation: Exploring the Policy Process

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POWER, PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION: EXPLORING THE POLICY PROCESS

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Abstract

The UK Social Policy Process (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b) is the starting point for this commentary. It took a broad approach to an analysis of the development of social policy by utilising ideas from politics, public policy and public administration in order to analyse the policy process through the application of a range of theoretical models and concepts, and to provide different perspectives on the operation of power in society. It also provided an analysis of the approach to policy making of the New Labour government, set against those of the Thatcher and Major governments. That publication effectively set the context for the remainder of the works discussed as part of this commentary, which together explore the themes of power, participation and representation in the policy process.

In addition to various theoretical perspectives, power is explored here through a consideration of the role of elected leaders, service users and citizens in the policy process; and through mechanisms of governance. Participation is considered by looking at the role of service users, petitioners and policy makers; while the theme of representation is examined in relation to political leaders.

Arguably, the major contribution of *The UK Social Policy Process* was in providing the first in-depth analysis of social policy making and implementation under New Labour (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b). This general framework was later applied to an original analysis of Conservative approaches to the governance of social policy at the time of the formation of the Coalition government (Bochel, 2011). Bochel (2006) devised a typology of forms of participation, one purpose of which was to help those who seek to use participation in the policy making process improve the practice of participation, while Bochel *et al.* (2008) drew together literature on participation to illustrate that, despite a plethora of government initiatives, there continues to be a lack of clarity over what participation entails. Bochel (2012) and Bochel (2013) look at petitions systems to illustrate the role of petitioners in the policy process,

and to examine the different types of systems. This has recently contributed to changes in the government's e-petitions system. Finally, the work on women leaders (Bochel and Bochel, 2008) helped to move the debate away from the descriptive representation of women and towards their substantive representation, whilst that on local political leadership (Bochel and Bochel, 2010) explored narratives and discourses from local leaders.

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Publications submitted for examination

Bochel, C. and Bochel H. M. (2004) *The UK Social Policy Process*, Palgrave, Basingstoke.

Bochel, C. (2006) 'New Labour, Participation and the Policy Process', *Public Policy and Administration*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 10-22.

Bochel, C., Bochel, H. M., Somerville, P. and Worley, C. (2008) 'Marginalised or Enabled Voices? 'User Participation' in Policy and Practice', *Social Policy and Society*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 201-210.

Bochel, C. and Bochel, H. M. (2008) 'Women 'Leaders' in local government in the UK', *Parliamentary Affairs*, special edition, vol. 61, part 3, pp. 426-441.

Bochel, C. and Bochel, H. M. (2010) 'Local Political Leadership and the Modernisation of Local Government', *Local Government Studies*, vol. 36, no. 6, pp. 723-737.

Bochel, C. (2011) 'The Conservatives and the Governance of Social Policy', in H. M. Bochel (ed.) *The Conservatives and Social Policy*, The Policy Press, Bristol.

Bochel, C. (2012) 'Petitions: different dimensions of voice and influence in the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales', *Social Policy & Administration*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 142-160.

Bochel, C. (2013) 'Petitions Systems: Contributing to Representative Democracy?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 4, pp. 798-815.

My contribution

Eight publications form the basis of this commentary, four of which are co-authored. My contribution to each of these is set out below:

Bochel, C. and Bochel H. M. (2004) *The UK Social Policy Process*, Palgrave, Basingstoke.

My contribution was in writing chapter 1 'Social Policy and Social Policy Analysis', chapter 2 'Perspectives on Policy Making, chapter 7 'Participation', and chapter 8 'Evaluation'.

Bochel, C., Bochel, H. M., Somerville, P. and Worley, C. (2008) 'Marginalised or Enabled Voices? 'User Participation' in Policy and Practice', *Social Policy and Society*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 201-210.

Three authors each wrote one section, and one author wrote the introduction and conclusion. My contribution was to write the section on 'The nature and purposes of participation'.

Bochel, C. and Bochel, H. M. (2008) 'Women 'Leaders' in local government in the UK', *Parliamentary Affairs*, special edition, vol. 61, part 3, pp. 426-441.

Both authors made an equal contribution in terms of the development of ideas and the writing of the article.

Bochel, C. and Bochel, H. M. (2010) 'Local Political Leadership and the Modernisation of Local Government', *Local Government Studies*, vol. 36, no. 6, pp. 723-737.

Both authors made an equal contribution in terms of the development of ideas and the writing of the article.

The context

This commentary considers the general approach taken in the literature on the making and implementation of social policy prior to 2004 in order to illustrate the need for a new approach. *The UK Social Policy Process* (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b) was written to address a gap in the literature on the policy process and is the starting point for this commentary. In exploring the relevance of the policy process to social policy, it enables the themes of power, participation and representation to be discussed in subsequent sections.

It is important to recognise that much of the literature does not fall easily into a particular category, and thus there will be overlap between, for example, social policy, politics, public policy, and public administration.

At the time that *The UK Social Policy Process* (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b) was being written, much of the existing literature around social policy tended to look at policy in the context of responses to problems, and to describe and evaluate policies (for example, George and Wilding, 1984; Sullivan, 1996; Franklin, 1998; Langan, 1998; May, Page and Brunsdon, 2001), rather than considering any insights that might have emerged from a 'wider consideration of the policy process' itself (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b, p.1). The range of literature that looked specifically at social policy and the policy process was quite small and relatively narrow in its reach. Hill and Bramley's (1986) *Analysing Social Policy* was perhaps one of the first texts to look at the social policy process and recognise the value of this approach, and was followed by Challis *et al.* (1988) *Joint Approaches to Social Policy: Rationality and Practice*, which focused on a particular attempt by government to develop a more 'rational' form of policy making. After this came a number of other texts which looked for example, at health policy (Harrison, Hunter and Pollitt, 1990; Ham, 1999; Baggot, 2000) and education policy (Trowler, 1998). There was also some additional work that started to consider the making and implementation of policy and the implications for social policy, such as: Bochel and Bochel's (1998) chapter on 'The governance of social policy'; Levin's

(1997) *Making Social Policy*, which discussed the mechanisms and machinery of government; and Wassoff and Hill's (2002) article, 'Family Policy in Scotland', which considered the impact of devolution on the policy process. These all considered the policy process in a largely United Kingdom context. Dolowitz *et al.* (2000) added a further dimension to the literature with the *Policy Transfer and British Social Policy: Learning from the USA?* Together these reflect the main body of literature on the social policy process at the time.

