

**Stakeholder Engagement in Waste Management:
Understanding the Process and Its Impact on
Accountability**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the operationalisation of stakeholder engagement process in sustainable waste management setting. The study aims to establish role of stakeholder power in the prioritisation process and add to empirical understanding of the way engagement affect accountability, which evaluates both the ‘process’, and the ‘outcome’ of engagement. This research is based on a three mini cases of local government authorities, which involve in-depth interviews, observations and document analysis. A broader insights of the engagement process from several stakeholder groups, namely the residents, NGOs, councillors and private waste contractors, are considered and compared with managerial views, and several aspects of stakeholder engagement practices are analysed, including the mechanisms used as well as the challenges faced by the LGAs in engaging. In addition, the intentions behind engagement undertakings are analysed and evaluation of the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement practices are made. Drawing on stakeholder theory, the role of power is explored as a stakeholder attribute in determining salience and in the engagement process. Insights from the interviewees are analysed in relation to the extent of participation and perceived level of power held which are then used to map the extent of their involvement on the ladder of engagement.

The findings indicate that power does play an important role in the engagement process. Managers also give greater consideration to those demonstrating certain extent of power i.e. the private waste contractor and councillors. It has also been proved that managers’ perceptions of the levels of power held by stakeholders play a significant role in establishing their priorities and deciding between competing interests. The use of stakeholder engagement as a mechanism for accountability has led to the recognition of a deficiency underlying the many processes of engagement. The study also has identified an additional feature of accountability, namely the interactive nature of engagement, which is unrecognised in other established measures of accountability.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This thesis attempts to obtain an understanding of the stakeholder engagement process conducted by local government authorities (henceforth, LGAs) in England. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to ascertain the role of power as a stakeholder attribute in determining stakeholder salience, the way in which elements within stakeholder engagement practices affect accountability, and the extent to which they fulfill accountability elements. There are an increasing number of discussions relating to issues of stakeholder engagement in the literature, particularly regarding three important aspects: stakeholder identification (Kaler, 2002; Mitchell et al., 1997; Morsing and Schultz, 2006), stakeholder management strategy (Berman et al., 1999; Post et al., 2002) and stakeholder influence strategy (Deegan and Bloomquist, 2006; Frooman, 1999; Frooman and Murrell, 2005; Rowley, 1997). These studies have led to a greater need to explore and document the process of stakeholder engagement within organisations (Burchell and Cook, 2006). Within the engagement process, there are ongoing discussions regarding stakeholder attributes that characterise stakeholders and their impact on prioritisation (Agle et al., 1999; Gago and Antolin, 2004; Mattingly, 2004; Mitchell et al., 1997). In particular, the issue relating to stakeholder salience, i.e. who is significant in managerial decision-making, is essential to stakeholder theory (Freeman et al., 2010).

With many competing stakeholder claims, especially in the case of public sector organisations, prior research has accentuated the importance of obtaining an understanding of those who are affected by decisions made by organisations and those who have the power to influence the decision-making process (Reed et al., 2009). The interests and influence of stakeholders may support and threaten an organisation's objectives (Brugha and Varasovsky, 2000) and studies have found

that managers give greater consideration to those demonstrating certain stakeholder attributes, including power (Agle et al., 1999; Eesley and Lenox, 2006; Mitchell et al., 1997 and Winn, 2001). It is therefore proposed in this thesis that power as a stakeholder attribute has a role to play in the stakeholder engagement process, particularly in determining salience. There are a limited number of prior studies which incorporate a comprehensive perspective of the process of engagement, including stakeholder saliency, because of the tendency to focus only on the managerial standpoint (Bull et al., 2008; Kochan and Rubinstein, 2000; Louma and Goodstein, 1999; Petts, 1995; Weaver et al., 1999); they give a less inclusive role to stakeholders within the public sector environment. By compiling the perspectives of several groups of stakeholders, together with those of public sector managers, this study specifically seeks to explore and provide a broader view of the process of engagement that includes stakeholder salience, and should create a greater understanding of stakeholder relations and management practices (Friedman and Miles, 2006).

A wealth of prior work on accountability has considered its significance and how it can be enhanced. However, this notion of accountability, from definition to how it should be depicted, is far from resolved (Boyne et al., 2002) and more study is required to broaden understanding of accountability (Painter-Morland, 2006). As engagement could affect the accountability of an organisation (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Neligan, 2003), the relational responsiveness view of accountability concerns being 'more responsive towards stakeholders' interests' (Painter-Morland, 2006, p. 94); it is therefore the intention of this study to continue this exploration and evaluate the impact of engagement on the elements and dimensions of accountability as a mechanism of accountability.

Most scholars aim to discuss stakeholder theory in relation to the effect of behaviour on performance and to the behaviour of organisations, opting for an instrumental view of the theory (David, et al., 2007; Harrison and Freeman, 1999; Mattingly, 2004; Peloza and Papania, 2008) or a normative view (Reed, 2002).

This thesis views stakeholder theory as descriptive (Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Jawahar and McLaughlin, 2001) since it aims to provide empirical grounds for practices in illustrating how organisations behave by discussing the attitudes, practices and structures that constitute stakeholder engagement practice; the study does not seek to investigate performance relationship in the organisation nor how organisation should behave.

The rest of this chapter provides the background of the study by presenting aspects of stakeholder engagement and a brief introduction to the concept of accountability in relation to public sector organisations. The research objectives and contributions of this thesis are presented, after which sustainable waste management is introduced as the study context. The chapter ends with a brief review of how the remainder of the thesis is organised.

1.2 Stakeholder Engagement and Accountability

A growing number of discussions on stakeholder engagement have been published (Cumming, 2001; Freeman et al., 2007; Frooman, 1999; McVea and Freeman, 2005; Owen et al., 2001; Rasche and Esser, 2006; Unerman and Bennett, 2004). At present, discussions on the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement and the relevant empirical evidence are overwhelmingly focused on the private sector context (Adams and Frost, 2004; Belal, 2002; Cooper, 2003; Gao and Zhang, 2006; Johnson-Cramer et al., 2003), with much work investigating its role and practices in large commercial organisations (Cumming, 2001; Unerman and Bennett, 2004). There is therefore a marked lack of evidence of stakeholder engagement practices in public organisations (Friedman and Miles, 2006). Moreover, while the importance of engagement has been widely documented in a recent policy statement i.e. “Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power” (DCLG, 2008) and guidelines – “Best practice guidelines on public engagement in the waste sector” (TEC, 2003); “Better Engagement in the Waste Sector” (TEC 2007a); “Designing Engagement for the Waste Sector” (TEC, 2007b), it is still notably scarce in public sector literature. With a large

number of stakeholders involved (Law, 1999) and the non-voluntary nature of the relationship between stakeholder and organisation (Pallot, 1992, p.4), stakeholder engagement in public organisations has proved to be a complex undertaking. For this reason, it is essential to recognise, investigate and understand the interplay between public organisations and their stakeholders.

For public sector organisations the discharge of accountability has become an issue of interest (Boyne et al., 2002; Coy and Pratt, 1998, Parker and Gould, 1999). Demands for public sector organisations to improve their accountability to their stakeholders have also been extensively documented in the literature. It has been argued that accountability is much simpler for private organisations to address, compared with public entities (Parker and Gould, 1999; Mulgan, 1997b; Sinclair, 1995). The concept of 'plural accountability' faced by public sector organisations (Roberts and Scapens, 1991) further aggravates the need to balance the many aspects of accountability, which they should consider. Moreover, the complexities of their objectives (Farnham and Horton, 1996) and the absence of focus on profitability for public organisations necessitate the wider use of accountability mechanisms (Mulgan, 2000a).

