REPRESENTATION AND EXPERTISE IN A CONTEXT OF INNOVATIVE PARTICIPATORY POLICIES. THE CASE OF QUEBEC CITY’S NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCILS.

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Introduction

In the Nineties, participatory policies have become an essential aspect of decision-making in most western countries. A strong will to integrate new and different actors in policy-making is generally the basis of participatory policies, as is shown by the proliferation of the words which concern citizen involvement: partnership, cooperation, governance, deliberation, consultation process, and so on. This innovation in the way of taking governmental decisions firstly appears in environmental policies. Then, many type of participatory arrangements have been created, like citizen juries, national hearings, forums, special surveys, etc., which have few common points concerning how they work, but they all contain the desire to find new ways of associating citizen and group actors to policy elaboration more closely. In this sense, the actual policy-making contains a form of ‘gentle command’ to participate in public life, which is also reflected by academic literature (Helly, 1999).

Participatory policies are perceived as the development of a new kind of policy, which is more concerned by procedures and rules than by content of the policy (Howlett, 2000). Theodore Lowi is the first to have tried to specify the objective of this kind of policy, named ‘constituent policy’:

The term ‘constituent’ may reasonably be defined as ‘necessary in the formation of the whole; forming; composing; making as an essential part. (...) Constitution is the setting-up, the way in which a political regime is organized and the laws which govern its organization (...) [The] significance of democratic party systems is to be found first in the regime and in the type of regime rather than directly and specifically in the substantive outputs of the regime (Lowi, quoted by Miller, 1990).

Two French political scientists have defined ‘constitutive policy’ more precisely the. According to Duran and Thoenig, this kind of policy first and foremost aim to create negotiating space between public actors (1996). The ‘constitutive policy’ does not define the issue and the solution because its first topic is to legitimise new actors and create standards of deliberation. The ‘constitutive policy’ intervenes in the initial stages of a more substantive and sectorial policy with the objective of defining the contents in a ‘collective’ way. Thus, participatory policies, as a kind of constitutive policy, is involved in the development of a ‘regulatory state’ characterized by a tendancy to ‘indirect government’ (Majone, 1997). Some prefere to talk about ‘administrative democracy’ to emphasis the procedural forms of participatory policies, close to bureaucratic way of thinking (Duran and Thoenig, 1996).

As the objective of participatory policies is to involve new actors, the main issue of participatory arrangements is concerned by legitimacy. Participatory policies should improve the legitimacy of decision-making. In this context, the legitimacy of representatives and civil servants are not seen to be sufficient to justify orientations and proposals. The legitimacy of representatives could not be limited to electoral approval (Quesnel, 2000A). Indeed, by developing participatory democracy, the representatives have to construct their legitimacy in a continuous way (Sine, 2001) with direct relationships with the ‘users’ of public policies (Warin, 1999).
The development of participatory policies is seen by several, as a change in the policy process towards a more deliberative and open style of policy-making (Blondiaux, 2002). The literature which advocates a ‘citizen-centered state’ would appear to give evidence of this transformation in policy-making (see for example : Fischer, 1993; Hunold, 2001; Simansen and Robins, 2000; Ventriss, 1997). However, there are a few studies which seek to show empirically how participatory policies have changed policy-making. Indeed, several interesting analyses on consultation and participatory arrangements have revealed that the institutionalization of participation has changed the group and citizen strategies. This change concerns the way of organizing collective action or means to exert pressure on government (see for example : Abers, 1998; Hamel, 1991; Laforest, 2000). In comparison, studies on the impact of participatory policies on representatives and civil servants are rare. Yet participatory policies can affect the traditional principles which govern the state, like responsibility, accountability and expertise. The legitimacy of these principles runs the risks being called into question by the new standards proposed by participatory policies, like a depoliticised and consensual conception of decision-making (Papadopoulos, 2000) and an enhancement of lay knowledge.

In this paper, I propose to analyse an experiment in participatory policies to see how the traditional principles of governance are confronted. More precisely, I ask the question: how do representatives and civil servants respond to the challenge offered by participatory policies? Does this innovation mean less representation and expertise? To do this analysis, I examine the day-to-day exchanges of citizens, representatives and technical staff in consultation arrangements.

This study is based on an observation and analysis of the case of Quebec city’s neighbourhood councils. Like many local governments (Rao, 2000; CRAPS/CURAPP, 1999), Quebec city has proposed a new way of conducting local politics using a citizen approach. During the last decade, this Canadian city has developed an interesting and innovative way of consulting its inhabitants in a learning and interactive process. This experiment has undoubtedly democratized local policy-making. Quebec city’s case is interesting to ask the question about citizen/representatives-civil servants relationship in a context of participatory policy, because these actors are often in contact in consultative procedures. We will see that the change of the policy process is complex and has to be seen on a day-to-day basis. This text is presented as a series of questions on a basis of the close observation of the dynamics in neighbourhood councils. This is a first formulation of my observations of the local politics in Quebec city.

1 The literature which concerns the will to have a more open state is considerable. This literature contains two types of approach which are diametrically opposed. The first one is relative to the trend of New Public Management which advocates a consumer approach to the state-citizen relationship. The second one is close to the deliberative trend in philosophy which is concerned by pluralism in decision-making.

2 The Quebec city participatory experiment is nominated in 1993 with nine other world cities for the Carl Bertelsman Prize, a German foundation which concerned by local innovation and which in 1995 created an ‘International Network for Better Local Government’. See Beauchamp and Dionne, 1997.
The paper begins with a story of the institutionalization of participation in Quebec city. This allows to present rules and functioning of the consultation procedures. In the two next sections, we will see how the representatives and civil servants are challenged by participatory policies.

1. Methodology

This paper is a part of the research for my thesis about the emergence and the evolution of consultative policies in two medium-sized cities: Quebec city (Canada) and Bordeaux (France). I seek to explain the ways in which participation is institutionalized. Three methods are employed. Firstly, interviews with political actors (former and current local councillors, political parties’ active members), national and local administrators and citizens involved in consultative procedures or in community organizations. Secondly, examination of an extensive number of administrative and political documents (minutes of consultative meetings, official reports, national laws, local rules, parties’ programs, etc.) and a press review. Thirdly, observation of participation in many kinds of consultative meetings. In this case, I have adopted an ethnographic approach. The data is not completely compiled in the case of Quebec city and my research on Bordeaux is still in progress. This is why I have limited this preliminary analysis to the case of Quebec city. However, when I feel that a comparison will contribute to the discussion, I will draw a parallel between the practice in Quebec city and neighbourhood councils in Bordeaux.