While the literature in respect of social policy and the policy process was fairly small, as illustrated above, the opposite was true for that which existed on public policy, public administration, politics and the policy process away from the social policy arena. Although key ideas can be traced back further, interest in policy analysis began to grow significantly in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, where there were concerns about the inability of governments to tackle seemingly unsolvable problems and thus there was a need to seek help for solutions. There was also an interest from academics in learning more about policy related issues and in finding solutions to these problems (Ham and Hill, 1984). Thus, over time, and drawing on the expanding literature from the United States, such as Simon's (1957) *Administrative Behaviour*, Lindblom's (1959) 'The Science of "Muddling Through"', Easton's (1965) *A Framework for Political Analysis*, Dahl's (1970) *Modern Political Analysis*, and Olsen's (1970) *Power in Societies*, courses in policy analysis were developed and publications began to emerge. To some extent this growing awareness about the policy process overlapped with concerns about the future of democracy at the time of the Cold War, with writers such as Mills (1956) following Lasswell (1936) in emphasising the importance of intellectuals in policy making as a counterweight to other interests.

There was also the growth of a very varied literature on power which has relevance for studies of the policy process, with Dahl's (1961) *Who Governs?* stimulating much debate around ideas of pluralism. However, very little of this was specifically focussed on social policy, although Bachrach and Baratz (1970) *Power and Poverty, Theory and Practice* and Lipsky's (1980, 2010)

Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services both have relevance and are worth mentioning here.

Some of the early texts in this field in a UK context included Pollitt *et al.* (1979) *Public Policy in Theory and Practice*, McGrew and Wilson's (1982) *Decision Making: Approaches and Analysis*, Burch and Wood's (1983) *Public Policy in Britain*, Ham and Hill's (1984) *The Policy Process in the Modern Capitalist State*, and Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) *Policy Analysis for the Real World*, which introduced students to a variety of theories and techniques which could be used to better understand the policy process. These were followed by a burgeoning policy process literature in the fields of public administration, public policy and politics (for example, Parsons, 1995; Hill, 1997; Rhodes, 1997; Newman, 2001; Hill and Hupe, 2002; Richards and Smith, 2002), many of which drew on key ideas from the American literature. The publication of Lukes' *Power: A Radical View* in 1974, had, of course, provided a widely used framework for the analysis of power.

Where social policy is concerned, we can see that a small body of literature was beginning to emerge which recognised the value of exploring the subject from a different perspective. *The UK Social Policy Process* (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b) was written to help bridge a gap in the literature, and took a broader approach to an analysis of the development of social policy by utilising ideas from public policy and public administration, and politics in order to analyse the policy process through the application of a range of models and concepts and provide different perspectives on the operation of power in society. It also provided an analysis of the approach to policy making of the New Labour government set against those of the Thatcher and Major governments.

Themes: power, participation and representation

This commentary explores the policy process through a consideration of the themes of power, participation and representation, which run through the publications selected for this thesis.

Power

The literature on power, while extensive, had rarely been applied specifically to the social policy process. This section identifies some of the key literature on power as it relates to the political system, illustrates how the concept of power can be used to help explore the policy process and considers my contribution to the literature in this respect.

It is almost impossible to discuss social structure and decision making without some reference to the role of power. Power pervades all aspects of society, from individuals, through organisations and corporations, to the state and political institutions. Yet it is an elusive concept. Hunter's (1953) *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers*, and Mills' (1956) *The Power Elite*, were among some of the early and influential books on the subject. These centred on American politics and the exercise of power by different groups in society. Later, Lukes (1974) put forward the idea that we need to think more broadly, in fact three dimensionally, about how we define and study power. By exploring policy making and implementation through a consideration of the themes of power, participation and representation, my research illustrates the complex nature of this process, including the many different groups and interests that seek to influence the agenda and, potentially, policy outcomes. The focus is on the exercise of power in the making and implementation of policy. My work uses a range of perspectives which can be applied to the study of the policy process and help us understand how power is exercised, the role of different groups in the decision making process, and their power relative to one another.

Power is a cross-cutting theme. It underpins, to a greater or lesser extent, all of the publications submitted here. This includes the power of elected leaders at national, devolved and local levels, the power exercised by users of services, and the power of citizens in the policy process. These groups and individuals have different degrees of power, and this is reflected in the extent to which they are enabled to participate in the policy process and the degree of influence they can have in affecting outcomes.

My interest in the policy process, and the starting point for my interest in research in this area, began with a co-authored chapter with H. M. Bochel: 'The governance of social policy' (1998). This sparked an interest in the process of governing, how it related to and differed from governance, and how this was translated into actual mechanisms of policy making and implementation by governments. There are a number of publications on power and governance in this thesis that fit closely with this theme, perhaps most obviously, 'The Conservatives and the Governance of Social Policy' (Bochel, 2011), and *The UK Social Policy Process* (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b), although as noted above, all of the selected publications are broadly related to it.

The UK Social Policy Process was significant not only for its consideration of the exercise of power, but as it offered the first in-depth analysis of social policy making and implementation under New Labour. The book, which developed from teaching and research interests, was written to address a significant gap in the social policy literature at that time, both in terms of academic analysis and reading for students. Whilst the book was partly developed as a textbook, it was also designed to be much more than that, taking an analytical approach to debates about the importance of the policy process in influencing and affecting social policies and their impacts, and focusing upon New Labour's approaches to and emphasis on policy making.

The UK Social Policy Process (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b) explored the role of the policy process in social policy and highlighted the importance of

'process' in affecting the way policies develop. It set out some of the intellectual challenges to 'traditional' approaches, such as those which emerged from the New Right, and from rational choice theory about the nature of bureaucracies. It discussed a range of theories, models and concepts which can be applied to structures of government, including central and sub-central government, and the devolved legislatures, to facilitate our understanding of the policy process.

