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Governance and the transformation of political representation

Michael Saward

Introduction

As Janet Newman points out in the Introduction to this volume, the shift in styles of politics in western countries from the more formal and hierarchical to the more informal and network-based – from government to governance – brings with it the need to question many of our received assumptions about politics and the state. This chapter sketches some of the traces of new kinds of political imaginary which change the meaning of political representation. Rules and practices of representation are fundamental to democratic politics. The legitimacy of policies and actors primarily rests on the extent to which they legitimately represent, or can successfully claim to represent, some group or larger set of social interests. The shifts in styles of governance from state-centric and more formal modes to plural and often informal modes of engagement with citizens at local, national and supranational levels raise important new questions about the scope and legitimacy of traditional notions of political representation. In the spaces of public-private partnerships, stakeholder involvement and new, more direct forms of citizen engagement, is there a transformed notion of political representation emerging? Can more groups, people and styles of activity count as ‘representative’ and, if so, what does this mean for the way in which we understand the term and more broadly for the legitimating role that representation plays in democracy?

The chapter will proceed as follows. First, it will critically appraise conventional approaches to political representation, suggesting in particular that they have ignored the process of constituting the represented which is so critical to political practice. In this sense, conventional approaches have overlooked the aesthetic and cultural

aspects of representation, and the ways in which these are them-selves deeply political. Second, accepting the constitutive role of representative practices for the sense of identity that political actors bring to the political process adds impetus to the need to look at a range of would-be representatives beyond the conventional electoral arena. What claims can appointed local or other officials, local activists or participants in public–private partnerships make to be representative, and how might we appraise and evaluate them?

Finally, this takes us to the heart of the challenge that modern governance poses for political representation. As other chapters have documented, processes of governance seep into a wider array of contexts and embrace a wider array of actors. We are not dealing here with a simple transfer of ‘representative’ politics from one type or domain to another, but rather a significant shift in the primary political sense of representation as a practice and concept.

Traditional thinking about political representation

If Pierre (2000) is right in arguing that the most important shift expressed by the notion of a change in focus from ‘government’ to ‘governance’ involves a move from more state-centric, formal steering to more hybrid, informal and (would-be) cooperative strategies and perspectives, then traditional notions of political representation face a double challenge. The first is to the strongly electoral focus of much of the writing and attention that is paid to representation, as both an idea and a practice. The second is a challenge which was already there in the traditional literature but which becomes more critical within a governance framework: how to acknowledge and to take more seriously the role of representation in actually constituting identities and issues, rather than merely reflecting pre-existing ones.

Let us deal with the second of these issues and return to the issue of electoral focus in a moment. In political science there is an enormous literature on political representation, which can be traced back over many decades. In some ways it is unfair to generalise on such a complex and multifaceted set of arguments, but there is one key limiting factor in most discussions which seems to me to be so strong that we might almost call it a persistent blind spot. That factor is the strong focus in this larger literature on the make-up and character of the representative, and the closely-related overlooking of the make-up and character (and ultimately the constitution) of the represented.

The nature of this blind spot can be illustrated effectively if we look briefly at the single most influential text on the theory of political

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representation in Anglo-American work at least over the past 30 years, the classic *The concept of representation* by Hanna Pitkin (1968). Pitkin's book is complex and dense, and I cannot even begin to explore it in depth here. However, the relevant single point – because it defines the basic approach to political representation in recent decades – is that the approach that Pitkin adopts is unidirectional and electoral, and on both counts it has real limitations when it comes to understanding political representation in the more complex and differentiated processes of contemporary governance.