2. The consultative process in Quebec city

Quebec city is a medium-sized town of 175,000 inhabitants in East Canada. It is the capital of the Province of Quebec, composed of a largely French-speaking community. Quebec city has a special status among municipalities in the province for historical reasons. Even if the city is governed by some general laws, its rules are essentially defined by its charter. Every two years, Quebec’s authorities participate in a special parliamentary commission to request some changes in the city’s charter. This point is important to understand the special status of consultation in the municipal affairs scene: Quebec and Montreal do not have the same procedures as the rest of the municipalities, in initiating and managing the consultative process. By virtue of their charters and the regular parliamentary sessions, these two cities have the

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3 My thesis is financed by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la nature et les technologies (FQRNT).
4 Since the beginning of the year, Quebec and its suburb have formed a new city of about 500,000 inhabitants. As the consultative process was started fourteen years ago, I talk about the ‘old’ Quebec. In conclusion, I will come back on this point because the amalgamation is an important challenge for consultative institutions.
5 In Canada, Municipal Affairs is a general jurisdiction of the provinces. On local governments in Canada, see: Tindal and Tindal 2000, Quesnel, 1999.
opportunity of initiating original consultative policy. In the rest of the municipalities, it is more difficult because participation is regulated by general laws. However, the initiatives in Quebec and Montreal have also been the result of political events. In the next section, I will explain the specific context within which Quebec city’s consultation policy has evolved.

2.1 Early stages and evolution

In the middle of the Sixties, a new political party won the local election in Quebec city. Its program was based on resolutely modernistic rhetoric. In a language near the American and Canadian Reformist movement, the new team offered to run the city more efficiently and in a more open way (Quesnel-Ouellet, 1976). Furthermore, the mayor and his local councillors proposed important projects to modernize the city. Demolition works were carried out to construct an urban motorway, big hotels and government offices. These events created a shock among the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods on whom the demolition work had a particularly hard impact. Gradually, an opposition movement emerged. Mobilisation around former and new neighbourhood committees was particularly intense (Doré and Plamondon, 1980). These committees were composed of people who came from community organizations and university (mainly social sciences students and professors). They criticized the anti-democratic way in which these projects was conceived: the interests of property developers were took precedence over those of inhabitants’ ones.

A. The emerging idea

Local political formation in 1977

During the Seventies, the idea of creating a political party emerged in the popular movement. The Popular Alliance (‘Rassemblement populaire’ in French, RP) was created in 1977 (Racicot, 1980). The task of

6 Montreal, the biggest city in Quebec, has its own charter too.
7 In the case of Montreal, see Hamel 2000A, 2000B. The Quebec consultation model is unknown, even in Canada. Yet it is one of the most highly developed and interesting local consultative policies in Canada. We will see in my text that the number of researchers who have been working on that are very limited.
8 In Canada, local political parties are few. The local level is seen as an apolitical government. In this context, political teams are preferred to political parties. In the province of Quebec, some local political parties were born during the Sixties. They only have informal relations with national and federal parties but remain weak. Even the most organized represent a hybrid between a team and a party. For example, the majority party in Quebec city (Popular Alliance), a well-organized and democratic party, changed its name after the amalgamation and introduced the word ‘team’. It became ‘Le Renouveau municipal-Équipe L’Allier’ (L’Allier is the mayor’s name).
9 A public inquiry at the beginning of the Sixties revealed many scandals in the management of the former teams.
10 The ‘modernist’ team held all the seats. A formal opposition in the City Hall was impossible.
11 A study published at the beginning of the Seventies by some of the intellectuals involved in the community groups demonstrated the links between the City Hall and the property developers. This extensive study of four volumes is the ‘theoretical justification’ of the new political party, as one its founders said to me. See EZOP-Québec, 1981.
mobilizing the community was dealt with at the same time as a profound consideration about party philosophy. The neighbourhood council (NC) was the fundamental idea of a very detailed program. This pro-citizen idea was a response to the weak democracy of the local council. Furthermore, the NCs were seen as a means to prevent radical town planning decisions, as was the case during the end of the Sixties. It was a way ‘to save the Quebec city’s neighbourhood’ (in the 1977 program).

In RP’s first program, the NC proposal was radical: they would be decisive on many of topics, like building and demolition permits or leisure and community activities in their neighbourhood. Consultation was reserved for planification (general planning for the city as a whole) and more generally, for municipal policies. In fact, the NC idea was a type of decentralization project.

This idea was presented for the first time to the population at the 1977 municipal elections. RP took twelve years to win the electoral struggle. During these opposition years, the members of RP had some important debates about winning strategies to win. The radical NC project was particularly criticized by some candidates who came from the ‘suburb’ districts of the city. After this first crisis, the NC idea remained an important point of the RP program. But it was not a central argument during the electoral campaigns.

**RP came to power in 1989**

Progressively, the RP gained some seats (one in 1981 and two in 1985). The party was determined to win the 1989 election. RP chose a more knowledgeable and charismatic chief: Jean-Paul L’Allier. The campaign was well-organized, around dissatisfaction topics and promise to relaunch some neighbourhoods particularly hard-hit by unsuccessful projects of the former administration. The result was effective: the RP candidate for mayor obtained 58% of the votes and in the twenty-one districts, the RP candidates for local councillor got between 35.5% and 79.2% of the votes (electoral participation: 62.1%). The RP won a comfortable majority with 15 seats (Quesnel and Belley, 1991).

In the two first years of the RP’s term of office, the NC project was not a priority. On one hand, RP had to learn how to deal with being in power. On the other hand, the local council had to manage a fiscal crisis: provincial government cut a part of the grant.

**B. The operationnalized idea**

*First step towards formalization: Formation of the Consultation Office*

The NC idea was also held up because extensive amendments to zoning and landscape had to be carried out. The former administration had neglected this matter in the last year of its term of office. It was an opportunity to adopt first consultative principles. A coordinator was engaged with the mandate to create the Consultation Office, affiliated to the Communication Department. The consultation coordinator had to
manage some public hearings on zoning and landscape topics in neighbourhood which had suffered the adverse effects of the former administration’s projects. As it was an electoral promise, it was a priority for the new political team. In the meantime, RP took the decision to make the consultation committees public. These committees were an initiative of the former administration. The people involved in their community on a different basis were appointed by the executive. The meetings were private and held irregularly. The consultation committees were totally dominated by the executive and were not seen as a democratic instrument. So, the consultation coordinator was given responsibility to give a second chance to the consultation committees by opening and formalizing the meetings.

These decisions were criticized by two opposite points of view. First, the RP’s active members condemned the consultative tendency. Some members pointed out that initially NCs should be decisional. In this sense, they act as the ‘program identity guardian’. The RP’s active members insisted for that the NCs become operational rapidly. Second, a feeling of discontentment swept through bureaucracy and more generally, in public opinion. Consultation is seen as an inefficient and time-consuming procedure. RP gained an unenviable reputation: the mayor and the local councillors did not take their responsibilities and they were afraid to take decisions. The local bureaucracy did not approve of the employment of a consultation coordinator in a context of fiscal crisis. As a member of RP told me, the coordinator was seen as an outcast in the local bureaucracy.

**Second step towards formalization: Neighbourhood council pilot experiment in 1993**

In this difficult context, the RP’s parliamentary members had to find a good strategy. They had to convince the party of their will to keep the NC project. But more importantly, they had to show everyone that this was an effective idea. The mayor, who was not an initial member of RP, took the view that it was up to RP’s parliamentary members to prove that their project was functional.