The book used and critiqued a range of theoretical perspectives, including rationalism (Simon, 1957 [1945]) and incrementalism (Lindblom, 1959), which are perhaps the best known models of the policy making process. While both of these models had been widely critiqued, including by Dror (1964) and Etzioni (1967), the rational model is of particular importance, in part because of its application within a number of the publications in this commentary, but also because of its relevance to New Labour's approach to the policy process. It is usually traced back to Herbert Simon's book, *Administrative Behaviour*, published in 1945 and revised in 1957. Simon argued that rationality should be a goal in decision making, and that in any organisation 'rational' decision making can be seen as being a choice between alternatives that will help achieve previously selected goals. To achieve this there needs to be a comprehensive analysis of alternatives and their likely consequences. While Simon suggests that it should lead to greater achievement of desired ends, and the model may be useful as an 'ideal type' for many organisations, it has a number of weaknesses, including that it is impossible to consider all the alternatives, that it could be a time consuming and possibly never ending process, that knowledge of potential consequences is likely to be fragmentary, and that it fails to take into account what has gone before. Other perspectives used in the book include: agenda setting models (see for example, Cobb and Elder, 1972; Kingdon, 1984); pluralism (Dahl, 1961); decisions and non-decisions (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963); and Lukes' (1974) discussion of three faces of power. It applied them to policy making in the early years of the New Labour government, comparing where appropriate, to the Thatcher and Major governments. The book therefore provided a foundation against which other

scholars were able to consider the policy process and social policy, particularly under New Labour. Together with other work, including 'The governance of social policy' (Bochel and Bochel, 1998), it helped highlight the importance of the policy process in social policy, an area that, other than a few notable examples, had largely been neglected for much of the past two decades, but which has come more to the fore in social policy analysis since then.

In many respects 'The Conservatives and the Governance of Social Policy' (Bochel, 2011) reflected and built upon *The UK Social Policy Process*, analysing the Conservatives' approach to social policy making under David Cameron, underlining Stoker's (1998, p.18) observation that 'Governance recognises the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide'. It provided an original analysis of Conservative approaches to the governance of social policy at the time of the formation of the Coalition government, again including some comparison with the approaches to governance of the preceding Labour (1997-2010) and Conservative (1979-1997) governments.

These works utilise tools that enable exploration and understanding of the policy process from different perspectives, and help to illustrate how they are interwoven with one another. For example, Bochel (2011, p.257) discusses how Cameron's desire to introduce more participatory approaches to running public services, for example, in respect of the 'Big Society', raised wider questions around the use of governance mechanisms, including the support structures in place to facilitate arrangements for the Big Society, and how far such approaches are representative of the views of the local community, as well as ideas such as fairness and equality, accountability and regulation.

Participation

During the 1980s and 1990s the literature on participation grew significantly, particularly building on earlier work such as that by Arnstein (1969) (see for

example, Richardson, 1983; Croft and Beresford, 1992; Parry *et al.* 1992; Beresford and Croft, 1993; Lowndes *et al.* 1998; Beresford, 2001), and reflecting the development of academic, professional, user and governmental interest in the subject. This was wide-ranging in nature, including, for example, consideration of what public participation consists of (and reflecting new emphases, such as on users and consumers, and citizens as distinct from 'the public'), why it is important, and the potential benefits of participation in respect of improved democracy, governance, policy making and social capital, through to the variety of ways in which people participate, such as voting, volunteering, responding to consultations, joining pressure groups, being co-opted onto working groups for statutory bodies, and being elected to take part in the democratic process of representing constituents/local communities (Bochel, 2006; Home Office, 2004a, 2004b).

In the 1980s and 1990s two main approaches to participation were evident in the literature – the 'consumerist' and the 'democratic' approaches. The consumerist approach is often associated with the politics of the New Right and its critiques of welfare bureaucracies. It is underpinned by a preference for markets, and often linked with the idea of a smaller state and an expanding mixed economy of welfare. Welfare users are conceived of as consumers of services, and the market is seen as playing an important role in meeting the needs of individuals (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b). In this model, participation is quite narrow in its scope, especially when compared with the democratic approach as outlined below.

The 'democratic' approach fits more with a view of a substantial role for the state in enabling citizens to participate in social and public life, and the rights and responsibilities of both citizens and the state in bringing this about. It is also associated with changes that were taking place in society around user-involvement and self-advocacy. In many areas of social policy there were parallel developments of organisations of users (rather than organisations *for* users), and in some instances initiatives that enabled individuals to have a greater say in decisions about their own lives. The democratic approach is

underlined by a belief that participation, and giving voice to the full range of interests across society, is key to a healthy and democratic society, and that this should be represented in the decision making process (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b). In this model 'public representation is fundamental to effective political decision making' (Lupton *et al.* 1998, p.54).

Richardson (1983) identifies different types of participation, notably direct and indirect, and Lupton *et al.* (1998) usefully add 'mediated' to this typology. It is worth briefly outlining these since they help pull together the themes of this commentary and are important in supporting the discussion in subsequent sections. 'Direct' participation involves face to face contact with decision makers, perhaps through joining statutory working groups, or attending public meetings; 'indirect' participation is where people attempt to influence the policy process through other activities, perhaps through pressure group activity, or voting; and 'mediated' participation is where 'citizens' views are represented to decision makers by others' (Lupton *et al.* 1998, p.52). This variety of approaches to and types of participation are relevant to this commentary. Conservative, Labour and Coalition government approaches have all drawn upon both consumerist and democratic approaches, whilst the individuals, users and groups considered in this research participate through direct, indirect and mediated forms.