In essence, Pitkin places the focus on the character and composition of the representative, not the represented. For example, representatives could be conceived of as being authorised by the represented, or as being accountable to them or acting in their substantive interests. Less often (and for Pitkin, less centrally and interestingly), they could stand for the represented symbolically, as a monarch might stand for or symbolise a nation. Her own preference – in the normative political philosophy vein in which she was writing – was for a conception of the representative as acting in the substantive interests of the citizen. Two points in particular stand out for our purposes. The first is that Pitkin gives virtually no time to the idea that the represented might be something other than known, given, transparent in composition, meaning and interest. Her theory is unidirectional – all the flows of interest are from the known represented to the question of how to understand and to constitute the representative. What does such unidirectional analysis miss? In a nutshell, it can miss (or underestimate, and therefore fail to pay due attention to) the ways in which the represented are not pre-given in composition in character: the extent to which the represented needs to be constituted and defined and understood *within* the process of political representation itself, and not somehow apart from or prior to it. There is a point to be made about the analysis of electoral representation: traditional geographical constituencies do not have characteristics, faultlines or policy preferences which can be simply (or even not so simply) read-off by would-be elected representatives. The latter, and their parties and advisers, need to and do play an active part in selecting the aspects of their constituencies about which they talk and on which they focus. They will seek to shift and change preferences structures in constituencies by highlighting some aspects of the lives of voters – moral issues connected to family life, for example, or the tax burden – rather than others. They will seek to show or tell constituents what they (the constituents) think, or should think, about the issues that are selected for focus. In short, an electoral constituency is, and needs to

be, constituted, constructed out of the raw materials of peoples and places.

Why does this matter? The main reason is that in principle, the search for who or what type of individual (or party) may be an appropriate – one might say more strongly, an authentic – representative of a given constituency can have a definite answer if the character of who is to be represented is assumed to be fixed, or at least knowable. But if we do not make such a ‘transparency assumption’ and take on board fully the view that constituencies can reasonably be conceived, interpreted and constructed in different ways for different political purposes, then the issue of who is the real, or appropriate, or indeed authentic, representative becomes more problematic (and in some ways more interesting). There is no essence of the represented that we can trace directly to the character of the would-be representative. We are left, in the end, with a variety of *claims* to be representative, but each of the claims will be partial and contestable.

On one level, this is merely to pose a challenge to the traditional electoral notion of political representation. But overlooking the constitution of the represented exposes an even greater and more distinctive gap in the theory, as the emphasis shifts from the traditional notion of a fixed, territorial and formal electoral ‘constituency’ to new, more fluid and sporadic conceptions and invocations of political constituencies. New modes of non-electoral citizen engagement and interaction with policymakers and managers (such as those discussed in the previous three chapters of the volume) challenge received notions of public and private in terms of who the makers and recipients of policy are. This opens up new domains in which representation happens, or is claimed, by actors and groups which seek legitimacy and access in these new governance arrangements. Like elected councillors in many local authorities in the UK, ‘public’ actors offer themselves as enablers rather than providers of policy, and in so doing they co-opt ‘private’ actors, for example, from voluntary associations and community groups, to play formal and informal roles as policy participants. In such contexts, the ‘private’ actors can lay claim to being representatives too, although not of the traditional electoral variety. Further, often these new domains of representative politics are characterised by a flexibility and looseness of identity; for example, class is no longer the primary political faultline and repository of political identity. Age, lifestyle, ethnicity, culture and religion are competing bases of political identity, and are therefore also competing grounds for claims to be legitimately representative of wider social interests. So, in sum, not only are there grounds to emphasise much more than traditional

approaches to the constitutive character of representation, we need also to extend the scope and spaces of that insight to contexts which are non-electoral and to plural perspectives and identities.

Electoral representation, in its varied permutations, remains rightly at the core of a discussion of political representation. But claims to be representative, the pressing of new political issues and concerns, and the constitution and presentation of new combinations of people and interests (new ‘constituencies’), occur more often and insistently. Such claims demand attention beyond as well as within the electoral context. It has become desirable to consider a wide array of claims to be representative, both electoral and non-electoral; but doing so involves moving beyond the boundaries of the categories and assumptions about representation that were set for the contemporary era by Pitkin’s analysis.

Even radical recent attempts to rethink representation assume that the architecture of conventional electoral democracy remains the representative baseline. Jane Mansbridge (2003), for example, has recently advocated a shift in perspective from ‘singular, aggregatively-oriented, and district-based’ criteria for representation, to what she calls plural, deliberatively-oriented and systemic criteria. However, her valuable effort remains within an orthodox framework. For example, even when writing of how some citizens regard elected representatives from other constituencies as *their* representatives because of their ‘race’, sexual orientation or opinions, she speaks the language of ‘surrogacy’, implying that the ‘real’ electoral constituency representative remains the baseline and that legitimate representatives are always elected. Mansbridge’s impressive account is more realistic than many conventional political science accounts of representation with regards to how difficult achieving formal accountability really is in systems of representation, and recognises accordingly how important deliberation among legislators and their constituents is with respect to the quality of political representation. On these grounds, her arguments take the debates forward; representation and accountability need to be seen as a matter of constant exchange, dialogue, education and adjustment between the representative and the represented. But for all this, her argument remains confined within an electoral paradigm, at a time when representative politics – the politics of making, and attempting to substantiate, representative claims – encompasses but also transcends electoral politics.