While there are many ways of demonstrating accountability (Coy and Dixon, 2004; Stewart, 1994), these mechanisms are criticised for their inability to depict the total accountability of organisations to the accountee (Haque, 2000). Recent studies propose that a way of enforcing accountability is through stakeholder engagement (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Neligan, 2003) because the participation of stakeholders in the affairs of the organisation may have an impact on its accountability (Bebbington et al., 2007) via the face-to-face nature of interaction (Robert and Scapens, 1985). Nevertheless, Paul (1992) suggests that the depiction of accountability could be improved by relying more on the 'voice' mechanism, i.e. by encouraging stakeholders to participate in addition to the usual control mechanisms. The practice of 'deliberation' which involves 'openness of decision-making, transparency of administration and public access to information' (Erkkila,

2007, p.23) and which is present in stakeholder engagement practices, is material to accountability (Mulgan, 2000b).

Generally, accountability refers to ‘certain obligations that arise within a relationship of responsibility, where one person or body is responsible to another for the performance of a particular service’ (Mulgan, 2000a, p.87). There is common understanding in the literature concerning the nature and process of accountability (Ahrens, 1996; Gray, 1983; Grey et al, 1996; Robert and Scapens, 1985; Stewart, 1984). Accountability involves a relationship in which people are expected to explain and be responsible for their actions (Mulgan, 2000b; Roberts, 1991, 2001, Sinclair, 1995) through ‘the giving and demanding of reasons for conduct’ (Roberts and Scapens, 1985, p.447). In the context of this study, the concept of accountability concurs with the concept provided by Kearns (1996), which refers to ‘a wide spectrum of public *expectations* dealing with organisational performance, *responsiveness* and even morality of government and non-profit organisations’ (p.9, emphasis added). The two elements in Kearns’ definition, namely, *expectations* and *responsiveness*, support the possibility of using engagement as a way of demonstrating accountability. Kearns (1996) recognises the need to respond to the expectations of stakeholders in relation to accountability. To this end, this study aims to further explore whether and how engagement affects accountability.

With the need to develop further understanding of the mode of engagement of the sustainability agenda, as emphasised by Gray (2001), stakeholder engagement as a way of enhancing environmental sustainability is evident from various contexts in the literature - for instance, in sustainable aviation (Ameshi and Crane, 2006), air quality management (McDonald et al., 2002) and education (Farrell and Jones, 2000). With regard to waste management, prior studies have considered stakeholder engagement in healthcare waste management (Tudor et al., 2007) in relation to Best Value legislation (Adams, et al., 2000) as well as municipal waste (Collins, et al., 2006; Petts, 1995a; 1995b; Powell, 2000). Building on studies in

stakeholding in waste management (Bull et al., 2008; Petts 1995a; 1995b) and in the public sector generally (Dunham et al., 2006; Winstanley et al., 1995), this study extends the analysis of concepts in stakeholder theory within sustainable waste management context as practised by LGAs. Justifications for sustainable waste management as the research context are discussed in the next section.

1.3 Research Context

This section introduces the UK waste management system before presenting sustainable waste management as the context of the study.

1.3.1 The UK Waste Management System

This section will describe the system for waste management in the UK, including the responsible governmental bodies, as well as the related rulings and guidelines issued for waste management services. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), is an important body established to assist individuals, businesses and local authorities in promoting sustainable waste management. The Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) is another prominent governmental body that has been supporting LGAs by providing management with training and advice. WRAP is backed by government funding from England, Scotland and Wales and provides training and advice for LGAs in the form of designing efficient collection systems for recycling. Quality of materials, cost efficiency, cost effectiveness and public acceptability are taken in account, as well as the promotion of effective waste prevention programmes. In particular, WRAP runs public-facing campaigns to encourage individuals to reduce waste and recycle more. Information, materials and funding are available to help local authorities to make use of these campaigns in order to drive up the quality and level of residents' participation in local recycling schemes.

Many policies and guidelines are issued in promoting sustainable waste management, one of the most prominent of which is the EU Waste Framework Directive which provides an overarching legislative framework for the collection,

transport, recovery and disposal of waste, and includes a common definition of waste. The Directive requires all Member States to take necessary measures to ensure that waste is recovered or disposed of without endangering human health or causing harm to the environment, and includes permission, registration and inspection requirements. It also requires Member States to take appropriate measures to encourage the prevention or reduction of waste production and its harmfulness as well as the recovery of waste by means of recycling, re-use or reclamation or any other process with a view of extracting secondary raw materials, or the use of waste as a source of energy. Other Directives for specific waste streams supplement the Directive's overarching requirements.

The UK government published *Waste Strategy for England 2007* on 24 May 2007, replacing the previous waste strategy for England, *Waste Strategy 2000*. This document describes the current policy on waste management in England and sets out a vision for sustainable waste management. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the devolved administrations are responsible for strategy and policy relating to their own waste management. This Strategy, together with *Planning Policy Statement 10 – Planning for Sustainable Waste Management (PPS10)* specifies the implementation of the requirements for England within the Framework Directive on Waste. The main aim of this Strategy is to deal with waste diverted from landfill in England, as required by the Landfill Directive. Other main elements of the Waste Strategy include provision of incentives, efforts to reduce, reuse, recycle waste and recover energy from waste. The strategy also provides target action on materials, products and sectors with the widest scope for improving environmental materials that will maximise the value of materials and energy recovered. It aims to improve national, regional and local governance within a clearer performance and institutional framework to deliver better co-ordinated action and services on the ground. The strategy places greater emphasis on waste prevention and sets a target for LGAs to reduce the amount of household waste that cannot be re-used, recycled or composted. One priority identified in this report is to strengthen the overall waste communications strategy, both at

national and local levels, by working with stakeholders in affecting attitudinal and behavioural change among all those involved. It may be inferred that all of the above guidelines and policies are indirectly aimed at changing behaviour towards waste management.

Management of waste in the UK is solely under the responsibility of LGAs, which include authorities for waste planning, waste collection and waste disposal. Their specific role is dependent on the type of council¹. In the two-tier structure, district councils are responsible for waste collection and county councils for waste disposal. Unitary councils, on the other hand, are responsible for both collection and disposal of waste. The vital role of LGAs as the responsible body for waste collection and disposal has been accentuated in the Waste Strategy 2007.

With the introduction of landfill tax and the move towards reducing the amount of waste to landfill, waste management in the UK has become more complex for LGAs (Powell, 2000). Thus, apart from the conventional aims of providing reliable waste removal for residents, LGAs are now expected to change the management of waste by introducing a wider role in reducing and recycling waste via a more integrated management of different waste streams (DEFRA, 2007), a basic concept of sustainable waste management which is now addressed.

It is generally accepted that the global warming experienced worldwide is due to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC, 2007). This increase is partly because of the disposal of biodegradable waste to landfill, which results in the emission of methane, a powerful type of greenhouse gas, twenty-three times more damaging than carbon dioxide. Methane emission from landfill in the UK accounts for 40 per cent of all UK methane emission and 3 per cent of all UK greenhouse gas emissions (DEFRA, 2007), implying a significant contribution of unsustainable waste management practices towards the phenomena of global

¹ The LGAs in the UK are classified into either unitary or those in two-tier structure. Different type of LGAs have different responsibilities.