While *The UK Social Policy Process* (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b), in particular, and 'The Conservatives and the governance of social policy' (Bochel, 2011) to a lesser extent, both address notions of participation, there are a number of other publications that fall within the overarching theme of 'participation'. These include, 'New Labour: Participation and the Policy Process' (Bochel, 2006), which considers how 'users' views are represented within the policy process, and highlights that one important dimension that had been neglected was the capacities in which people participate in the decision making processes; 'Marginalised or Enabled Voices? 'User Participation' in Policy and Practice' (Bochel *et al.* 2008), which focusses on issues of power, participation and governance, and highlights the lack of clarity around many aspects of

participation; and 'Petitions: different dimensions of voice and influence in the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales' (Bochel, 2012), and 'Petitions Systems: Contributing to Representative Democracy?' (Bochel, 2013), which are relevant to both the themes of participation and representation.

The emphases on citizen participation and involvement in decision making by Conservative, Labour and Coalition governments can be analysed by utilising some of the perspectives outlined in the section on power, notably through consideration of the mechanisms used by governments, such as attempts to increase choice and the range and diversity of providers of services, and by some of the established models of policy making, such as rational and incremental models. Attempts to increase public input into decisions about policies, and even implementation, can be seen as a rational approach to the policy process, aimed not only at improving the process itself, but potentially also policy outcomes, and Conservative, Labour and Coalition governments have sometimes recognised this, although they tended to take different approaches to the implementation of participation in the policy process.

Ideas associated with participation, in its various guises, have been reflected in much of my work, including Bochel (2006), which creates a typology of forms of participation, the purpose of which is to highlight the need for bodies that wish to involve people in decision making processes to consider clearly who they are seeking to involve, with what purposes and on what basis. It considers the capacities in which people participate and makes a key distinction between participation which is undertaken on an individual basis, and participation undertaken on a group basis.

The article focuses on New Labour's encouragement of participation in public policy and decision making processes, which might be seen as a broadly rational approach to the policy process (Simon, 1957 [1945]). This is supported by a democratic approach to participation and draws on a mix of participatory and representative approaches (see for example, Arblaster, 1987; Parry,

Moyser and Day, 1992) 'that potentially encompasses the participation of individuals, communities, community leaders, elected representatives and groups in all aspects of the public policy process …' (Bochel, 2006, p.13). Whilst, in theory, participation might seem a relatively straightforward idea, the article illustrates that the involvement of groups such as users is much more complex than it might first appear, and that this may have consequences for the policy making process and policy outcomes. One dimension of participation that has largely been neglected (in the literature and in practice) has been the capacities in which people participate. People can participate as individuals, but they can also participate through groups. As 'participants', are they expected to represent themselves, or are they participating to represent others? Making this distinction 'would make a significant contribution to policy making as it would help clarify the focus and intention of participation for different initiatives; for those who seek to encourage participation; and for those who participate, so they are clear in what capacity they are participating' (Bochel, 2006, p.10). A further aspect of this lack of clarity that is highlighted by the article is that there is a need to set out what is meant by 'participation' for each initiative, so that participants are clear about what is expected of them, and what they can achieve by their involvement (see for example, Arnstein, 1969). In doing this the article highlights some of the different groups and interests seeking to influence the agenda and potentially policy outcomes, illustrates the different power of these groups relative to one another and helps us to understand some of the ways in which power is exercised. The article discusses how governments pursuing participatory strategies may have a variety of motivations. For example, Parry, Moyser and Day (1992), referring to the work of Verba and Nie (1972), include 'advantaging those already in a position of power' (Bochel, 2006, p.12). They also emphasise the fact that much participation 'is directed towards persons who are in authority, and able to influence decisions, or leaders of pressure groups, who are intermediaries in the process of policy making' (Parry, Moyser and Day, 1992, p.7, cited in Bochel, 2006, p.12). In highlighting the complexity of the practice of participation, this article makes an important contribution to the literature and

has implications for policy makers who may view 'participation' *per se* as a 'good thing'.

Bochel *et al.* (2008), continues this focus and highlights the lack of clarity around many aspects of participation, a theme which is also highlighted in my publications on petitions systems (Bochel, 2012, 2013), and which underlines the need for more detailed work on the purposes and mechanisms of participation. It makes a significant original contribution because it draws together a range of different aspects of participation and underlines the fact that, despite the vast array of participatory initiatives that have emerged from governments, there continues to be a lack of clarity over what participation actually entails. There may be a variety of reasons for this, including that the purposes of participation are likely to be different for governments, organisations, and users, since they will all have their own ideas about what they want to achieve from the process and may have different motivations and agendas.

More recent work (Bochel, 2012, 2013) has continued to develop the theme of participation, and has looked at the encouragement of the use of petitions systems, under both Labour and Coalition governments, as a participatory tool for governance. In doing this, both were to some extent using an element of policy transfer (in the transfer of the idea for establishing a petitions system) from the system in the Scottish Parliament. The petitions systems in the Scottish Parliament in particular, and also in the National Assembly for Wales, were widely seen as successful, and their increasing popularity with the public led initially to Labour and then the Coalition government setting up e-petitions systems. Labour created the Number 10 Downing Street system and also legislated for their introduction in local government in England, while the Coalition government repealed that measure and replaced the Number 10 system with a hybrid Whitehall/House of Commons system. The work highlights that it is important to be aware that petitions systems can vary considerably, and as such they facilitate different types of participation, and levels of influence in the policy process.

The systems in the devolved bodies are underlined by ideas around democratic participation and may include elements of direct, indirect and mediated participation for petitioners. For example, both devolved legislatures in Scotland and Wales (although not yet Northern Ireland) have Petitions Committees which consider all admissible petitions. The Committees discuss each petition and have a wide range of actions which they can take. The most common form of action taken is to request further information from relevant organisations on the subject raised in the petition (a form of indirect participation). Other actions include: inviting the petitioners to give evidence before the committee, and holding roundtable evidence sessions (both forms of direct and/or mediated participation). Petitioners are kept involved at every stage of the process, and are invited to respond in writing to any evidence that is submitted by organisations that have been written to on their behalf (direct participation). In contrast, the system established by the Coalition government for the most part simply accepts and records petitions, and thus can be classified primarily as an indirect form of participation. Despite the statement on the petitions system website that 'e-petitions are an easy, personal way for you to influence government and parliament in the UK' (http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/), petitions that garner fewer than 10,000 signatures do not even receive a response, and given that the vast majority of petitions (97.7 per cent) get less than 1,000 signatures (Fox, 2012), many petitioners may feel that their participation has been a waste of their time; furthermore, even for those that reach the 100,000 signature threshold, there is no guarantee of a debate in Parliament, let alone a realistic prospect of influencing government policy. These contrasting case studies serve to illustrate some of the different ways in which power is exercised by petitioners and by elected representatives at the national and devolved levels of government. This is applicable to a number of theoretical models, such as Hirschman's (1970) conceptualisation through 'exit', 'voice' and 'loyalty', and Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation, which have underpinned some of the analysis in my work. Together they also serve to highlight a tension between representative and participatory democracy.