Political representation is a process that involves the constitution of the identity of the representative *and* of the represented. In the context of new styles of governance, it is misguided to overlook the claims

and instances of political representation that are not based in an immediate way on the mechanism of election. If the new governance is about government happening in ways and places that are not contained within formal, hierarchical and bounded conceptions of representative politics, then these are the directions that theories of representation need to take in order that they might keep up with the realities of contemporary governance. The following sections will look briefly at the questions of the new spaces, identities and styles of governance, respectively.

The currency of political representation

What is political representation? The literature on the subject dissects different types and roles in some detail. Generally, a representative is regarded as one who stands for or acts for an (absent) other. They may do so by being a delegate – acting on the express wishes of the represented – or a trustee, acting in the perceived best interests of the represented. Further debates about legitimate representation also revolve around whether a representative needs to share social characteristics with the represented, or whether representation is a matter of representing attitudes and ideas rather than identities.

In my work a different perspective is adopted that problematises the whole notion of representation. At the most general level, it is argued that representation is not a fact, but rather a process that involves the making of *claims* to be representative. One does not act or stand for another, but rather claims to do these things. And, for example, that claim may be based on prioritising a delegate or trustee role (or some combination of the two).

A representative claim is a claim to represent, or to know what represents, the interests of someone or something. Representative claims can be accepted or rejected, implicit or explicit, electoral or non-electoral, and so on. Seeing representation as an economy of claim-making provides a frame through which to examine how representative politics is practised and reshaped within a context of contemporary governance. It also facilitates efforts to tap into the sense in which representative politics is ubiquitous: there is no place beyond representation (Prendergast, 2000). This does not mean that there is nothing ‘real’. Rather, it means that people and things are not invested with meaning without representation. It also does not mean that the word does not have meanings, but rather that those meanings have complex genealogies. As makers and receivers of representative claims of varied sorts, we are simultaneously inside and outside of

representation: if someone claims to represent me, they necessarily portray both themselves as an actor with particular characteristics and abilities, and myself as a different character with interests which need to be spoken for. Both of us are caught up in depictions, portraits or representations. As the philosopher Jacques Derrida has written, 'man' is now "not only someone who has representations, who represents himself, but also someone who himself represents something or someone" (1982, p 316). Men and women are "interpreted throughout according to the structure of representation.... Structured by representation, the represented subject is also a representing subject" (1982, p 315).

Contemporary governance is about many things. One of them is how a range of actors and institutions that are not elected exercise political power. Indeed, many non-elected actors, inside and outside the state, make claims to be representative. Getting such claims accepted may involve a different sort of process from standing for election, but in polities where so much negotiation about, participation in and administration of policy is conducted beyond clearly electoral arenas, they deserve serious attention.

New spaces of governance and representation

Public–private partnerships, new consultative mechanisms, new participative forums such as citizens' juries, marketisation and stakeholder engagement are among the key mechanisms at stake in the remaking of governance. One thread that runs through such developments is that more 'unconventional' political actors take their places within decisional or implementational processes, at local, national and supranational levels of governance: pressure groups, individual citizens, businesses, and so on. Complexity increases with the wider array of actors, the varied roles set for them and which they play, and the range of new and hybrid forums in which participation occurs. Against this background there is a wide variety of actors who may be representative or, rather, who may make claims to be representative, and who may do so on grounds that differ substantially from traditional formal and hierarchical conceptions of electoral representative relationships.

As Janet Newman suggests in the Introduction to this volume, narratives of globalisation have been central to accounts of governance change. A range of actors and organisations operating across and above national boundaries claim to be representative of different global and local interests, and in ways that differ markedly from the types of claims

that traditional state representatives make. The point will be illustrated briefly through the example of stakeholder representation – a relatively new form of non-electoral representation of interests at the global and other levels which has risen to prominence because the governance of international problems, not least environmental ones, required new actors and processes in complex new spaces (for a fuller account, see Backstrand and Saward, 2004).