The strategy which they choose was convincing. They gave the mandate to the consultation coordinator to set up a NC pilot experiment in two different districts. This experiment was devised by a committee composed of civil servants and two local councils. They decided: 1) Consultation concern all neighbourhood issues and not only zoning and landscape; 2) The members should be elected by a resident assembly; 3) The NCs should control their agenda; and 4) The NCs must be empowered to develop neighbourhood projects or to give their own issue which is not on the consultative agenda. Thus, the pilot experiment represents the second step towards formalization of the consultative process.

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12. The executive are formed by the mayor and the full-time councillors responsible of a city’s sector.
13. Expression from Doré, 1992: 142. G. Doré is one the founders of the RP and he was a professor. His ‘academic text’ belongs to a group of texts about the Quebec city’s participatory model exclusively written by intellectuals who were members of RP. The texts about Quebec city’s neighbourhood council, which were written by an external observer, are scarce.
The pilot experiment was a big test. Three consultation organizers joined the consultation coordinator in the Consultation Office. The pilot experiment lasted two years during which a continuous assessment process was conducted. The consultation organizer, charged with leading the two citizen groups, collected an immense amount of quantitative and qualitative data. At the end of the two years, the consultative team and the General Policy Department wrote a very extensive report on the different topics of the pilot experiment, some public hearings and a new thematic consultative commission (Women and the city). Two chapters were added with the aim of thinking about the consultative policy: the opportunity to have referenda and foreign experience in NCs.

The assessment report was a good instrument to convince the sceptics. Participation was working and the experiment in the two neighbourhoods was particularly interesting but very different. Furthermore, the pilot experiment was an opportunity to establish for functional rules NCs in a continuous learning process. A really reflexive relationship was created between the members and the consultation organizer because the members were actually involved in defining the rules. However, an important point in the report allowed to close the debate on the nature of NCs: members clearly preferred that the NCs stay consultative. According to them, accountability belong to the mayor and the local councillors.

Third step towards formalization: Official policy consultation

After the assessment, consultation was maintained with the consultation committee, public hearings, ‘Women and the City’ and ‘Urban Safety’ thematic commissions. The consultation process gained its legitimacy. The RP councillors and the consultation team now had the project to consolidate consultation. A third degree of institutionalization seems to be a good solution to maintain the methods and the procedures developed from the beginning of the Nineties. Formalization was the occasion for consultation to have functional principles and procedures. With wide ‘guidelines’, consultation will become a democratic and ‘technocratic’ realities. The objective was to define a consultation policy and to include policy and consultation rules in Quebec city’s specific charter. It was a means of protecting consultation from a majority political party change in future. The counter-example of Montreal, where the new mayor had revoked consultation procedures, gave a new reason to draft a clear and a formal consultation policy. After a relatively short time of consideration, the amendment was presented to the special parliamentary commission. The government accepted the amendment easily. The Quebec city consultation policy became official in 1996.

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14 Public hearing and ‘Women and the City’ commission seem not a controversial issue but they were important in the consultation policy. Neighbourhood councils were more controversial.
15 In fact, the amendment is symbolic but important: the local council has the obligation to adopt a consultation policy. The content is not specified.
After this important date, a new and last step had begun. The NCs were now official. Progressively, in respect of the rules governing their creation, eleven NCs succeeded to the consultation committees. The NCs were immediately a popular success. The community’s request to create a NC in each area came more rapidly than the consultation team had thought. The last one was created in 1999.

2.2 Consultative institutions

A strong and clear consultation procedure had resulted from this relatively long process of consolidation. I would now like to take a brief look at the way the consultation institutions work. As I discuss NC’s effects more precisely in the rest of the paper, I prefer to put the emphasis on them than on public hearings and thematic consultative commission.

Creation

The city is divided into twelve neighbourhood of around 9000-15000 inhabitants. The NC are not imposed by the City Hall. A petition of a minimum of 300 residents’ names in favour of the creation of a NC is necessary. In some neighbourhoods, the local councillors took the initiative of collect the signatures. Only one neighbourhood has preferred to keep the consultation committee, due to the special sociological composition of the neighbourhood.

Composition

Nine people are the NC’s ‘administrators’ : four women, four men and a shopkeepers’ representative. They are elected for a two-years term during an annual neighbourhood residents’ assembly. The neighbourhood local councillors are members, but without the right to vote (more on this point below). A consultation organizer was associated to each NC.

Status

The NC is an autonomous organization: its legal existence does not depend on the City Hall. It is an association recognized by the City Hall to set up its policy consultation. The City Hall subsidizes the NC to cover operating expenses and community activities initiated by NCs. Thus NCs have two mandates: 1) to give their opinion on City Hall proposals; 2) organize different community activities (neighbourhood fêtes, floral and landscape gardening projects, surveys on different topics, promoting the NC, neighbourhood press, etc.). This last capability is very important because it empowers the NC and also contributes to the members’ motivation. They are able to be actively involved and not just to reply to the city’s policies. The financial backing given by the City Hall is small (between 2000 and 5000$CAN) but it

16 The ‘Old Quebec’ is a tourist attraction with few inhabitants (about 2000), several shopkeepers, hotels and restaurants. Several residents and business associations are present in the area.

17 The neighbourhood council border does not respect the district ones. They are bigger. That is why more than one local councillor is associated to each neighbourhood council.
is demonstrably enough to start various activities. Furthermore, as an autonomous organization, the NCs are able to request grants from other institutions to finance their activities\(^{18}\).

As an association, the NCs have the legal obligation to present an annual financial report. The City Hall also requests an annual report. In these reports, we can find all the consultation and community activities.

**Meetings**

NCs have a monthly meeting, sometimes more in very dynamic NCs or when there is an important issue in a neighbourhood. The meeting is always on the same evening, every month in the same place. The agenda is fixed by the president\(^{19}\), with the help of the consultation organizer. It always contains: a progress report on projects, mail, a period for the local councillor (in the middle of the meeting), a period for the public, accounts and open discussion\(^{20}\). During the meeting, the secretary, a member of the NC, takes notes to write the minutes together with the consultation organizer.

The meeting is also the occasion to exchange information about the neighbourhood. In this context, community organisations are always invited to the meeting. Together they plan a project or talk about a worrying issue. In this sense, the NC is used to forming networks in the neighbourhood (Simard et Landry, 2001). Some of the NC members are even members of other interest or community groups.

**Consultation process**

Planning and landscape issues are obligatorily subject to consultation. But consultation concerns also other sectors, although they are not obligatory: environment, public safety, housing policy, leisure, budget priorities, etc. In all consultation, it is the executive’s prerogative to authorize the consultation procedure.

Consultation in the NCs takes two forms. 1) A consultation only with the nine members. Generally, this small scale consultation concerns policies which have a minor effect in the neighbourhood. The NCs can decide to give their opinion or to make a wider consultation with the population. 2) A consultation with the population when the topic is very important for neighbourhood development and future (street zoning, traffic change, etc.). In this case, the population is invited to give their opinion in a public meeting. Afterwards, the members take a position on the basis of the reactions of population.