These publications are original in that there has been very little academic work in this area in the United Kingdom (see for example, Judge, 1978; Carman, 2006; Miller, 2009; Carman, 2010). They can also be seen to link clearly to the policy process in relation to concerns to achieve better policy making and policy outcomes. The systems in the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales can be seen to reflect attempts to develop a broadly rational approach to policy making (Simon, 1957 [1945]) through enabling a degree of public participation. They can also, at least in some instances, result in policy changes, illustrating that the public can potentially influence all stages of the policy process.

The publications on petitions systems also link to the theme of representation. Bochel (2012) applies ideas of descriptive and substantive representation to the systems, while Bochel (2013) considers how they contribute to representative democracy and explores the tensions between participative and representative democracy.

Of the works included in this submission, the research on petitions systems has clearly had the greatest non-academic impact, despite being relatively recent. The results of the research have fed into debates at the national level about the future of the e-petitions system introduced by the Coalition government, and influenced proposals for its reform. This began with an invitation to participate in a private Backbench Business Committee/Hansard Society seminar on the future of the Government's e-petitions system at Westminster. The research then featured prominently in the Hansard Society's report *, What next for e-petitions?* (Fox, 2012). Subsequently, I was invited to speak to the Study of Parliament Group, January 2013 conference, about petitions systems and the potential usefulness of other models, such as those in the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales. I also submitted evidence on the impact of petitions to the House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee's inquiry *Revisiting Rebuilding the House: the impact of the Wright Reforms* (House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, 2013), and was invited to give evidence

to the Committee. My research also informed parts of the Committee's questioning of others, including its former chair, Tony Wright. In addition, it formed part of a submission to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Constitution (House of Lords Select Committee on the Constitution, 2011). The research has also had an impact at the devolved and local levels. It has been used in reviews of the petitions system in the National Assembly for Wales, including by the Assembly's Presiding Officer, and by Renfrewshire Council (Renfrewshire Council, 2011). More recently, I was also invited to give evidence to the House of Commons Procedure Committee for its inquiry into *E-petitions: a collaborative system* (House of Commons Procedure Committee, 2014). The Committee accepted a number of my recommendations, including that a Petitions Committee be established and that there be a wider range of more flexible responses to petitions.

This research has also had some impact outside the UK. It has been used by AmericaSpeaks, an organisation which works to engage citizens in governance, in their guide for public managers who are interested in exploring implementing e-petitions in their communities (Goldstein *et al.* 2013). It was also used by the Canadian MP, Kennedy Stewart, to support his proposal to enhance democratic participation by introducing electronic petitions to the Canadian Parliament (Stewart, 2013). Subsequently, I was invited to be a witness before the Canadian Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in support of Kennedy Stewart's case to bring e-petitions to the Canadian Parliament. In 2014 I submitted written evidence and gave verbal evidence to the Committee. The outcome was that 'the House unanimously passed the report and e-petitions will be in place sometime later this year!' (email from Kennedy Stewart to CB, 26/03/2015).

Representation

As outlined below, there has long been a substantial literature on representation. This has been wide-ranging in nature and encompasses a range of themes including different types of representation, representation at

local, devolved and national tiers, who the representatives are, who they represent, and barriers to representation. There are a number of joint publications with a specific focus on representation included in this commentary. 'Women 'Leaders' in local government in the UK' (Bochel and Bochel, 2008) explored the position and representation of women from different perspectives, including their under-representation in positions of power and their descriptive and substantive representation; and 'Local Political Leadership and the Modernisation of Local Government' (Bochel and Bochel, 2010) explored discourses around leadership. These reflect a more longstanding interest and research in this field including the publication of a book on *The Careers of Councillors: Gender, Party and Politics* (Bochel and Bochel, 2000), a number of articles on councillors (see for example, Bochel and Bochel, 2004a), and an article 'Do Women Make a Difference?' (Bochel and Briggs, 2000) looking at whether female politicians at the local and national levels impact upon politics and the policy-making process. More generally, 'New Labour, Participation and the Policy Process' (Bochel, 2006), whilst largely about participation, is also relevant here because of its discussion of some aspects of the relationship between participation and representation. The publications included for this commentary are important for several reasons: they link research with contemporary interests of policy makers and politicians; they explore areas which had previously not been the subject of much attention; and 'Women 'Leaders' in Local Government in the UK' (Bochel and Bochel, 2008) explores gender dimensions in these areas.

From the late 1970s the focus in the literature on representation and politics broadened to cover gender in considerable depth. Some of this literature emerged from the United States and Europe (see for example, Karnig and Walter, 1976; Diamond, 1977; Mezey, 1980; Stewart, 1980; Darcy *et al.* 1987; Engstrom *et al.* 1988, Githens *et al.* 1994; Kelber, 1994; Conway *et al.* 1997), but there was also a substantial literature from the UK, much of which focussed on the local level (see for example, Welch and Karnig, 1979; Bristow, 1980; Hill, 1981; Hills, 1982, 1983; Hollis, 1989; Martlew *et al.* 1985; Barry, 1991; Studlar and Welch, 1992; Rao, 1998). At the national level, Vallance's (1979)

study of Women Members of Parliament, was followed by a series of publications including: Norris and Lovenduski's (1995) *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*; Brown's (1996) chapter on 'Women and Scottish Politics', and Lovenduski and Norris's (1996) *Women in Politics*. Over time these bodies of work came together, with literature from the UK, Europe and the United States reflecting the development of common ideas and synergies of thinking, and indeed with significant levels of co-authorship.