Processes of stakeholder representation, such as those at the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, can be seen as instances of creative rethinking of what representation is, and who can do it. The purpose is not to “replace states but rather find more effective and more legitimate ways of addressing the shortcomings of exclusive territorial governance” (Eckersley, 2004, p 193). This space can lead to a renewal and reinvention of democratic governance: new devices, sequences, decision rules, procedures and modes of representation. Of course, because there is no ‘world state’, one might anticipate a complex array of hybrid multipolar processes, which are more or less institutionalised, to operate at regional and global levels even more than at national and local levels.

The model of stakeholder representation is a creative set of possibilities rather than a fixed model; as such it is a set of practices that constitute constituencies. It does so within a context where the topography of governance is changing, with new emerging spaces of politics (institutional void) without any predetermined rules. In the governance process in which people deliberate, political community and meaningful participation is created (Hajer, 2003, p 89). Depending on the devices and their sequencing, policymaking procedures create a sense of a ‘community of fate’ among people who had never (or only dimly) conceived of themselves to be part of the same community (Hajer, 2003, p 97; Saward, 2003). Stakeholding is suitable in the context of governance with overlapping ‘communities of fate’ that do not respect territorial boundaries. Global environmental threats highlight the need for those affected to have a say in defining and addressing them – bringing what has been called the ‘all-affected principle’ to bear on deliberative and decisional procedures (Saward, 2000).

We commonly think of democratic mechanisms as governmental and permanent. There is a strong case, not least an environmental and global one, for shifting our attention to non-governmental and temporary or sporadic mechanisms (Saward, 2000). This is not the most influential perspective in new models of global governance; Held’s (1995) influential model of cosmopolitan democracy, for example, is a proposal for replication of governmental permanence at the global

level, an approach that seems at once both utopian and over-familiar. The familiar ways of thinking of democratic mechanisms are familiar because we are used to thinking in relatively fixed and territorial terms. Interesting alternatives emerge when we begin to think of new mechanisms which might help us to address issues which are changeable, perhaps temporary, sporadic in their manifestations and which constitute and define new political communities (of fate) across national boundaries. The Rio and Johannesburg summits of 1992 and 2002, for example, and especially the stakeholder practices at their core, represent a shift from the permanent to the temporary and more flexible. The complex and pressing nature of the issues discussed arguably requires more extensive grounds or bases for political representation than merely involving delegates of various states and United Nations (UN) agencies. The difficulty of obtaining agreement on how to address issues of global environmental governance and how to follow through on actions perhaps demands involvement from varied groups beyond states. On these and other counts, formal and informal stakeholder representation comes to the fore as a governance mechanism within the larger sporadic structures. Both the definition of the problems and the formulation and implementation of 'solutions' pose such a degree of difficulty that wider inclusion of interests, inclusion that 'digs down' more into functional and other civil society and cross-national affected groups, becomes desirable and even necessary.

Stakeholder governance is one example of new spaces of political representation. Sometimes the delegates of business, indigenous people, farmers, women and others taking part in the stakeholder forums at the World Summit were elected, but mostly were not. They stood mostly for functional interests rather than territorial ones. The style of legitimacy that they could claim arose more from the fact of their official participation in the UN-sponsored process than formal accountability to a specified group membership (or constituency). Their legitimacy – such as it was, and certainly it was subject to contestation – also had a pragmatic basis: these were broad social interests whose participation was seen by the UN agencies and many state participants as essential to the practical workability of any agreed outcomes. In that sense, their participation was an acknowledgment of the limits of the writ of states and of the power of state actors whose legitimacy rested on more traditional electoral foundations. Are the so-called major groups co-opted, or do they have real influence? Are stakeholders really representative of the interests for which they (claim to) speak? There is room for argument on these and a range of

other points. But the key factor for our present purposes is this: a shift towards a more multipolar and participative process of governance opens up spaces for new types of representative claim, and in turn the process serves to legitimise those claims, partly by formalising them.

The stakeholder model resonates with deliberative models of democracy. It is worth noting that examples such as the World Summit stakeholder forums are built around the notion of deliberation, carrying a democratic legitimacy in its own right. This has been a major theme in democratic theory for nearly two decades now (Dryzek, 2000; Saward, 2000). The principle of stakeholding is central to the idea of a transnational democracy: those affected by, causing or having stake in the issue at hand should have a voice in its resolution (McGrew, 2002, p 223). Stakeholding is suitable to governance with overlapping ‘communities of fate’ that do not respect territorial boundaries.