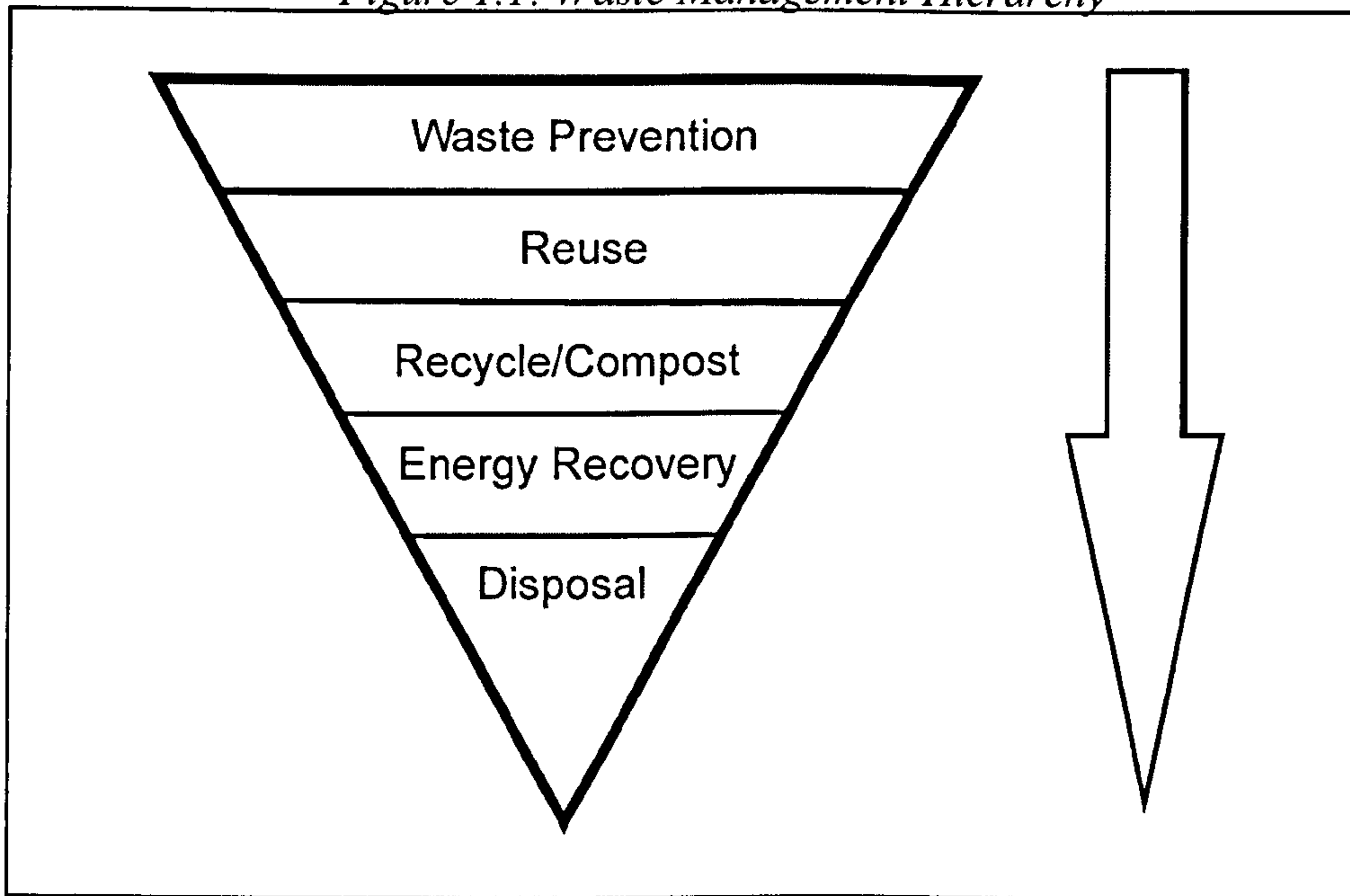
warming. Sustainable waste management is indeed a key priority in encouraging prudent use of natural resources that is essential for future prosperity and the protection of the environment (DEFRA, 2007). It is also one of the priorities set out in the government's sustainable development strategy, *Securing the Future* (DEFRA, 2005)

‘Through more sustainable waste management; reduction, re-use, recycling, composting and using waste as a source of energy, the Government aims to break the link between economic growth and the environmental impact of waste.’ (p.17)

Apart from reducing greenhouse gases, better waste management can lead to improved efficiency in resources and can protect public health through safe management of potentially hazardous substances; it can also protect ecosystems, safeguard social amenities by ensuring household waste is collected, reduce fly-tipping by household and businesses, and limit local nuisance from waste facilities (DEFRA, 2007, p. 19)

In managing waste, the waste hierarchy in Figure 1.1 explains the general objectives of sustainable waste management. The waste hierarchy has taken many forms over the past decade, but the basic concept has remained the cornerstone of waste minimisation strategies. This hierarchy reflects the preferred management options promoted by the European Union (Commission of the European Communities, 1989). Aspects of sustainable waste management include (i) reduction of waste at source (ii) reuse, recycle and recovery and (iii) use of environmentally sensitive treatment and disposal. The most effective approaches to managing waste are situated at the top of the waste hierarchy.

Figure 1.1: Waste Management Hierarchy



(Source: DEFRA, 2007)

In shifting the activity towards the top of the hierarchy, the primary goal is to reduce waste at source; the secondary goal is re-use and recovery (including recycling, composting and energy recovery); and the third goal is treatment and disposal of environmentally sensitive materials.

In relation to the above hierarchy, the government has introduced many policies in relation to waste management, all of which have sought to shift the management of waste from landfill including The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (DOE, 1990). Several environmental strategies such as the UK '*Strategy for Sustainable Development*' (DOE, 1994), '*Making Waste Work*' (DETR, 1995), '*Less Waste: More Value*' (DETR, 1998), '*A Way with Waste*' (DETR, 1999) partly focus on the importance of behavioural change among all those involved. The importance of behavioural change in promoting a sustainable waste management agenda can also be inferred from the relative abundance of academic literature on the matter (Burn and Oskamp, 1996; Colins, et al., 2006; Tucker and Spiers, 2003; Nixon and Saphores, 2009; Robertson and Walkington, 2009; Viscusi et al., 2009). An important influence of behavioural change, proposed by Nixon and Saphores

(2009) is the provision of information, particularly from multiple sources. Engagement, which should involve a minimum provision of information to the stakeholders, therefore has the capacity to be the change agent.

Compared with other services such as the provision of housing and education by LGAs, waste management is a particular service that affects all citizens regardless of their age and social status. It is a core aspect of everyday life for which every individual is responsible and requires widespread co-operation from the general public, local government authorities, business corporations, NGOs and regulators. As the focus of this study is on stakeholder engagement, the significance of sustainable waste management as the study context is deemed appropriate. It is in the interest of the stakeholders to engage with their LGAs on the management of waste because of the many benefits they may gain from engagement (DEFRA, 2007; TEC, 2003; TEC 2007a; 2007b); this assertion will be further elaborated in the next section. One of the most important benefits is the empowerment of the community, a proposal that was promoted in a recent White Paper which aims to encourage greater control over local decisions and services by citizens (DCLG, 2008).

1.3.2 Issues in Waste Management Systems: A Brief Retrospect

Several matters pertaining to sustainable waste management will be discussed in this subsection as well as the potential role of engagement in addressing these issues.

The changing waste management practices, known as waste minimisation, involve placing emphasis on the top section of the waste hierarchy (Figure 1.1), i.e. preventing waste by encourage reuse, recycle and energy recovery, and waste disposal as the last alternative. One problem that arises is the need to encourage the public to view waste management as a shared problem rather than the responsibility of another person (TEC, 2007a). This problem, termed Not In My Backyard Syndrome (NIMBY), is evident in many waste management literatures

and makes any initiative to involve the public in decision-making exceptionally difficult (Hartley and Wood, 2005). While it is estimated that each household generates about a tonne of waste annually, only 14.5 per cent is recycled (DEFRA, 2007). This signifies there is much room for improvement in achieving the aim of moving waste away from landfill. Such a low commitment from the public as experienced by relevant authorities (DEFRA, 2007) needs to be addressed (Petts and Leach, 2000). One possible solution to attract the support of the public and to encourage greater participation from them is to undertake stakeholder engagement activities (Read, 1999; Simmonds and Widmar, 1990; TEC, 2007a). According to the Waste Strategy 2007, active involvement of organisations, including the third sector, as well as individuals, is required (DEFRA, 2007). The LGAs should therefore promote greater involvement from these specified parties.