There was also a burgeoning social policy literature on gender and the role of women in society, which, while not specifically about representation *per se*, did consider how women were represented in society, for example, at home and in the family, at work, in education, health, social security, etc., which reflected feminist analyses of women's issues. Pascall's (1986) *Social Policy: A Feminist Analysis*, Glendinning and Millar's (1987) *Women and Poverty in Britain,* Maclean and Groves' (1991) *Women's Issues in Social Policy*, along with the second edition of Glendinning and Millar's (1992) *Women and Poverty in Britain in the 1990s,* and Hallett's (1996) *Women and Social Policy: An Introduction*, all contributed much to these debates and increasingly fed into and influenced academic, and to some extent policy-oriented, thinking.

It was the existence of literature in the fields of politics and social policy, initially with a focus on gender, specifically on women councillors and on local political leaders, which was part of the impetus for the joint publications discussed in this section of the commentary.

A number of broad types of representation emerge from the literature. One of the seminal works in this field is that of Pitkin (1972). In *The Concept of Representation* she identified: formalistic representation, the initial giving of authority, after which the representative may do whatever they please within the limits of their authority; symbolic representation, based upon the notion that a representative 'stands for' the thing they represent; 'descriptive' (or 'characteristic') representation, which suggests that representatives should be

drawn from the group they are elected to represent and that they should share its characteristics – age, sex, gender, social class, religion, ethnic grouping (see Bochel and Bochel, 2000), often in terms of the numerical composition of political bodies; and 'substantive' representation, which she refers to as 'acting for', reflecting the actual activity of representation, where representatives act 'in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them' (Pitkin, 1972, p.209).

I have undertaken a variety of co-authored work that relates primarily to elements of representation, in particular to gender and local government. This uses the ideas of descriptive and substantive representation as tools to analyse the ways in which elected leaders at the national, devolved and local levels represent their constituents in the policy process. There is one other aspect to representation relevant here, and that is the idea of representation by largely unelected 'community leaders' and others, such as parents as 'representatives' of others. This type of representation does not easily fit with the types outlined above, because as illustrated in the section on 'participation', there is considerable confusion over the capacities in which people participate in the policy making process (Bochel, 2006).

There are debates, particularly from a feminist perspective, that see the descriptive representation of women as a pre-requisite for their substantive representation, on the basis that the more women that are elected, the more they are likely to act for women, although in practice this does not necessarily follow (Celis and Childs, 2008, p.419). One explanation that is sometimes put forward to explain the possible link between descriptive and substantive representation is that of critical mass (see Dahlerup, 1988). This suggests that once the proportion of women in a political institution reaches a certain level a 'critical mass' will be reached, and this will impact positively on public policy and political institutions. However, some interpretations of this have been rather simplistic, since women are all individuals, and they may or may not choose to act for women (Bochel and Briggs, 2000), while it is also possible that some men may act substantively in the interests of women.

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A further aspect of the literature, which to some extent reflects the idea of critical mass, is the under-representation of women in political institutions. At a local level whilst it is difficult to provide exact figures because numbers vary across types of council, in 2000 women made up approximately one-quarter of councillors, whilst in Westminster women constituted 18% of MPs in 1997 (Bochel and Bochel, 2000), over time the proportion reached 29 per cent in the House of Commons in 2015, and at local government level, 32% in England in 2013, 24% in Scotland and 26% in Wales in 2012, and 23% in Northern Ireland in 2011 (Keen, 2015).

This under-representation was one of the reasons for the focus on gender in some of my co-authored work, particularly from 2000 to 2008. It raised issues around the barriers to women who wished to participate in their communities by standing for election to local councils. Here we can see that representation links not only with participation, but also with the operation of representative democracy and with the policy process, in that elected representatives participate in the policy process and are involved in decisions which impact on the lives of individuals and communities. The distinction between 'representative' and 'participatory' democracy is also reflected in my work on petitions systems.

'Women 'Leaders' in Local Government in the UK' (Bochel and Bochel, 2008) examined leadership roles and functions of male and female councillors. The research provided evidence on the way in which councillors in leadership positions perceived their styles and roles, and by looking at this through the lens of debates on descriptive and substantive representation, enabled the research to see what difference women councillors might make to representation and the policy making process. Local government councillors in the UK are not descriptively representative. Bochel and Bochel (2008, p.429) note that 'well under one-third are female, only 4% are non-white, and more than half are aged over 60'. Given this under-representation of women it is unsurprising that much of the literature has focussed on the barriers to participation, including individual and structural factors, rather than on the

substantive representation of women and their progression to more senior posts within the council. This research was important because it sought to move away somewhat from the focus on descriptive representation towards the substantive representation of women. 'Local Political Leadership and the Modernisation of Local Government' (Bochel and Bochel, 2010) considered academic discourse around local political leadership and the different narratives that emerge, including around the shift to governance, the latter reflecting an emphasis on the role of local political leaders. This illustrated that while there was some consensus, from academics, the narratives emerging from central government, and from local political leaders, on the desirability of 'strong leadership', there was more divergence of views on the political structures that are required for such leadership, 'with council leaders clearly believing that it is possible to demonstrate strong leadership within inclusive, consensual and collective decision-making mechanisms…' (Bochel and Bochel, 2010, p.731), and even where leaders had 'the constitutional power to choose the cabinet and to allocate portfolios… Leaders rarely act alone…' (Bochel and Bochel, 2010, p.734). The article highlights the complexity of governance emerging from different perspectives, central government, academic discourse and the views of local political leaders.

The research on women leaders (Bochel and Bochel, 2008) has also been used outside the academic arena. For example, it has been cited and referenced by the Commission for Councillors and the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (European Parliament, 2008), by the Centre for Women and Democracy (2009) in respect of women and routes to leadership, by the European Parliament (2013) on gender equality issues, and by the 2013 South Australian Community Action Project about how to increase female participation as elected members in South Australian local government (Gaut *et al.* 2013).