The deliberative account of democratisation of the world order is based on the premise that democracy is more about deliberation, reasoned argument and public reflection as much as (and on some accounts, more than) voting and aggregation. The deliberative governance model moves beyond the conventional language of representational politics. The key is to encourage vital transnational public spheres rather than institutional reform or democratic constitution of the world polity. This means relaxing the necessity for a homogenous global constituency or ‘demos’, and assuming that legitimacy can be enhanced through deliberation rather than an international equivalent of constituency-based national elections. The argument is that stakeholder democracy taps into the strengths of a deliberative emphasis, in that the latter is more deeply compatible with the structures and processes of global governance as compared to an aggregative or conventional electoral politics.

New identities in governance and representation

As suggested above, in representative politics, portrayals of constituencies, the nation or voters’ interests are just that: portrayals (Spivak, 1988, p 276). There is no self-presenting subject whose essential character, desires and interests are transparent, beyond representation, evident enough to be ‘read-off’ from their appearance or behaviour. Politicians often claim to be able to read-off constituency and national interests, to have a unique ‘hotline’ to voters’ real wants and needs. But the fact is that they can only do so after first deploying an interpretative frame containing an imaginative construct or portrait of their constituents. To speak for others – as elected representatives do, of

course – is to construct portraits of the represented that bring selected character traits and the interests of the latter into some focus. Linda Alcoff puts the point well:

In both the practice of speaking for as well as the practice of speaking about others, I am engaging in the act of representing the other's needs, goals, situation, and in fact, *who they are*. I am representing them as such and such ... I am participating in the construction of their subject-positions. This act of representation cannot be understood as founded on an act of discovery wherein I discover their true selves and then simply relate my discovery. (1991, p 9; emphasis in original)

The view presented here suggests that the political science sense of representation – someone standing for or acting for someone else – requires that attention be paid also to representation in the cultural studies sense: the making of depictions or portrayals of others. To act for someone is unavoidably to portray them in a certain way as well.

If a portrait or a representation of constituency is a precondition for representative action, then we can see that that portrait has to be constructed – it is a key ingredient in the construction of the constituency. Nobody – critics, political representatives, academics – can just ‘report’ on external events and phenomena as if the latter are reliably knowable, transparent. Elected politicians construct verbal and visual images of their constituencies and their countries (among other things). Constituencies are ‘hard-working’, ‘good, honest folk’, ‘family-oriented’, ‘patriots’. At least, one might want to insist on the ‘mutual constitution’ of representative and constituents (see Young, 2000). Both are, in Seitz’s words, “the effect of a practice” (1995, p 144), the practice of representation itself: “Representation fills in the blank spaces of possibility reserved for representatives, but it also fills in what gets represented” (1995, p 134). From a slightly different angle, note Ankersmit’s comment that “without political representation we are without a conception of what political reality – the represented – is like; without it, political reality has neither face nor contours. Without representation there is no represented” (2002, p 115). To represent is to do much more than see just what a constituency wants and to replicate that want. Invariably, there will not be a clear ‘want’, but rather a mixed and shifting set of preferences, half-preferences and apathy that a would-be representative must shape, mould, quite possibly ‘create’ and try to sell back to the relevant constituency.

It is all the more important to attend to this feature of political representation in the context of contemporary governance, because politics operates increasingly across boundaries between formal and informal, state and civil society, national and supranational, and so on, involves increasingly complex efforts to mould, press and establish new conceptions of functional and territorial interests and constituencies. Consider, for example, five types of non-electoral representative claim that are found within varied, new, hybrid forms of governance. These claims are based on the idea that there is a ‘constituency’ that needs its interests to be identified, shaped and spoken for within consultative, participative or implementational processes alongside elective governmental institutions. ‘Stakeholders’ are those individuals or groups whose participation is needed to make a process or a policy ‘work’. ‘Marginalised interests’ involve (as it is claimed by would-be spokespersons or representatives) voices that have been excluded previously or downgraded in importance. ‘Intense’ interests are those that are not catered for (again, it is argued) within more formal or electoral arenas, where one person—one vote procedures explicitly do not take into account intensities of preference with regards to public policy proposals. And ‘emergent interests’ are those that constitute new actors on the political scene. Such interests are encouraged to emerge as authorities seek to engage and consult citizens in new ways, and often assert themselves to be the result of new or hybrid or neglected conceptions of constituency identity which are not captured by – indeed, cannot be captured by – traditional electoral notions of representation.