Knowledge level is identified as an important element in promoting participation in environmental activities such as waste management and minimisation (Simmonds and Widmar, 1990). Many researchers concur with the importance of disseminating information in promoting sustainable waste management (Hartley and Wood, 2005; Lansana, 1993; Perrin and Barton, 2001; Read, 1999; TEC, 2007a; Vining and Ebreo, 1990) since information received by individuals can be used to make choices from an array of possible actions (Strong et al., 2001). Davies et al., (2005) emphasise the importance of timeliness and accuracy of information by way of frequent updates and convenient reminders, as well as the trustworthiness of the information provider. Although other researchers contend that mere provision of information is insufficient as it does not necessarily lead to a better and informed decision (Owens, 2000; Selman, 2000), communicating relevant and sufficient information is undoubtedly important in educating the public (TEC, 2007a). LGAs, being the closest governance structure to the public, should play a vital role in educating, mobilising and promoting sustainable development (Fox et al., 2002). In this respect, LGAs have been criticised for not having adequate communication with the public (Boyne et al., 2002).

Prior studies comment that in facilitating engagement, it is important to ensure that both LGAs and the stakeholders are receptive (Hartley and Wood, 2005). Despite many activities organised by LGAs aimed at attracting and securing involvement, participation, particularly from the public, is still low (Bull et al., 2008; Hartley and Wood, 2005). As mentioned by Wilcox (1994), one main barrier to participation lies in the attitudes that people bring to the process. Such reluctance to engage may be explained by the perception that those activities are seen only as a public relations exercise (Friedman and Miles, 2006; Petts and Leach, 2000). This is also evident in the study by Young (1996), who claims that the voice of the public does not affect any decision-making since LGAs are already committed to the solution. Similar findings are described by Hartley and Wood (2005) who suggest that the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders towards engagement influence its effectiveness. The low level of satisfaction experienced by the stakeholders can result in frustrations that their expectations are not met (Strong et al., 2001). For this reason, Selman (1998) emphasises the importance for LGAs to instil confidence among members of the public that their views are genuinely important and can have an impact on the decision-making process.

With these issues clouding the agenda of sustainable waste management, stakeholder engagement has been identified as a solution in that it may enable, encourage and engage people and communities in a move towards sustainable development (TEC, 2003). Furthermore, engagement is viewed as a form of devolving power from LGAs to individuals (Selman and Parker, 1997; TEC, 2007a) and can result in an increased understanding on the part of the public of activities and projects implemented by LGAs (Petts and Leach, 2000). It would therefore be enlightening to analyse the operationalisation of engagement activities undertaken by LGAs in the waste management context. This will provide invaluable insight as previous literature shows that experiences of engagement by public sector organisations that contribute to environmental sustainability is lacking compared with those by commercial organisations. As

engagement encompasses many activities such as informing, consulting, partnering and involving (DEFRA, 2007), the present study proposes that stakeholder engagement, if undertaken appropriately, may be able to address the above-mentioned issues. It will be illustrated in a later chapter that engagement, with its multiple roles, can serve several objectives, which in turn encourage stakeholders to participate in programmes and support policies launched by LGAs in order to meet the sustainable waste management agenda.

1.4 Research Objectives

The present study also builds upon prior research on stakeholder engagement in the context of the private sector (Belal, 2002; Cooper, 2003; Gao and Zhang, 2006; Johnson-Cramer et al., 2003; Owen et al., 2001; Unerman and Bennett, 2004), the public sector (Blair and Whitehead, 1998; Cotton et al., 1997a; Cotton et al., 1997b; Doyal, 1992; Farrell and Jones, 2000; Hill et al., 1998) as well as in waste management (Bull et al., 2008; Petts, 1992; 2001; Petts and Leach, 2000). Following the recommendation of Chess and Purcell (1999), the present study attempts to evaluate both the ‘process’ and the ‘outcome’ of engagement. Specifically, it provides a comprehensive analysis of the way stakeholder engagement practices are operationalised in the context of sustainable waste management. Attempts are also made to evaluate the levels of involvement of various stakeholder groups and the significance of ‘power’ as an attribute in the engagement process. This study also seeks to arrive at an understanding of whether and how stakeholder engagement practices performed by public sector organisations affect accountability. The distinct feature of this thesis is the way in which both the stakeholder engagement prioritisation process and the attribute of power are linked to the concept of accountability.

Evaluations of engagement practice, particularly regarding environmental issues addressed by public sector organisations, have either considered only the results, i.e. outcome evaluation, or the process, i.e. process evaluation. With limited empirical research on *the process* and *outcome* of engagement (Chess and Purcell,

1999) the present study aims to evaluate both aspects of engagement. Out of three research objectives, the first two explore the *process* of engagement performed and the third objective considers the outcome of engagement. The first research objective of the study is:

1. To determine the way stakeholder engagement practices as operationalised by public sector organisations

The present study differs from many extant studies which focus primarily on a particular group of stakeholder (O'Dwyer et al., 2005a; 2005b; Petts, 2001; Tilt, 1994), in that it is concerned with the involvement of several groups or sets of stakeholders by observing their participation in engagement mechanisms such as public meetings, as well as noting the interaction between diverse stakeholders in the participation process. While the majority of studies in stakeholder engagement explore its practice from the managerial standpoint (Owen et al., 2001; Welcomer, 2002), there has been a relative absence of studies which consider stakeholder engagement from the perspective of non-managerial stakeholders. This research is significant as it contributes to the limited studies which consider the views and expectations of secondary stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995; O'Dwyer et al., 2005b). It is also the intention of this study to respond to the call for a focus on voices and dialogue with less economically powerful stakeholders (Friedman and Miles, 2002; O'Dwyer, 2002; Owen and Swift, 2001; Owen et al., 2001; Unerman and Bennett, 2004), such as resident association representatives, non-governmental organisations and voluntary action groups. Furthermore, this research incorporates the views of those deemed as powerful stakeholders, both economically (private waste contractors) and politically (councillors), in order to generate a balanced perspective. Insights from several stakeholder groups are considered and compared with managerial views, and several aspects of stakeholder engagement practices are analysed, including the mechanisms used as well as the challenges faced by the LGAs in engaging. In addition, the intentions behind engagement undertakings are analysed before evaluating the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement practices. By providing a comprehensive account of stakeholder engagement practices by the LGAs, a contribution can be made to the literature on

the public sector, augmenting the understanding of the nature of stakeholder engagement. Findings of this study will undoubtedly enable managers to undertake an effective approach to stakeholder engagement.

2. To understand the level of participation of various stakeholders and the relative importance of 'power' in the stakeholder engagement process

In an attempt to contribute to the limited empirical research investigating stakeholder attributes (Frooman, 1999; Parent and Deephouse, 2007), the role of power is explored as a stakeholder attribute in determining salience and in the engagement process. Insights from the interviewees are analysed in relation to the extent of participation and perceived level of power held. These are then used to map the extent of their involvement on Friedman and Miles' ladder of engagement (2006).

Additionally, the established role of these stakeholder attributes used by managers in determining salience is further explored. In evaluating the perceptions of managers and stakeholders towards the engagement process, this study is particularly interested in looking at the role of power as a stakeholder attribute in the engagement process as well as in determining salience. For this research objective, the interviewees' perceptions of power are analysed, in particular the significance of power in the stakeholder engagement process and the perceived level of salience. In addition, insights obtained from the stakeholders and managers relating to the stakeholders' extent of involvement and perceived power are analysed to determine the level of stakeholders' participation before mapping it onto the ladder, or stance, of participation. In particular, the extent of involvement of the public, one of the main stakeholders in waste management, is explored; this should make a relevant contribution to the development of sustainable waste management (DEFRA, 2007). Little in-depth research has been undertaken to explore how the public can be extensively engaged and, most importantly, the reasons for their low level of involvement have received little attention, despite the diverse activities introduced by LGAs (Bull et al., 2008;

Petts and Leach, 2000). This study also serves as a response to Petts and Leach (2000) who call for further explanation of why the majority of the public do not participate.