Research methods

My research looks broadly at power, participation, representation and decision making in the policy process. These can be clearly seen to be socially constructed concepts. Ontology, which looks at the 'nature of social entities', can help in understanding different approaches to research and 'whether the social world is regarded as something external to social actors or something that people are in the process of fashioning' (Bryman, 2012, p.19). The constructivist ontological perspective has relevance for the study of social phenomena including groups, such as women, citizens, users, elected leaders, and institutions and organisations, such as parliaments, assemblies and local councils, studied in my research, because it 'asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors' (Bryman, 2012, p.710), enabling me to bring my own, and others', interpretations to these phenomena through my research.

Epistemology can help in understanding 'what is regarded as appropriate knowledge about the social world; one of the most crucial aspects is the question of whether or not a natural science model of the research process is suitable for the study of the social world' (Bryman, 2012, p.19). The interpretivist perspective is perhaps of most relevance to my research, because of its focus on the collection of qualitative data, exploring how people interpret social phenomena, exploring perspectives of the social world, applying theories, such as Simon's (1957 [1945]) rationalism, Lindblom's (1959) incrementalism, and descriptive and substantive representation (Pitkin, 1972), to social phenomena and working to generate typologies (see for example, Bochel, 2006**)** and potentially theory (see also Van Theil, 2014). To a lesser extent realism also has some bearing, since my research does have small elements of measuring observable recordable social phenomena, as opposed to interpreting subjective understandings as typified by an interpretivist approach. A critical realist approach adds a further dimension to studying the socially constructed entities listed above, in that through the application of different theories my research enables both observable and

'hidden' effects, for example, of power, to be studied. Having said this, Bryman and Becker (2012, p.127) argue that it is 'important to recognise that research methods are not necessarily rooted to epistemological assumptions. Research methods can be far more free-floating than is generally appreciated. This recognition is crucial to the issue of combining quantitative and qualitative research, since it implies that the barriers to integrating the two research strategies are far less pronounced than is often suggested by writers who see methods as tied to particular epistemological positions'.

My research has drawn on a variety of methods as appropriate. While not strictly a 'mixed methods' approach, it has arguably resulted in 'a more complete account… than could have been obtained by either a quantitative or a qualitative research approach alone' (Bryman, 2012, p.37). Each has different strengths and purposes, for example, the qualitative methods employed in the studies discussed here include: literature reviews, including analysis of government green and white papers; in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with local political leaders, with members of Petitions Committees, clerks to each committee, elected representatives and relevant organisations; and observations of Petitions Committee meetings, all built on one another to provide one part of a picture. The literature reviews set the context in terms of illustrating what existed in each research area and helped to illustrate where there were gaps in the research that could be explored. The empirical research then used this to identify who to interview, what questions to ask and where observations might be appropriate. The quantitative methods involved an analysis of the numbers of male and female councillors, the proportions of male and female councillors in senior positions, and the portfolios for which they were responsible, where relevant (Bochel and Bochel, 2008). Bochel (2012) involved an analysis of all petitions submitted to the National Assembly for Wales, since the system was established in 2007, and an analysis of one-quarter of the petitions considered by the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee over the period since its inception in 1999. This data provided a further part of the research picture on the scale of the issue/social phenomena being studied. The qualitative and quantitative

methods employed here 'have different strengths and purposes' and 'deal with different research questions or issues' (Becker and Bryman, 2004, p.99), and work together to produce a more complete overall picture.

I have also used case studies of institutions with petitions systems (Bochel, 2012, 2013), which involved a mixed methods approach. This decision to use case studies was made for a number of reasons: there was a lack of previous research in this area; they were appropriate for this type of exploratory research as it enabled a more in-depth study (Burnham *et al.* 2008); they have been widely used in the social sciences; and the small number of cases selected added a comparative dimension to the research (Bryman, 2004). It is also an 'all-encompassing method' which 'can embrace different epistemological orientations' (Yin, 2014, p.17).

While there are criticisms of a mixed methods approach, including that such an approach is inappropriate because different methods are rooted in particular ontological and epistemological assumptions (Bryman, 2012), the ways in which they have been used in this research demonstrates that they can be complementary.

As part of each case study, observations were undertaken of Petitions Committee meetings and in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of actors. This was supported by analysis of secondary data collected from Parliament, Assembly and local authority websites. For Bochel (2012) an analysis of petitions considered by the devolved legislatures was also part of the case study approach. Taken together these methods enabled triangulation of the findings (Becker and Bryman, 2004).

One criticism of a case study approach is that it is sometimes thought that 'one cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore the case study cannot contribute to scientific development' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.221). However, Flyvbjerg (2006, p.228) argues that 'formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas "the force of

example" is underestimated', while Yin (2014) suggests that analytic generalisation (which he contrasts to statistical generalisation) is possible, particularly in relation to theory or theoretical propositions. This can be seen in my petitions research, where it has been possible to make a distinction between substantive and descriptive types of petitions systems (Bochel, 2012).

A case study approach was helpful because, by collecting data through different methods, such as literature reviews, semi-structured interviews and observations, it enabled me to build an in-depth picture of each system. For example, observations of Petitions Committee meetings enabled me to see if what was being said in the interviews with members, clerks and petitioners was actually happening in practice. While these qualitative methods provided me with rich data, the quantitative analysis of petitions enabled me to see the scale of the systems, the overall numbers of petitions being submitted to each one, and gave me a clearer idea of the topics people were submitting petitions about.

The research on women leaders (Bochel and Bochel, 2008) was based on empirical research, including data collection from local councils in England, Scotland and Wales from local authority webpages and from the *Municipal Yearbook*. This information, when analysed, provided a comprehensive picture of leadership in local government as at May 2006. The research also involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with people in leadership roles. Those interviewed were selected to represent a variety of forms of authority including district and county councils, London boroughs, English unitary and Scottish and Welsh councils, across the three main political parties and independents, and from councils with one party majorities, coalitions and minority administrations, with interviews being conducted either face to face or by telephone. Clearly, there can be risks associated with approaches that rely on self-reporting, but all of the interviews were conducted on a confidential basis, hence there was no need for any respondent to be concerned about any repercussions from anything they said, or indeed to seek to inflate their

own role, and therefore not to speak with absolute candour. The same research was used for the work on local political leadership (Bochel and Bochel, 2010). The aim of this was to reveal the views of respondents on some of the challenges facing local political leaders in relation to 'modernisation' and the idea of 'strong leadership' under the Labour government of the time. The article analysed their responses in the context of academic and governmental discourse around local political leadership, concluding with a consideration of how and to what extent these different narratives of local political leadership fitted together and highlighting areas of convergence and divergence.