New styles of governance and representation

Governance processes may well encompass a wider array of actors and interests, and involve a wider array of groups and individuals in politics, than more traditional conceptions of politics and government. But they do not guarantee the empowerment of this array of actors. Techniques of governance are suspected just as reasonably as being new or revamped techniques of social and political control as they are of empowerment or inclusion (see Chapter Six of this volume). In this respect, it would be a mistake to imagine that the making of a wider range of claims to be politically representative, by a wider range of actors, necessarily implies the strengthening of those actors. Relative political silence may be a reflection of political strength or contentment. Representative claim-making may reflect political insecurity in the complexities and uncertainties of the new processes of governance –

a sign of weakness and of a desire for reconnection or belonging as much as a sign of participation or strength.

With that caveat in mind, let us consider some of the key new styles of representative claim that the remaking of governance prompts and offers to us. Mostly these are examples of non-elective representative claims, and they encompass some of the examples mentioned at the end of the last section. First, there are claims which we might call ‘wider interest’ claims. The core idea here is that a representative claim may be based on the notion that larger and deeper human interests and needs need to be represented or voiced, but are too wide to receive sufficient voice in a national electoral political system. One might consider, for example, the rock stars Sir Bob Geldof and Bono and their advocacy of Third World debt relief, famine relief and poverty alleviation. This style of claim taps into the notion of rethinking governance, and the need to deal with a reconfigured social imaginary, in that such claims highlight the practices and consequences of governance that political systems may not have found adequate ways to recognise or with which to cope.

Second, claims to be a ‘surrogate’ representative suggest that formal electoral processes are not sufficiently subtle or encompassing in fast-changing social and cultural contexts, and that new and sporadic modes of representation, which bring into relief marginalised perspectives or emergent communities, are necessary. Mansbridge (2003) cites the example of Barney Frank, a gay congressman in the US who explicitly takes on the task of representing gay and lesbian interests well beyond the territorial boundaries of his own constituency. One thing that a focus on the remaking of governance does is to draw our attention to the existence of important perspectives which, by their nature, do not readily find voice in party and electoral politics. A representative claim might be based on the idea that one is a surrogate spokesperson for a group which, because of its cultural nature and consequent geographical dispersion, has no formal elected representative to speak for it. Young (2000) argues that in highly differentiated contemporary societies the representation of perspectives – points of view that arise from how people are differently positioned within a social field – is different from the representation of interests and opinions. Marginalised groups, for example, are not united or cohesive in their political opinions, but their perspectives condition their interests and opinions. Representing perspectives can involve claims that go beyond electoral forums:

A more democratic representative government would have various layers and sites of elected, appointed, and volunteer

bodies that discuss policy options, make policy decisions, or review policy effectiveness. In such bodies it is possible and desirable to give specific representation to particular social group perspectives which might not otherwise be present. (Young, 2000, pp 152-3)

Third, as discussed in the previous section, stakeholder forums amount to a new style of representative claim, based on the notion that one stands for or speaks for a group which has a material or other 'stake' in a process or a decision, and therefore has a right to have its interests included in the process. Certainly, these examples involve a radical deconstruction of our received ideas of what a 'constituency' is. 'Constituencies', arguably, can be short-lived, non-territorial and spontaneously-formed, yet still form the basis of competing demands for political representation.

Conclusion

Wider interests, surrogates, stakeholder representatives – these are just a small handful of examples of new styles and forms of representation which are prompting a rethink of what representation can mean, and what it can contribute to our understanding of governance. As governance is rethought and remade, and new and complex arrangements cut across older boundaries between public and private, state and non-state, so new spaces are opened up for new representative claims to be made.