3. To identify the way engagement may have an impact on the accountability of the public sector organisations.

While the first two research objectives concern the ‘process’ of engagement (Chess, 2000), the final aim of this thesis is to evaluate the ‘outcome’ of engagement. Based on propositions by Burchell and Cook (2006) and Neligan (2003) that engagement to a certain extent affects accountability, this study intends to analyse how this occurs. An assessment is made of the extent to which engagement fulfils two elements of accountability, i.e. giving an account and holding to account. The effect on the dimensions of accountability, in particular public and political accountability, is scrutinised. Finally, the prospect of using stakeholder engagement as an accountability process is analysed. Linking stakeholder engagement to the concept of accountability enables reflection on an insufficiently explored role of engagement by way of involvement and participation (Neligan, 2003; Rasche and Esser, 2006).

1.5 Research Methodology

In achieving these three research objectives, an interpretive approach has been adopted. By considering how stakeholder engagement is operationalised and ‘performs’ in practice, enables the researcher to interpret not only the actual conduct of engagement activities, but also the meaning behind them as constructed by some of the participants involved. The information obtained from the interviews are then analysed thematically. Patterns of experiences as related by the interviewees are identified and classified accordingly into several themes. These themes enable the interpretation of the stakeholder engagement phenomenon within the local authorities. In addition to the interviews, observations of meetings and a review of documents are carried out with the aim of triangulating the construction of engagement in practice. Observation of meetings entails gathering

evidence of face-to-face engagement, a common means of stakeholder engagement. Additionally, information presented in leaflets, pamphlets and other related media is reviewed in gathering evidence of the way in which engagements are intended and practised. It is envisaged that the use of several sources of data will enhance the validity of this research and generate substantial and reliable empirical information in order to understand the wider ‘picture’ of stakeholder engagement practices in LGAs.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter One has introduced the rationale and scope of this research and given an outline of some of the research problems and issues confronted in the thesis. It provides an overview of the research and describes its purpose and context.

In Chapter Two, the theoretical approach adopted by the researcher is discussed. This chapter elaborates how stakeholder theory and the accountability framework determine the study. In particular, the role of power as an important stakeholder attribute in the engagement and prioritisation process forms an important part of this chapter.

Chapter Three gives a critical review of the literature in relation to the research questions relevant to the study. It discusses the significance of stakeholder management and engagement in relation to sustainable waste management in LGAs within England, and examines the issues addressed in past studies, highlighting the gaps in the existing literature.

In Chapter Four, the methodological approach undertaken by the researcher to conduct this investigation is outlined. The philosophical assumptions underpinning the research are discussed, and the research methodologies are justified. This chapter also describes the research design by outlining the basis of selection of the LGAs for this study. The chapter also explains in greater detail

how the research was conducted, including the choice of approach for case study, use of qualitative methodology and its methods including interview, observation and document review. Issues relating to the validity of this research are also explored. This chapter ends with the discussion of the rationale adopted for the thematic analysis of the research findings, as well as considering how the analysis was undertaken.

The empirical findings gathered for this study are presented in Chapters Five and Six. Chapter Five explains the operationalisation of stakeholder engagement practices. This chapter first describes how the sustainable waste management agenda is taken forward by the LGAs before continuing with an analysis of stakeholder engagement practices. This includes an examination of the diverse strategies and mechanisms employed by the LGAs to engage with their stakeholders. The chapter also covers various intentions underlying engagement undertakings as well as the barriers to effective engagement as described by the respondents. Also presented within this chapter are the perceptions of managers towards the engagement concept, as well as an evaluation of the effectiveness of engagement performed. More importantly, the ways in which stakeholder engagement practices differ between the LGAs are analysed.

Chapter Six presents the prioritisation process in managing the claims and demands of various stakeholder groups. In particular, this chapter explores how power is perceived by the respondents of the study as well as the effect it has on the extent of the levels of involvement of respective stakeholder groups in the LGAs' engagement process and, to a certain extent, on the decision-making process. These levels of involvement are then mapped onto the ladder of engagement. The same chapter also gives details of the empirical findings of the accountability aspect of this study. It discusses how the respondents conceptualise the notions of accountability in relation to stakeholder engagement. By analysing the elements of accountability fulfilled by stakeholder engagement practices, the possibility of using stakeholder engagement as a process for LGAs to demonstrate

their accountability to their stakeholders is evaluated. In addition, this chapter considers the way in which the stakeholder engagement process may have an impact on several dimensions of accountability for the LGAs and whether certain dimensions of accountability are compromised by others.

A summary and discussion of the arguments presented in the thesis is given in Chapter Seven. In particular, this chapter concludes the thesis by discussing the extent to which engagement may have an impact on accountability as well as its implications for practice, and its contributions to literature, particularly in the field of stakeholder engagement. The limitations of the study are also addressed. This chapter ends with a description of suggestions for future investigation to extend this study further.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented an overview of the current research. It introduced the research area and discussed background of research issues. This chapter outlines aspects of stakeholder theory as the theoretical framework of the study, aiming to build on the arguments relating to the rights of stakeholders as well as to underpin the significance of power in understanding the stakeholder engagement process and procedures. The study draws from ideas proposed by the stakeholder theory, which places emphasis on the role and significance of stakeholders for an organisation's sustained existence and how power is conceptualised by this theory. The researcher discusses the significance of stakeholder attributes and argues that these can influence an organisation's stakeholder engagement undertakings. This chapter also highlights the proposal that stakeholder engagement is a mechanism for accountability.

2.2 Stakeholder Theory as the Theoretical Framework

The development of stakeholder theory has been largely attributed to work by Freeman (1984) and has since become an established part of management theory (Matten and Crane, 2005). The stakeholder theory attempts to describe and derive activities, and balance a multitude of interests. Further, according to this framework, an organisation's continued existence requires the support and approval of the stakeholders. One important assertion is that the interests and well-being of 'other' parties – identified as stakeholders – must also be promoted, rather than simply seeking to maximise their shareholders' wealth.

Donaldson and Preston (1995) classify works on stakeholder theory into three branches: descriptive (how an organisation behaves), normative (how an organisation should behave) and instrumental (how behaviour affects performance). Stakeholder theory is used to describe an organisation's

characteristics, including its nature, the way managers view issues such as stakeholder engagement, and the perception of managers and executives of the interest of stakeholders. The instrumental view seeks to explicate organisations dealing with stakeholders' interests in order to maximize their performance (regarding profitability and growth). The normative base of stakeholder theory proposes that managers should reflect on the interest of those who have stakes in the organisation. Within this branch, there is an argument that stakeholders' views should be considered because their interests have intrinsic value. Thus, the organisation should consider all stakeholders who have a moral stake in its actions, even though they may be perceived as lacking influence.