The consultation in NCs follows always the same pattern. Firstly, the civil servant responsible for policy presents the topics with visual aids. They give information and answers questions. In a closed meeting with only the members present\(^{21}\), civil servants have only one proposal to submit. For a public

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18 For example, the Saint-Roch’s neighbourhood councils twice obtained $50000 from the federal and provincial governments for a safety project in their area.

19 The president is elected by the 9 members. He leads the neighbourhood councils, with the help of the consultation organizer.

20 In Province of Quebec, there is a strong assembly tradition. Every assembly, even for a small association, respects procedural rules for running an assembly. There is many written codes. The most important is the Morin code. The agenda is a very important aspect of these rules.

21 The general public is accepted. They can give their opinion but it will be integrated into the consultation report. In this kind of consultation, only the members’ remarks are take in account.
consultation, they always present two or three proposals for a planning change. Secondly, the local councillors explain the particular issues of the policy. Thirdly, the population and/or the members ask questions and give their opinion. During the whole meeting, the consultation organizer leads the assembly in order to formulate a clear opinion. After the consultation process, the civil servant and the consultation organizer prepare a consultation report which they give to the executive, who then to take their decision. The Mayor of Quebec city said that 93% of the NCs’ position was approved by the executive. The annual report of the Consultation Office give information in this way.

*Other consultation arrangements*

Even if the NCs are the most regular symbolic consultation arrangements in Quebec city, the consultation policy contains other means of consulting. First, the City Hall holds regular public hearings for general topics concerning more than one neighbourhood or the city as a whole. In this case, three neutral commissioners are chosen to listen and to read expressions of opinion, submitted by citizens or community groups. After that, the commissioners write a report to give their opinion, on the basis of the expressions of opinion. Second, three thematic commissions with the aim of defining a special policy or of expressing an opinion on special topics. These commissions are: Women and the city, Public safety and Youth and the city. Their members being appointed by the local council. Third, the consultative process provides the opportunity to develop new consultation tools. For example, some local councillors organize an annual meeting in their district. Follow-up committees, with interest and community groups, are also formed for special topics (traffic in ‘Old Quebec’, river redevelopment and cleanup). I also participated in a ‘street consultation’. Citizens were invited on the street to talk about a pilot traffic experiment in a residential street. We walked about two hours to observe the situation in each section of the street. This street exploration is indeed an interesting tool which is also used by Women and the city commission (for measuring safety) and by NCs to check out improvements and problem in their area.

Without any doubt the NCs and the other consultative arrangements represent an interesting participatory innovation. The implementation of the NC in Quebec city contributes to the transformation of decision-making in a more open and democratic way. But this positive change also comes with uncertainties: traditional organisational principles, like accountability, responsibility, representation and expertise are challenged by participatory procedures. NC is a new actor with political and day-to-day legitimacy which is totally different from that of local councillors and civil servants. What are the strategies adopted by local councillors and civil servants? Have their role and their work changed? How do they see the NCs? In sections 3 and 4, I deal with these questions on the basis of interviews with these actors and my own observation during NCs’ meetings.
3. Representatives and the neighbourhood councils: an opposite or a collaborative relationship?

The Quebec city’s consultation policy define the role of local councillor in the NCs in these terms:

The local councillor of a district included in a NC’s territory is a formal member without the right to vote. The local councillors are members of the NC as representatives. They are not NC spokesman to the local council. They are not local council spokesman to the NC (Ville de Quebec, 1996).

This text is very approximate and does not explain what is the work of the local councillor in the NCs. At least, we could understand that the representative status of the local councillors is confirmed. Furthermore, as we will see, the local councillor cannot refuse the role of spokesman because they know the two ‘worlds’ well and an important part of their work with the NCs is to give information. Our observation and interviews help to define the role of local councillor more precisely in a NC context.

In fact, the local councillor-NC relationship, contains three aspects which are always present and form the driving force of NC’s. First, there is a type of hidden opposition surrounding the legitimacy. Who are most legitimate? We will see that two approaches of representation make up ‘the legitimacy struggle’. Second, the NCs also gives the opportunity to develop a fruitful relationship. The partnership is a combination of collaboration concernily NC projects and information exchange about neighbourhood needs and City Hall priorities. Third, the place of the opposition representative seems to be more difficult to find. Opposition representatives vacillate between marginalization or refusal and an active involvement. This marginalization of the opposition local councillor asks the following question: is the NCs a policy for the majoritary group?

The legitimacy struggle

For the local councillors, the fact that exist NCs potentially calls into their legitimacy to represent neighbourhood inhabitants. The role of NC would appears to be close to the role of the local councillor: representing the inhabitants’ interests. Furthermore, local councillor and NC members are both in a position of authority in the district. They both claim to be in a role of territorial representation. With this posture, NC members seek to know the population’s opinion in public consultation or in informal discussions with inhabitants. In the meetings, the more dynamic NC members remind mention their conversations with shopkeepers, or with some inhabitants in order to legitimize their position. NC members oppose their ‘representative’ job (exchange with inhabitants) to that of the local councillor. In this sense, their relationship with the population could be the same as for the local councillor. Moreover, local councillor and NC members are both elected by residents. This very symbolic act could give legitimacy to both actors to talk and take a position in the name of the neighbourhood’s inhabitants. For
example, the NC’s members use the vote argument to justify their position when they have a disagreement with the local councillor or the consultation organizer. A local councillor explains this debate about voting:

Local councillors are elected. NC members are elected. Is it the same vote? Some NC members say they are elected by people in the same way as the local councillor. But there is a difference. The local councillor is elected by universal suffrage rules. NC is an association of which the members are the neighbourhood inhabitants, which is not the same thing. This aspect of the NC is often forgotten by their members. In fact, NC are an association and the de facto members are the neighbourhood population. The NC representation seems to be close to the interest group model. But the integration of the NCs in the city decision-making process does not reflect the associative status of the NCs. Furthermore, this legitimacy struggle was predictable, because when the NCs were devised, the votes was seen as a means of giving democratic legitimacy to the NCs. The legitimacy issue was important to allow the NC to be recognized in the neighbourhoods.

However, local councillors have a greater electoral legitimacy than NC: thousands of electors vote for them, whereas only a few hundred inhabitants go to vote at the NC’s annual assembly. Furthermore, few citizens regularly attend to the NC’s meetings. This situation asks the question: who do NCs represent? This important point is rarely an issue in the discussion. The NC’s are a strong democratic symbol and a critic faces a negative reaction.