Given that they are non-elective, what legitimating arguments do these sorts of claims tap into in the attempt to justify themselves and, in turn, what do these arguments tell us about transformations of governance? Traditionally, representative claims from non-elective actors would be accompanied by, or imply, a further claim that there is a link with the formal line of democratic delegation, legitimating the claim. For example, an unelected government adviser, official or appointee might be in a position to claim representativeness of a larger group or interest on the basis of their formal connection to elected figures within a traditional set of line-hierarchy relationships. Interestingly, some of the newer and more challenging claims do not move in that direction when attempting to justify themselves (or when others attempt to justify them). Rather, they tend to try to break the bounds of a traditional, hierarchical model of democratic accountability. Given the importance of informal network governance to the broader idea of the remaking of governance, it is important to note that a key claim

is that an actor is ‘locked into’ networks, and thus restricted or limited in what they can do by being embedded within a chain of mutually dependent relationships. So, a representative claim might be based on the actor being locked into a tight or dense network of organisational or other similar ties, such that alternative forms of accountability become exercised. For example, one might think in terms of the thickness of the “cobweb of connections in the ecology of communities” (March and Olsen, 1995, p 177). There are various mechanisms for achieving accountability of organisations which do not require election. As Giandomenico Majone writes:

What is required to reconcile independence and accountability are richer and more flexible forms of control than the traditional methods of political and administrative oversight. Statutory objectives, procedural requirements, judicial review, budgetary discipline, professionalism, expertise, monitoring by interest groups, even inter-agency rivalry can all be elements of a pervasive system of control which only needs to be activated. When the system works properly no one controls an independent agency, yet the agency is ‘under control’. (Majone, 1995, p 118)

Dense networks can foster legitimacy in part because they constrain actors in ways that are analogous to electoral constraints, although drawing that analogy need not be central to such claims.

Even more interesting are arguments that seek to establish the authenticity of new claims precisely by tapping into their very newness, their very separation from conventional electoral and related justifications and arguments. We might refer to these as the ‘untainted’ style of argument or claim: ‘I can speak for or represent these marginalised interests because no one is paying me to do so, because I have no other axe to grind as all elected officials do, because I am the real thing, authentic.’ I am not suggesting for one moment that we have some mysterious means by which claims to authenticity can be upheld – far from it – merely that this is a style of representative claim that one hears more often, perhaps in response to the ever-wider reach of governance and the counter-effort to retain and assert a sense of independence or authenticity.

In some respects, arguments which rest upon notions of the formal connectedness of a representative claimant to elective office appear to have reached a limit in terms of how much legitimacy their invocation can garner. Occupying or being connected to a position in a formal

hierarchy or chain of delegation appears increasingly insufficient as the basis of a convincing representative claim in the more complex, public–private boundary crossing of contemporary governance. It still matters to us that politicians and other decision-makers and managers are formally accountable, and that there is a direct or indirect electoral component to that accountability. But the political–cultural resonance of the claim seems to be accompanied by greater scepticism, or cynicism, concerning the disengagement and unresponsiveness of formal governmental institutions.

So, although formal accountability still matters, other criteria seem to be on the rise. In particular, criteria which stress the role of claimants being locked into wider governance networks – and which appeal to underlying values of accountability and control, but which tap into different constructions or interpretations of ‘accountability’ and ‘control’. Here, connectedness as a criterion is still invoked, but it is less formal, less clearly linked to elections and more to do with networks than hierarchies.

Further, surprisingly perhaps, there has been an apparent increase in the salience of criteria of untaintedness – that is, a rise in the perceived value of disconnection from formal hierarchies or lines of delegation centring on traditional governmental and elected actors. Criteria of untaintedness enact – or at least would like to enact – values of authenticity, a relatively new arrival in the pantheon of familiar democratic principles. Not all arguments that tap into this view would share the terminology – Iris Young’s account, for example, would stress grounds of inclusion rather than untaintedness – but I believe that the term captures something crucial of the underlying thrust of such arguments. Besides, we are less concerned here with actual untaintedness (whatever that may mean), and more concerned with the claims to representation that seek to tap into an idea of untaintedness.

I want to argue that these subtle but important shifts in the types of argument that are made by would-be representatives tap into the notion of remaking governance, in that they reflect shifts in the ways that governance operates. If networks count more than hierarchies, then representative claims which base themselves precisely in network forms of organisation will rise in salience. And if the remaking of governance involves the reaching of governance processes into ever-wider social domains, then the urge to assert independent authenticity – ‘untaintedness’ – will be all the stronger.

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