The present study uses the descriptive classification in its exploration of stakeholder theory. The researcher attempts to depict managers' behaviour in engaging with various stakeholder groups, i.e. the way public sector managers behave in undertaking stakeholder engagement activities. The research views stakeholder theory as 'broadly managerial' (Friedman and Miles, 2006, p.29) in discussing the attitudes, structures and practices that constitutes stakeholder management. According to Donaldson and Preston (1995), "stakeholder management requires, as its key attribute, simultaneous attention to the legitimate interest of all appropriate stakeholders, both in the establishment of organisation structures and general policies in case-by-case decision making" (p.67). This recognises that not only should managers make decisions regarding stakeholder engagement practice, but stakeholder groups should also do so in responding to the actions of organisations' or their initiation of activities with the focal organisation. This recommendation is supported by Frooman (1999) who states that evaluating stakeholders' actions is as important since managers need to be able to determine stakeholders' influence in order to manage their expectations and act accordingly. Thus evaluating the practices in stakeholder management of both managers and stakeholder groups and their attitudes towards engagement, gives a complete portrayal of stakeholder engagement practices in the public sector organisation, and is relevant for developing the stakeholder theory,

affording greater understanding in stakeholder relations and management practices (Friedman and Miles, 2006).

Within stakeholder theory literature, specifically in research into stakeholder relationship management, previously conducted studies generally fall into three categories: stakeholder identification, stakeholder influence strategy and stakeholder management strategy. Stakeholder identification concerns their attributes, which focus on identifying the stakeholders. It involves stakeholder analysis – ‘a process by which expectations of various groups with which the company interacts are analysed’ (Slatter, 1980, p.58). Studies conducted within this category have emphasised the need to understand the relative power and influence of different stakeholders, as well as their interest in a particular issue (Hill and Jones, 1992) and to determine the levels of power of each group of stakeholders (Crane and Livesey, 2003).

The second category, stakeholder influence strategy, is concerned with the strategies adopted by stakeholders in order to influence the organisation in satisfying their wishes. Many researchers have performed empirical analysis on strategies executed by various stakeholder groups, including proxy resolutions, boycotts, strategic alliances and labour strikes. An examination by Freeman and Reed (1983) is based on the nature of stakes and on sources of stakeholder power. Frooman (1999) proposes four types of stakeholder influence strategies: withholding, usage, direct and indirect. The withholding strategy occurs when a stakeholder discontinues the provision of a resource to a firm with the intention of pressurising the firm into changing a specific behaviour (p.196), while the usage strategy is said to occur when the stakeholder continues to supply a resource, but with conditions attached (p.197). Both withholding and usage strategies are considered to be successful when the organisation eventually changes its behaviour pursuant to strategies implemented. Direct and indirect strategies are concerned with the supply of resources to the organisation. The former refers to situations when the stakeholder itself manipulates the flow of resources to the firm

(p.198), while the latter is used when the stakeholder exerting influence does not have a direct relationship with the organisation (p.198).

The final category of stakeholder theory literature centres on strategies adopted by organisations to manage stakeholder relationships. These strategies form the descriptive view of stakeholder theory. Friedman and Miles (2006) caution that stakeholder management involves the managing of relationships with stakeholders rather than with groups of stakeholders. An essential feature of this strand of stakeholder management is the assessment of the extent and quality of stakeholder management in practice. It is this aspect on which this study seeks to focus and to pursue further. According to Friedman and Miles, a complex issue, which arises from stakeholder relationship management, is the need to balance conflicting interests effectively.

2.2.1 Stakeholder Concept

The stakeholder concept has been used extensively, both academically and in practice. In the academic literature, different types of literatures adopt different definitions. For instance, those concerned with ethics apply a different concept from those in the marketing field. Friedman and Miles (2006) have compiled a set of seventy-five definitions of 'stakeholder', reflecting changes in this term from 1963 to 2003 (p.5-8). The concept has been identified as 'problematic' (Hill et al., 1998, p.1486), and according to Stoney and Winstanley (2001, p.650) the notion is becoming 'content free' as it includes 'almost anything that the author desires'. A particularly strong criticism has been voiced by Roberts and Mahoney (2004, p.400) who have found, for instance, that accounting researchers have been using the term 'stakeholder' but have failed to link this to any versions of stakeholder theory. In practice, the concept is closely linked to the public relations agenda in promoting a certain image of the organisation (Freeman et al., 2010).

The term 'stakeholder' first emerged in the management literature at the Stanford Research Institute in 1963 and was originally defined as 'those groups without

whose support the organisation would cease to exist'. While many definitions of stakeholder have emerged in the literature, the most commonly used is that referred to Freeman (1984), who labels stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of corporate objectives (p.25). This definition comprises two parts – *affect* and *is affected*, which signifies how each stakeholder groups are 'multifaceted and inherently connected' (Freeman et al., 2010, 26). According to Freeman, to be an effective strategist, one needs to deal with 'those groups that can affect, while to be responsive, one must deal with those group you can affect' (1984, p.47). The ways stakeholders are defined suggest a two-way relationship between stakeholders and organisations. However, this definition is said to be too broad, and is further criticised in that it considers stakeholders only from the perspective of managers and executives (Freeman et al, 2010). Kaler (2002) identifies several streams of stakeholder definitions: claimant (stakeholders as those groups who make a claim on the firm), influencer (stakeholders are those who can influence, or may be influenced by the organisation) and a blend definition (combination of the claimant and influencer definitions). According to Kaler (2002), the claimant is the most superior, i.e. those who can make a claim on the organisation are the most superior.

According to the literature, the term *public sector* should have a more inclusive definition (Lewis, 1991). Bryson (2004) refers to stakeholders as "persons, groups of organisation that must somehow be taken into account by leaders, managers and front-line staff" (p.22). Edeb and Ackermann (1998) define stakeholders as 'people or small groups with the power to respond to, negotiate with, and change the strategic future of the organisation' (p. 117). A further concept of stakeholder focuses on the *claim* aspect as given by Bryson (2004) which refers to 'any person that can place claim on the organisation's attention, resources or output, or is affected by that output' (p. 27). Johnson and Scholes (2002), on the other hand, emphasise the organisation's ability to meet stakeholders' expectations as 'those individuals or groups who depend on the organisation to fulfil their own goals and on whom, in turn, the organisation depends' (p. 206). Other definitions recognise

that stakeholders for public sector organisations include all people, including the nominally powerless, while Edeb and Ackermann acknowledge the role of power in determining who is a stakeholder of an organisation.

Blair and Whitehead (1998) classify stakeholders of public sector organisations into four types: supportive, marginal, non-supportive and mixed-blessing. Supportive stakeholders are those who support the organisation's goals and actions, while marginal stakeholders are those that have a stake in the organisation but who are generally unconcerned with most issues. Non-supportive stakeholders are those who would not cooperate with the organisation and for whom it can be disadvantageous to do so. The mixed-blessing group of stakeholders is those who play an important role in the organisation - for instance, the staff within the organisation. Stated more simply, stakeholders can be classified as internal and external stakeholders. Although this can be easily arranged in commercial and profit-motivated organisations, it is not so achievable for those in the public sector. For instance, councillors in LGAs can be classified as both the internal and external type of stakeholder depending on their role within the LGA. The multiple roles of councillors as both representatives and policy makers have implications for the group of stakeholders to which they belong. As a representative of their wards and those electors living within the wards, councillors are classified as external stakeholders to the LGAs. Their role as policy makers, however, demands their involvement in the decision-making of the LGAs as members of management or partnership boards, and so become internal stakeholders of the LGAs.