The struggle of legitimacy reveals some confusion surrounding NC’s role. The creation of NC is based on a critical view of City Hall and its local councillors. The RP’s idea to form NCs was based on the justification to implement more democratic local government and to stop decisions which potentially threatened the neighbourhood quality of life. The idea behing NCs is well-expressed by Danny Burns:

The simple idea underpinning local democracy is this: councils have long been controlled by councillors who are perceived to be unrepresentative, and by a bureaucratic system which is perceived to be irresponsible, inaccessible, inefficient, unaccountable and so on. If services was controlled locally and representatives committees of local people were able to make their decisions, then the whole system would become far more democratic (Burns, 2000). In this context, NCs have a sceptical position or a role of a ‘correct decision’ watchdog. It is not surprising then, in a conflict situation, NCs members claim to be representative of the inhabitants. This claim is generally based on a different conception of the NC’s representation. In the language of NCs members, their representation style is neutral: as ‘ordinary’ citizens, they represent lay people. Their apolitical speech accuses the political and partisan attitude of the local councillors. They contrast the ideal

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22 Interview with a person who was a member of the policy committee at the City Hall.
23 Citizens regularly come to meetings generally to ask a specific question or to present a problematic situation. In this case, the citizens stay in the meeting until the population period in the middle of the meeting. When it is a public consultation, more citizens come. The debate is wider in public consultation. In regular meetings, NCs work as a board meeting with only members of the board present.
lay and day-to-day representation to the unsavory political representation. In their view, their neutral position gives them a greater legitimacy. Depolitisation and consensus seem to reflect their approach to local democracy approach. For example, in an NC meeting, a member insisted that the big green spaces should be protected in the neighbourhood plan, because this was a very political question and involved property developers. As she said to underline the legitimacy of the NC in this affair: «We represent the citizens but we do not have political considerations like the City Hall and the property developers».

This debate about legitimacy shows that two types of representation are confronting the NCs. On one hand, classic representation based, on the delegation of the people’s power to a representative. On the other hand, a citizen representation approach, based on evident links between the NCs members and inhabitants. According to this last view, NCs members mirror the inhabitants’ needs and problems because they are lay people too. They represent the archetype of the neighbourhood citizen.

By comparison, the legitimacy struggle is totally absent from the NCs of Bordeaux. The inhabitants have a passive role in Bordeaux’s NCs: after a presentation by the mayor and civil servants of the evolution of the City Hall projects in the neighbourhood, citizens only have the right to ask the mayor some questions. In this very limited empowerment context, citizens do not have the same feeling of representation. Representation remains the local councillors and above all, the mayor’s prerogative. The collective ambition of representation is impossible because they for themselves. The participatory model of Bordeaux contributes rather to the individualization of citizenship (Graham and Phillips, 1997).

The comparison between Bordeaux and Quebec city, enables the following hypothesis to be made: the legitimacy struggle is a healthy reaction and shows the interest and the dynamism of the NC’s members.

The partnership relation

In reality, the legitimacy struggle is not so conflictual. It is a veiled struggle which is behind the general dynamics of the NC meetings. When there is a disagreement or a misunderstanding, the debate about legitimacy appears. But in general, the relationship between local councillors and NCs is based on a tacit understanding of the role of each. The NCs appreciate the information and the help of the local councillor: Local councillors give information on City Hall priorities, on project evolution or on rules and functioning. Their presence during the NCs’ meeting improves the NCs’ projects. For the local councillors, this informative and supporting role appears to be important in order achieve sucess in their district and to have a good working relationship with the NCs:

Although we do not vote…we are there as an observer and we have to answer citizens’ questions. In the same way, as I have first-line information as member of the majority group, I can correct some mistakes or false information about City Hall policies.

Thus the NCs are also a resource for the local councillors. NCs help the local councillors to improve his networks in the neighbourhood. In this sense, NCs act as additional ‘eyes and ears’ of the local
councillors. For example, NCs members give information and make proposals about a problem that the local councillor may not have seen. NCs also have interesting ideas, which can be structural projects for the neighbourhood. As one local councillor said:

Two heads are better than one….I consider the NC as an asset because I’m thinking about the development and the future of the neighbourhood with other people…I’m not alone. NC is an alarm committee.

At the same time, local councillors have to adapt their strategies and decisions. NCs are an opinion barometer. When a local councillor knows the NC members well and goes to their meetings, he can anticipate the NC’s reaction to a municipal project. He gives this information to his colleagues who will adapt their position.

Moreover, I have observed that in some neighbourhoods, NCs have won more legitimacy than the RP’s district organization. This group, formed by RP’s active members living in the district, have the mandate to advise the local councillor on different neighbourhood issues. Progressively, RP’s local councillors have preferred to listen to the NC proposals rather than meet his district organization. This fact was contrary to the Copus hypothesis about the tension between the political party’s loyalty and the citizens’ demands. In their work on local politic in Great Britain (where the political party are more organized than in Canada), Copus find that «The party group demands the loyalty of its membership and, as a consequence, profoundly influences councillors in their representative activities» (2000 : 93). In the case of Quebec city, the simple active members of the RP seems to replaced by NC’s opinion and needs. The legitimacy struggle also exists between NC’s and RP’s membership.

Thus, giving and obtaining information seems to be an important aspect of the NC-local councillor relationship. The period reserved for the local councillor during the NC’s meeting shows this reciprocal interest for information. If the local councillor could not be there at the beginning of the meeting, he is generally present for his information period (in the middle of the evening). Furthermore, the local councillor tries to attend to activities organized by NC (special consultation, neighbourhood fêtes, shows, and so on). That is why we can suppose that the local councillor plays both the role of leader and messenger in the NCs.

Neighbourhood council : a policy which has marginalized the legislative body?

When the pilot experiment was initiated in 1993, some opposition members did not see this innovation as good news. The first argument to support rejecting NCs was relative to their time-consuming aspects.

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24 I have not yet interviewed opposition members. During my last journey to Quebec, there was a local electoral campaign. Given the important reconstruction of the opposition and the formation of a new coalition during this
The cost of consultation procedures was also discussed. The consultation policy required recruitment of new employees as Quebec city was in the mist of a fiscal crisis. The most interesting argument lay in the effects of improving the executive power of the NCs. According to this view, the consultation strengthened the executive proposals. When a project, rules or an amendment are presented to the local council, it is symbolically impossible to refuse the proposal. Because the NCs have given their agreement, the proposal has citizen approval. Rejection is seen as an undemocratic act. The only role which the local councillor has, is to approve the proposal without criticism. That is why some of opposition representatives were seeking a reform which enhanced the role of the local councillors. According to them, the population needed to know what the local councillor can do for them rather than adding a new actor in the decision-making process.

In my view, this question about the place of the legislative body is an important issue concerning the NCs and other participatory procedures on a local level. As neighbourhood representatives, local councillors have a place in the NCs. At the same time, this position has been seen as both a constraint and a resource. In general, the exchange between the NC and the local councillor improves knowledge about needs and problems in the neighbourhoods. Even if in a conflictual discussion, both approaches to representation in opposition, the local councillor’s status is not called into question. But as a member of the local council, the municipal legislative body, the local councillor loses a part of his prerogative when a proposal is the object of consultation. For the opposition representatives, this position is particularly problematic because the local council is the main political institution where they can criticize the majority team’s decisions. With the NCs, the local council loses a part of the quality of their debate. We find this kind of discussion in the now well-known Porto Allegre participatory budget. The Porto Allegre experiment is different from that of Quebec city’s in rules and functionning but the problem faced by the legislative body is the same as that of Quebec city’s:

[...] since the definition and approval of the budget are a legal prerogative of the Câmara de Vereadores, the Prefeitura, in strict legal terms, limits itself to submitting to the Câmara a budget proposal that the Câmara is free to approve, change, or defeat. In political terms, however, because the executive’s proposal is sanctioned by the participatory budgeting institutions and thus by the citizens and community organizations and associations that participate in them, the executive’s proposal becomes a fait accompli for the legislative body in view of the political risks for the deputies in voting against the ‘will of the citizens and the communities’. The majority of the chamber thus claim that by institutionalizing the participatory budgeting without involving the legislative body, the executive has in real terms emptied out the latter’s jurisdiction over budgetary matters (de Sausa Santos, 1998: 467).

period, I have preferred to await a calmer time to meet them. Thus, the next analyses are based on observation, meeting minutes and press reviews.
In Quebec city, the ‘local council problem’ does not concern something as important as the budget\textsuperscript{25}. Nevertheless, the place of the legislative body in a consultative process must be better understood to evaluate the NCs’ effects.