The articles concerned with leadership (Bochel and Bochel, 2008; 2010) and those about petitions systems (Bochel, 2012; 2013) utilise different models, theoretical and conceptual approaches in order to help set the context for and to provide a framework for the analysis of the various perspectives. For example, the work on women leaders (Bochel and Bochel, 2008) is set in the context of theoretical debates around the descriptive and substantive representation of women, these are also applied to different types of petitions systems in Bochel (2012), while in Bochel and Bochel (2010) political and academic discourses around local political leadership underpin the debate. The mix of methods employed across the various studies included here encouraged thinking at a theoretical level and enabled me (and my co-author in the case of the research on council leaders) to apply models, concepts and theoretical approaches to my research.

Conclusions, current and future directions

The focus of this commentary is on the concepts of power, participation and representation in the policy process. 'The context' illustrates that, in 2004, the starting point for this commentary, while the literature on social policy and the policy process was fairly small, that on public policy, politics and public administration was substantial. This has particular relevance for the theme of power here. *The UK Social Policy Process* (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b) took a broader approach to the development of social policy and applied ideas from

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these disciplines in order to analyse the policy process using a range of models and concepts to provide different perspectives on the operation of power in society, focusing in particular on social policy under the New Labour governments.

In addition, there was a substantial existing literature on the subjects of participation, representation, and gender at this time. My research sought to analyse these topics utilising a variety of models and concepts, in order to see how Conservative, Labour and Coalition governments approached the governance of social policy, including through citizen participation and involvement in participatory initiatives, such as petitions systems, and by exploring the role of elected representatives through the lens of debates on descriptive and substantive representation to see what difference women councillors might make to representation and the policy making process.

Taken together, the research discussed here brings new perspectives to our understanding of a variety of elements of the policy making process, as discussed through the themes of power, participation and representation. My current and future plans for research continue to focus on these themes.

Power

This theme continues in my current research and future publication plans. I am in the process of writing a chapter on 'The changing governance of social policy' for an edited book on *The UK Coalition government and social policy*. I am also, with my co-author, writing a successor to *The UK Social Policy Process* (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b), which will be titled *Making and Implementing Public Policy*, for publication in 2017.

With colleagues in the School of Social and Political Sciences, I am undertaking research initially funded by the University, into 'Parliament and Policy: Predicting Success and Failure'. This is looking at the passage of two pieces of legislation through Parliament, and subsequent evaluations of

'success' or 'failure' from the perspectives of those centrally involved with them. One aim is to develop a conceptual framework against which policy success and failure might be measured, based on the aims of a policy. We are working on a number of articles and aim for these to support a bid for substantial funding in order to broaden the research to a wider range of case studies.

Participation

My work on petitions systems continues in a number of respects. I am reviewing literature from other disciplines, including law and psychology, to apply the concept of procedural justice to the way in which institutions engage with members of the public through petitions systems. Given that petitioning representative political institutions is becoming increasing popular with the public, and that most petitioners are not going to get what they ask for, their experience of and treatment by the systems is very important. I also have data, yet to be analysed, on the topics people petition on, and what they perceive to be outcomes. These have the potential to lead to further articles.

In terms of impact from my research, it was agreed in February 2015 that a new Select Committee on Petitions would be established in the House of Commons. This was one of my recommendations to both the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee (written evidence February 14 2013, and oral evidence March 14 2013) and the Procedure Committee to which I gave evidence (June 11 2014). In May 2015 I was invited by the new clerk to the Committee to discuss 'the ways in which we could draw on your work on different petitions systems as we think about how to advise the Committee as it thinks about how to address the task ahead of it' (correspondence from the clerk to the Committee to CB, May 13 2015). There is also potential to become involved in the evaluation of the Committee's work.

Representation

My plans relating to the themes of power and participation both also relate to representation in that they look at the role and influence of elected representatives in the policy process in terms of the methods of governance they employ, how they operate in Parliament and the ways in which they enable the participation of individuals in the policy process.

Overview of contributions

The UK Social Policy Process (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b) was the starting point for this commentary. It offered the first in-depth appraisal of social policy making and implementation under New Labour, and took an analytical approach to debates about the importance of the policy process in influencing and affecting social policies and their impacts. Looking at the remainder of these publications chronologically, 'New Labour, Participation and the Policy Process', (Bochel, 2006) drew on the literature on participation to devise a typology of forms of participation, one purpose of which was to help improve the practice of participation for those seeking to employ this approach in the policy making process. 'Marginalised or Enabled Voices? 'User Participation' in Policy and Practice' (Bochel *et al.* 2008), highlighted the lack of clarity around many aspects of participation, making an original contribution by drawing together a range of different aspects of participation and underlining the fact that, despite the vast array of participatory initiatives that have emerged from governments, there continues to be a lack of clarity over what participation actually entails. Bochel and Bochel (2008) examined the leadership roles and functions of male and female councillors. It sought to move away from the focus on descriptive representation towards a consideration of the substantive representation of women at local level. 'Local Political Leadership and the Modernisation of Local Government' (Bochel and Bochel, 2010) explored discourses around leadership, and the different narratives that emerge, including around the shift to governance. 'The Conservatives and the Governance of Social Policy' (Bochel, 2011) provided

an original analysis of Conservative approaches to the governance of social policy at the time of the formation of the Coalition government, building upon the general framework developed in *The UK Social Policy Process* (Bochel and Bochel, 2004b). Finally, the publications on petitions systems (Bochel 2012, 2013) are original in that there has been very little academic work in this area, despite the growing interest within government. They also clearly link to the policy process in relation to concerns to achieve better policy making and policy outcomes.

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