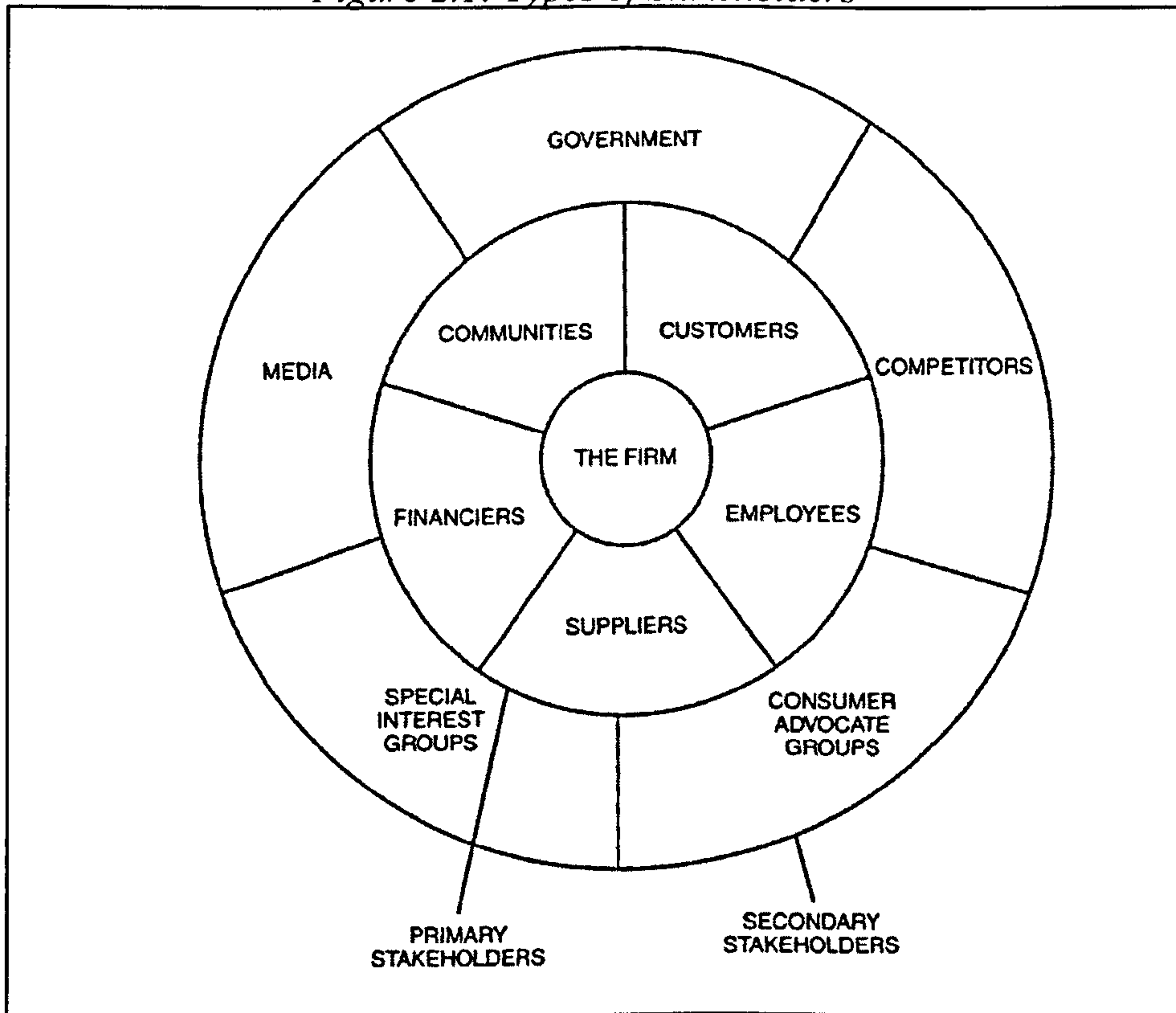
2.2.2 Types of Stakeholder

Several authors have attempted to classify stakeholders into various groups (Clarkson, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Goodpastor, 1991). Based on Freeman's definition (1984), Goodpastor (1991) categorises stakeholders as *strategic* and *moral*. A strategic stakeholder is 'the one who affects the firm', implying a managing of interest, i.e. these groups of stakeholders and their interest must be dealt with (Freeman, 1984, p. 126). According to Frooman (1999), the nature of

the relationship between stakeholder and organisation is unidirectional, from the perspective of the organisation. The moral stakeholder refers to 'the one who is affected by the firm', indicating the need to balance interests and implying a bi-directional relationship between the stakeholder and the organisation (Frooman, 1999).

Another prominent work in categorising stakeholders is offered by Clarkson (1995), who classifies stakeholders into two broad groups of primary and secondary stakeholders. Clarkson describes the primary stakeholder as 'one without whose continuing participation the corporation cannot survive as a going concern' (p.106) and secondary stakeholders as 'those who influence or are influenced and affected by, the corporations but they are not engaged in transactions with the corporation and are not essential for its survival' (p.107). The primary and secondary stakeholders for a typical organisation are presented in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Types of Stakeholders



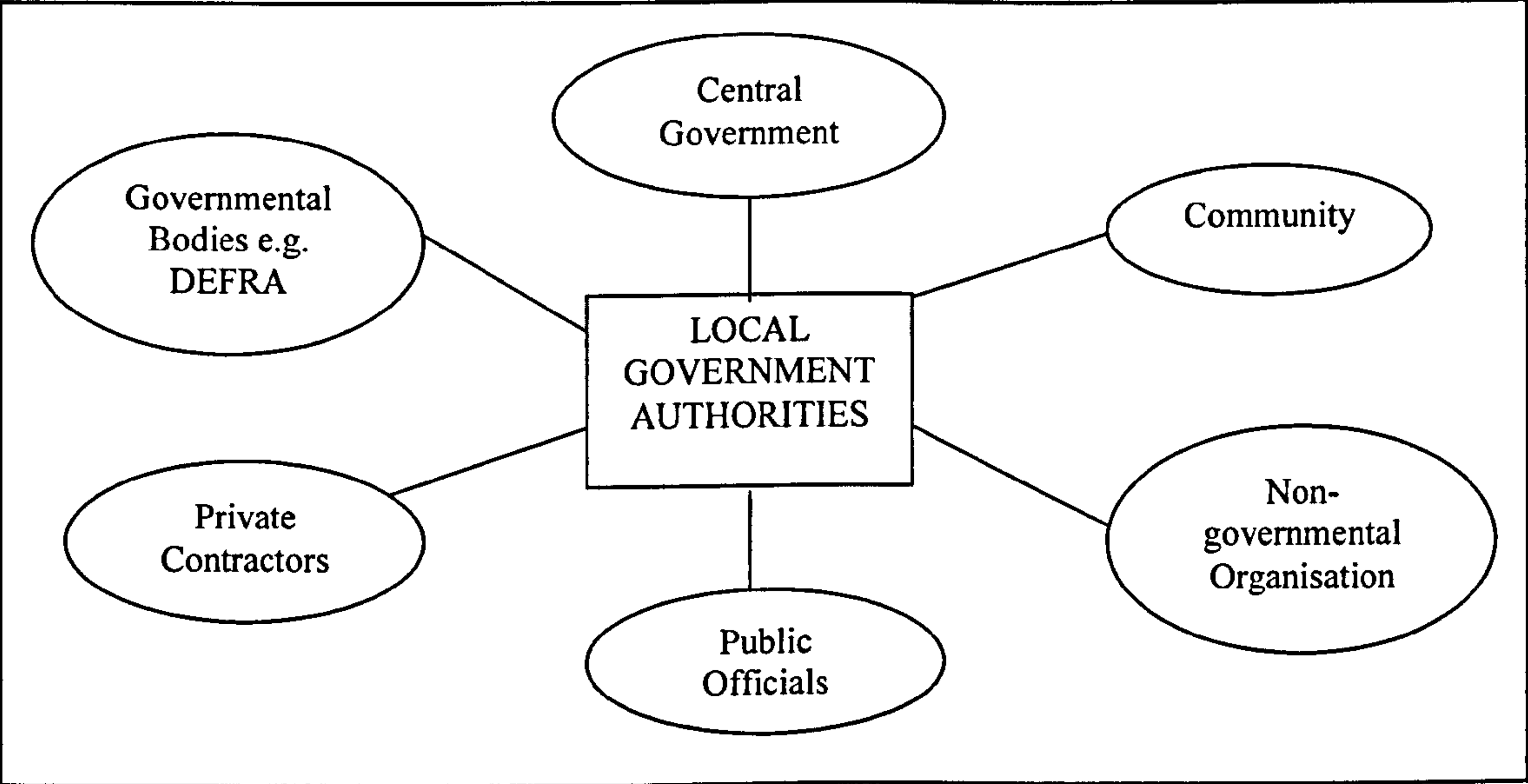
(Source: Freeman et al. (2007))

Primary stakeholders in waste management are the strategic stakeholders, i.e. the central government and the community stakeholders. Secondary stakeholders refer to groups identified as the internal stakeholders, such as the finance and planning officers and the environmental NGOs. A complete list of stakeholders in the context of this study is presented in Chapter Three.