After the pilot experiment, the Quebec city opposition representatives were less critical about the NCs. When the NC functioning rules and the consultation policy were adopted, the opposition approved the proposal. But the observation in meetings and the meetings minutes shows large absenteeism from the opposition in the NCs. Some never attended their district NC’s meetings. Others were present but their role are very limited. Their leader role is less important than the majority representative one. They have less information to transmit. In this case, this is the messenger role which is favored. The opposition local councillor promises to talk about a neighbourhood problem to the City Hall or during the local council meetings. At the next meeting, they give the case evolution. Their position gives their speech and exchange a partisan aspect. Their only resource is to criticize the majority team’s work. In this case, some NC’s members condemn the opposition representative to being politically self-interest. By comparison, the majority local councillors’ language appears more neutral. However, it is surprising to see how little some more dynamic opposition members are talkative during NCs meetings unlike during local council assemblies. The opposition local councillor does not seem to find a comfortable place in the NCs. This is not true for some of the more dynamic ones. These opposition representatives lend a hand to NCs in their own activities (initiative power). They are deeply involved in their neighbourhood and choose to give priority to their work in the neighbourhood rather than favor the work in the legislative body.

Nevertheless, the question about the place of the opposition local councillors reveals an important aspect of consultation policy. Consultation policy is first and foremost a policy which favors the links between City Hall/the citizens and not citizen/local councillors. NCs are firstly concerned by the City Hall priorities. The regular presence of specialized civil servants and the help of consultation organizers accentuated this situation. Moreover, as members of the majority group, RP local councillors are in a good position to reap the benefits of NCs.

In comparison however, the opposition situation is less favorable in Bordeaux’s NCs. The opposition is not invited into NCs’ meetings. Even the local councillors members of the majority coalition have a small role to play during the assembly. The mayor has the leading main role. In this case, we can really talk about a policy which favors only the executive.

\textsuperscript{25} Every year since 1995, the local councillor responsible for the budget at the executive has organized meetings in each neighbourhood to present the City Hall budget situation. In fact, this kind of meeting is more an informal than a consultative one. It does not have the same status as Porto Allegre.
This discussion about the place of opposition in the NCs is interesting because it demonstrates that the links between a representative and a participatory democracy is not easy. To favor citizens, could have the effect of marginalizing the status of the local councillor as there is generally a collaborative relationship. The gentle struggle for legitimacy participates also places a part in this potential marginalization. To sum-up, the place and role of the traditional institutions of representation, like the legislative body (in this case, the local council) is needed to be enhanced or made more precise in a context of participatory policies (Papadopoulos, 1998: 290).

4. Is technical knowledge compatible with common knowledge?

In the citizens-civil servants relationship, the question of legitimacy is also concerned. However in this case, the competition concerns knowledge. Technical legitimacy is still confronted by day-to-day legitimacy. But as we will see, the participatory process is well-integrated in Quebec city’s bureaucracy. This allows a better view of the consultation by technical staff. I believe this is the result of the creation of the Consultation Office, a service which builds bridges between NCs members and administrators. That is what I call the ‘street-level bureaucracy’ effect (Lipsky, 1980). In this context, many employees see consultation as a challenge. In general, they observe that consultation has changed the way in which they work. Some transformations are welcomed, whereas some aspects of consultation are more difficult to accept. The competition between technical and day-to-day legitimacy is one of them.

The street-level bureaucracy effect

In 2001, the Consultation Office employed six consultation organizers and one consultative coordinator. Each one is responsible for several NCs and thematic consultative commissions. Their work is essential to the consultation process for several reasons. First, consultation organizers help NCs to be effective. Before each meeting, they prepare and send documents, reports, mail and so on to members which are necessary for discussion and for making projects. To do this, consultation organizers have to plan the meeting with the NCs’ presidents to write the agenda. They also have to correct the minutes with the NCs’ secretaries. Contact with other departments is important for implementing the NCs’ initiatives (printing posters, closing a street for a neighbourhood fête, getting some equipment, finding information, and so on). An important part of the consultative organizers’ job is by telephone with citizens and city departments. In this sense, they are true organizers. Second, consultative organizers are responsible for the proper organization of the consultative process. When the executive authorizes a consultation, consultation organizers help civil servants to prepare their presentation (more on this below). During consultation, consultative organizers run the assembly to define a clear position (summing up a point, clarifying an
opinion, etc.), as they do in regular meetings. After the consultation, they write a consultation report. In fact, consultative organizers guarantee the permanence of the consultative process. As the consultation processes are complex, consultative organizers are necessary to help volunteers to do their job. Their presence provides a continual link between City Hall and NCs. The consultative organizers are also very important to motivate members and to keep an ‘esprit de corps’.

Also decisive is the effect of the consultation organizers’ presence in the municipal bureaucracy. They assure not only the motivation of the NCs but also the proper integration of the consultation process in the bureaucratic system. Their role is appreciated by the civil servants, because consultation organizers work to perpetuate the links between citizens and bureaucracy between which they act as a buffer. In my interviews, civil servants described consultation organizers in a complimentary way:

- They have an essential role. They act as support during consultation. They also know the NCs members well. It allows us to have an intermediary between the citizens and us.
- They have a role of organizer and secretary. They write the summary. They build bridges between citizens and City Hall.
- They are employed to make our work easier….to make the relationship between citizens and local bureaucracy easier. As they meet NCs and citizens every month, they have to present our will to collaborate.

As the consultation organizers meet the citizens and the NCs regularly, they can help civil servants in their work. First of all, they develop both skills to make visual and oral presentations easier and more accessible to the general public. Progressively, civil servants have also elaborated teaching tools to people who do not possess technical knowledge. Today, because the consultation process is well-integrated and appropriate tools have been created, civil servants do not need to talk with consultation organizers to check the clarity of their presentation. But the consultation organizers remain essential to ensure ‘ethics’ of simplification. Second, as the consultation organizers know each neighbourhood and their NC well, they can anticipate NCs’ reactions against or in favor of a proposal. In this context, the technical staff can adjust their proposal or improve their arguments. In this context, the climate between citizens and technical staff is less conflictual.

The presence of the Consultation Office also helps to set up an interdisciplinary way of working in municipal bureaucracy. In fact, consultation organizers have to understand the mandate of each department to carry out their work with citizens. Moreover, in a large consultation, civil servants from several different departments have to work together.

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26 In fact, the association framework and the initiative power was planned to leave NCs extensive autonomy. But NCs use only a small part of their autonomy. The great length of time NCs need to reply to consultation, would appear to prevent them from making the most of this empowerment. In a context of semi-autonomy, the consultation organizer is essential to continually consolidate the group.

27 For example, the General Policy Office (a service associated with General Management Direction) has to work with Safety, Leisure and Community Life, Transport for the elaboration of a urban safety policy, in collaboration with the Safety Commission.
Thus, the well-organised nature of institutionalized consultation ensures a better relationship between technical staff and NCs. The presence of a ‘street level bureaucracy’ which is in contact with citizens day-to-day helps to integrate and formalize the consultative process in City Hall decision-making. The consultative organizers help citizens and technical staff to develop profitable links.

On the other hand in Bordeaux, the equivalent of the Consultation Office – the Neighbourhood Life Office – is less well-integrated in the bureaucratic system. Furthermore, not all the consultation procedures are centralized in the Neighbourhood Life Office. In this context, the four thousand employees are not properly aware of the consultative process. In addition, the Neighbourhoods Life Office does not help the technical staff to know citizens better. In Bordeaux, the ‘consultation organizers’ have above all a role of messenger for the inhabitants’ complaints. They cannot act as introducer of the consultative process in the municipal bureaucracy. That is why the consultation process is unknown and unaccepted in Bordeaux’s bureaucracy.

*Challenge and work transformation*

The technical staff generally see the NCs as good challenge in their work. They appear to appreciate the direct links between NCs and citizens. An interview, the civil servants justify this relationship by a ‘consumer approach’. According to them, it is normal to talk and try to cater for citizens’ needs because citizens are their clients. In this context, civil servants promote the contact with NCs. This is a way of appreciating the problems and needs of citizens:

> In general, citizens referred mainly to their daily life experience … That is what we want. We need their opinion.

For several, the meeting with citizens is an occasion for learning and improving their proposal:

> We are learning a lot. I like this direct contact with citizens. That is the most interesting part of my work. We are employed to improve their quality of life. I am the expert but I do not know everything. Citizens allow us to think and to alter our proposals.
> There are often some interesting questions … something did not occur to us when we drew up the proposal.

All civil servants I met, said that the NCs have changed their work. Much communication and argumentation has to be done to be effective in a consultative process. Each person interviewed said that ‘popularization’ is an essential objective of their work. Because they know they will have to present their proposal to a lay public, the technical staff takes time to find a good example, or an illustration which can simplify their message. Visual information is then very important.

> The consultation process has undoubtedly changed my way of working because I have to prepare a proposal with regard to public presentation.
> Simplification is an important part of our work, with the executive and the NCs. We have to be both clear and concise. Sometimes, I have to re-explain the proposal because I did not find the right image to give an example.
This is above all true for the Town Planning Office. Planning has adopted a new approach. A new planning have replaced the old modernizing planning, which was responsible for the demolition works of the Seventies (Mercier, 2000). The new planning in Quebec city is characterized by a will to restore old neighbourhoods in respect of their heritage, based on a truly democratic process. According to this view, citizens become active in the local development, namely they are involved in the transformation process of their neighbourhood (Mercier, 2001). As every change in landscape and town planning rules is obligatorily subject the consultative process, this position is indeed defended by the town planning staff. As planners very often meet NCs and citizens, they develop a pertinent and interesting relationship with citizens. For example, some neighbourhoods have elaborated a neighbourhood plan which defines the landscape and town planning priorities in the area. To do this work, NC and the planner responsible for the neighbourhood plan have meet to draw up the plan. This is intense work, leading to the development of a close relationship. As a planner said to me, ‘we become partners’. In this way, technical staff try to develop a relation of trust with a touch of humour. More generally, NCs now know the civil servants well who are often involved in consultative process. In this sense, these civil servants become also a kind of ‘street-level bureaucracy’. But, as we will see in the next section, the partnership and direct relationship meet some problems which show that the consultation process is demanding for civil servants.

**Difficulties and process of adaption for technical staff**

For civil servants often involved in a consultation process, three subjects are difficult to deal regarding NCs: inefficiency and the fact that the procedures involved are time-consuming, opposition between technical and common knowledge and to support projects which are a proposal from NCs or local councillors.

According to technical staff, even if they appreciate their direct relationship with citizens, some consultation procedures are very time-consuming and inefficient. The consultation process involving only the members of the NCs is particularly problematic. This kind of consultation only concerns minor changes, which is why the consultation is limited to NCs members. Sometimes, the minor change concerns only one neighbourhood or at other times the city as a whole. In the former case, the technical staff have to go to each NC to ask their opinion. This process could be long (several months if there are special events or if some parts of NCs’ agenda are running late) for a result which is not very essential. Furthermore, according to technical staff, to repeat the proposal twelve times is not constructive. As the issue was minor, the comments are always the same. In this case, the consultation process is cumbersome and uninteresting, for both NCs and technical staff. For NCs, this kind of consultation takes up precious
time which could be spent to exchanging information and improving neighbourhood projects (Quesnel, 2000B). Several civil servants would like that NCs is grouped once or twice annually in a plenary session to present this kind of proposal.

Technical staff also point out that an extensive part of their presentation is dedicated to explaining and developing some implications of the proposal. Even the civil servants submit the proposal a week before the meeting, NC members do not take the time to read these documents before the meeting. A planner said to me: «NC members are doing voluntary work by attending the meeting». In four years, technical staff has, however, developed a tool to help with the reading of their documents. They present a synthesis of the current rules, the proposal and the issues in the form of a table. Thus, in this context, technical staff feel that NC members do not do their work as the civil servants have to do.

This question of time-consuming procedures is concerned by two other aspects of the technical staff’s work. Firstly, as they often have a professional status, some civil servants cannot claim these additional hours spent on consultation evenings as holiday. They are too busy to take all their additional hours as holiday. For example, a planner can have between 15 and 30 evenings of consultation during a year. Also, technical staff are more often approached by citizens in their day-to-day work:

> As we are involved in many consultation processes, we are known by citizens. In this context, they very often call us. Every day I have between 50 and 70 phone calls. This is interesting for citizens to have this direct contact….but the workload is enormous.

In this way technical staff really become ‘a street-level bureaucracy’ but their responsibilities are not reduced accordingly. They are confronted by having to manage of their relationship with citizens to a significant extent.

In fact, the consultation process creates a strong belief in the right to know among citizens, the right to express an opinion and the right to complain as an ‘ordinary’ citizen. But this system is like a vicious circle and makes demands on civil servants.

The problem of time-consuming procedures is related to the knowledge issue. As for the local councillor, there is a legitimacy struggle but this time, however, it concerns the legitimacy of knowledge. Citizens and civil servants oppose their separate means of obtaining knowledge. Citizens and NCs members emphasise their day-to-day knowledge. They know because they live in their neighbourhood and they discuss local problems with their neighbours. On the other hand, technical staff highlight on their ‘objective’ knowledge and the difficulties of convincing citizens whose knowledge ‘subjective’ is. Furthermore, civil servants have to respect some rules and standards which are specific to their sector:

> The consultative process has some pernicious effects because it creates expectations. But as a technical discipline, we are controlled by rules that we did not decide…It puts us in an uneasy situation.
Sometimes, citizens insisted only on one intervention although I have many solutions. And in my choice, I have to ask: is it possible technically? Is it legal? (...) Often I have to work in a climate of false perceptions.

In this case, the technical staff has a teaching role relating to some rules and information with citizens. Inspite the fact that they appreciate some comments on their proposal, several civil servants confided to me that the consultative process is easier with NCs which are composed of specialists, or of a highly-qualified members. But the presence of educated people can have an other effect, as a civil servants said to me:

Sometimes, citizens have thought they can do the consultation without us. They want to make the presentation. But this is our job!

Generally, we find this feeling of intimacy with the different issues of the area in the most dynamic NCs.

The legitimacy struggle is sometimes difficult, because when citizens and technical staff disagree on the intense nature and roots of a problem, some citizens take a very radical stance. They remind the civil servants of the principle of accountability, which is fundamental part or their work. An extreme example given by a civil servant: one citizen, angry because a civil servant did not agree with changes in traffic regulation, and who threatened the civil servant by claiming that he would be responsible for the death of his children if there were an accident. With this kind of demagogic trend, the consultation process is less attractive for technical staff.

However, this direct and extreme confrontation between technical staff and citizens is rare. An other difficulty met by civil servants is more interesting for asking the question about the way in which changes the work of technical staff. This difficulty is related to the desire that every project and proposal should gain its ‘citizenry’ legitimacy, beyond and in spite of the operating rules of the bureaucracy. Indeed, technical staff sometimes have the difficult role of presenting and defending a project which they judge unnecessary. Moreover, technical staff have to find arguments to defend this project, without the help of the person who had proposed it (NCs or local councillor). For example, I was present at a ‘street consultation’ initiated by NC. According to them, there was a problem of through traffic in a street, namely motorists not living in the neighbourhood, but tacking a quiet street to join a boulevard. According to the traffic specialist, the problem was not as important as to warrant changing the street. However, the NC, with the help of the local councillor, insisted on presenting a traffic pilot experiment project. The traffic specialist drew up a proposal which he presented during a ‘street consultation’. During the meeting, it was interesting to see that the NC members did not take the lead in defending the project. They took a passive position and let the traffic specialist present the argument in favor of the traffic pilot experiment. This situation was very paradoxical because a large part of the citizens present at the meeting seemed to be against the project. Therefore the NC did not take its reponsibility and let the civil servants defend their project. Several civil servants told me that they were confronted from time to time by this kind of
situation. In this context, the usual standards for assessing a project are left aside in favor of only the needs and problems formulated by citizen. Day-to-day legitimacy is preferred to technical legitimacy. But in fact, the principles which conduct policy-making cannot be completely overthrown. Thus the consultation process can lead to the paradoxical situation where a project, initiated by citizens, supported by the local council, has to be defended by technical staff, as their usually standards cannot be applied to this project. In this sense, the change to a more ‘street-level bureaucracy’ principle can sometimes be difficult to experience for technical staff (Peters and Pierre, 2000). Their traditional role of neutrality and expertise is challenged by direct contact with citizens.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the paper, I underlined the fact that the development of participatory policies is seen by several scholars as a major change in policy process. The deliberation has become a standard which cannot be ignored in contemporary policy-making. In this context, I asked the question how local councillors and civil servants coped with this transformation in local politics? How are the NCs in Quebec city challenged by their work? As we have seen, the answer is a mixed view of positive and negative aspects.

First of all, the NCs can be seen as a resource for local councillors and technical staff. Local councillors and NCs have developed an interactive relationship where the exchange of information is very important. Local councillors give information on City Hall priorities as NC members give information and express opinions on problems and needs of the area. NCs act as a barometer which allows local councillors to anticipate some decisions in their district. The marginalization of the district party organisation in favor of NCs proves the importance of the relationship between local councillors and NCs. For their part, civil servants see the consultative process as an interesting challenge in their work. They appreciate direct links with NCs and citizens because the former give a different point of view of a problem. In this sense, civil servants have developed particular skills to communicate with citizens in a more popularised way. This good integration of the consultation process in the local bureaucratic system stems from the Consultation Office which is in relationship with citizens on a day-to-day basis. This ‘street-level bureaucracy’ acts as a bridge between NCs and the City Hall. With the help of the consultation organizers of the Consultation Office, this makes it easier for civil servants to appreciate the consultation process. As they often meet NCs and citizens, technical staff become in turn a ‘street-level bureaucracy’.

However, these intense exchanges between local councillors/technical staff and citizens poses some question about the increase in citizens’ involvement in decision-making. The representation and expertise principles are called into question by the day-to-day legitimacy of NCs. In the first place, there is a gentle
legitimacy struggle between local councillors and NCs. In case of disagreement, NC members draw attention to their position as lay citizen representatives. Two types of representation are opposed: a more ‘neutral’ and day-to-day representation against traditional and ‘politicized’ representation. On the other hand, this legitimacy struggle is latent and defines in fact the more general context in which collaborative relationships grow between NCs and local councillors. More worrying is the place and role of the legislative body. With the example of the representative opposition, we have seen that the NCs is first and foremost et avant tout a policy which gives priority to the relationship between City Hall and citizens. In this context, the majority local councillors are favored whereas the opposition does not fit a comfortably in the NCs. In this sense, NCs act as an opponent of the legislative body. When an executive decision is approved by NCs, it can be seen as undemocratic to vote against the proposal. The local councillors, and above all the opposition representatives, cannot debate constructively and can only accept the project.

For civil servants, the more negative side of the consultation process lies in its demanding nature. Sometimes, NCs and citizens oppose the common knowledge to the technical knowledge of civil servants. Even though this aspect should be borne in mind, more important is fact that consultation process and occasionally is time-consuming and has ‘pernicious effects’ putting civil servants in an uncomfortable position. Firstly, the transformation of the role of technical staff in a ‘street-level bureaucracy’ way greatly increases workload. Citizens take the initiative to call them directly because they see civil servants in consultation. Secondly, the technical staff are in the position publicly to defend a project which is initiated by NCs and/or local councillor, as its usual professional rules of decision do not apply to the project.

This analysis of the effect of participatory policies on local councillors and civil servants work shows that participatory innovation could not just be seen in a complementary way of representation and expertise, without harmonization. The principles of representation and expertise (accountability and responsibility) are called into question by the principle of participation. If participatory policies become widespread, we will have to think about new principles which are compatible for representation, expertise and participation at the same time. Even if the case of Quebec city is a success in general, the ‘harmonisation’ thinking is necessary to ensure the permanence of participatory arrangements. Otherwise, in a the medium term, the ‘old’ rules (representation and expertise) will threaten participation. Participatory arrangements remain weak institutions which are very dependent on the political situation. In this context, the change in the policy process is not yet a complete reality.
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