While the use of stakeholder theory is widely applied in studies conducted in private organisations, it is suggested that the nonexistence of shareholders in public organisations such as LGAs will require a change in the basic tenet of stakeholder theory (Blair and Whitehead, 1998). In line with the significance of public accountability in public organisations and services, communities will be at the heart of aims and objectives of any programmes and activities (DCLG, 2008).

The following diagram illustrates the different groups of stakeholders to whom LGAs are accountable:

Figure 2.2: A Stakeholder Model for Local Government Authorities



groups of stakeholders in the waste management industry have affected the relationship between LGAs and their stakeholders.

Freeman (1984) views the stakeholder model depicted above as ‘enormously oversimplified’ (p.25) since in reality, each category can be separated into a number of smaller groups whose “stakes change over time” (p.57). Thus, it is important to recognise and assess the rights of the stakeholders, a discussion of which follows.

2.2.3 Rights of Stakeholders

The rights of stakeholders in demanding attention from organisations to their claims, termed as stakeholder legitimacy, are examined in the literature. Some studies have considered categories or types of stakeholders; others base their argument on stakeholder rights by following certain principles.

Based on the principle of fairness, Phillips (2003) proposes a solution regarding the rights of each stakeholder group. According to Phillips, stakeholders who

“voluntarily accept the benefits of a mutually beneficial cooperative scheme of cooperation” (ibid., p.92) are the groups with legitimate claims on the organisation. This therefore gives stakeholders such as members of staff, customers and suppliers greater rights over, for example, media and pressure groups.

In managing stakeholder relationships, the stakeholder theory emphasises three stages to be followed by an organisation (Freeman, 1984). The most important of these is to understand who the stakeholders are and their perceived stakes. Stakeholder identification is therefore paramount in ensuring that each stakeholder to whom organisations are accountable is being engaged. As the purpose of this study on public sector organisation is to serve the public (Broadbent and Guthrie, 1992), it is important to recognise their stake in public sector organisation. The following section discusses the identification of the community as a primary stakeholder and their corresponding stakes.

2.2.3.1 Community as Stakeholder

As the context of this study is sustainable waste management, stakeholders include ‘communities, but also groups with a wider interest in waste management who may not have such involvement with the specific place or area under consideration’ (Information Sheet 1, DEFRA, 2007, p.3). Since no precise definition of community has so far been offered in any LGA guidelines, this study refers to the community as *all residents residing in an area or locality under the jurisdiction of a particular LGA*. Inclusion of the community as stakeholders and its significance as primary stakeholders illustrate the complexity of stakeholder relations in LGAs, as they are made up of diverse individuals with different expectations (Wilcox, 1994).

Acknowledging that they cannot survive unless they deliver value to their chosen stakeholders, one of the groups whose needs are increasingly recognised by organisations are the service users (Broadbent and Guthrie, 2008). This particular

group of stakeholders is also the main user of waste services. While several prior studies have looked at community involvement in waste management (Petts, 1995b; Petts and Leach, 2000), the present study intends to evaluate the position of the community in waste management and to analyse how local authorities manage and meet the demands and desires of their communities. According to the list of stakeholders stipulated by the Waste Strategy (refer to Chapter Three), the ‘community within its constituency’ is one set of stakeholders to which LGAs must relate. It is argued here that the nature of the community stake in waste management is two-fold: the community can be viewed as consumers and as citizens. In relation to these, Jansen (2008) recognises that the views of the community differ - as citizens they perceive the performance of governmental organisation as *voters*, but as consumers, their perspective is that of *users* of services. These community roles are elaborated in the next section.

As consumers, members of the community are less empowered since they do not have the ultimate authority to choose different councils to serve their needs; in the words of one researcher, they are unable to exercise their power to ‘exit’ Mulgan (2000a). He also argues that exit options, if available, could be a potent alternative in ensuring satisfactory services are provided. In many services provided by LGAs, the community is viewed as a group of captive consumers (Parker and Gould, 1999). Similarly, with regard to waste management the community cannot choose who should be providing their services.

However, as citizens, the collective stake of community is greater than that of individuals. As ratepayers, a community is entitled to the provision of various services, including waste management. This entitlement can be exercised in several ways, including demanding and voicing dissatisfaction and, ultimately, voting for a change of councillor. Recognising and identifying the stake that the community possesses in waste management can be further explained in relation to the concept of accountability. As consumers, market accountability is owed to the community as citizens; public accountability is due to them. Parker and Gould

(1999) note the tension between public accountability and market accountability, suggesting that to focus more on individual consumers would result in a reduction in accountability to society at large. The extent to which members of the community will be more likely to be treated as consumers rather than as citizens depends greatly on the extent to which services are outsourced, commercialised or privatised (Parker and Gould, 1999). Considering that the underlying aim of public organisations is to serve society (Broadbent and Guthrie, 1992) and not solely to service the customers (Parker and Gould, 1999), researchers such as Bowerman (1998) and Plowden (1994) assert that public accountability should prevail over market accountability. Other significant community-related stakeholders include the lobby groups and NGOs. Taking account of the democratic accountability of the public sector, Plowden (1994) urges public organisations to be accountable to citizens' representatives, including lobby groups and similar organisations set up to promote the voice of the citizen.

Having discussed the importance of the community as a stakeholder for the LGA, the following sub-section discusses several stakeholder attributes and how they affect the prioritisation of stakeholders, before justifying the focus of this research on one specific attribute.

2.3 Stakeholder Salience and the Impact of Stakeholder Attributes

The question of who should matter in managerial decision-making is central to stakeholder theory (Freeman et al., 2010). For this reason, a number of prior studies seek to systematically address the question of which stakeholders deserve or require managerial attention. Stakeholder salience, which refers to "the degree to which managers give priority to competing claims" (Mitchell et al., 1997, p.854) is an issue to managers, as they need to decide on which group of stakeholders to focus. Saliency is an aspect of stakeholder theory, which focuses on the assumption that stakeholders' possession of attributes determines the extent to which managers pay them attention.

Many authors have conceptualised the relationship between stakeholders' attributes with several other aspects of a company's activities, including their social performance (Ullmann, 1985) and their performance in general (Clarkson, 1995; Wood, 1991). Others argue that stakeholder management is associated with higher financial performance (Jones, 1995), improving organisational flexibility and enhancing the wealth-creating capacity of firms (Post et al., 2002a, p.36). In the words of these authors, "the long-term survival and success of a firm is determined by its ability to establish and maintain relationships within its entire network of stakeholders" (ibid. p.7). In practice, however, it has been discovered that some organisations still disregard the significance of managing the stakeholder relationship (Harvey and Schaefer, 2001).

Mitchell et al. (1997) have developed a typology for classifying stakeholders by proposing stakeholder identification and salience based on managerial assessment of stakeholders' possession of one or more of three relationship attributes: power, legitimacy and urgency. Stakeholders are given greater managerial attention when they possess valued resources, and are deemed legitimate when they are socially acceptable and can muster urgency when they have time-sensitive or critical claims (Mitchell et al., 1997). Stakeholders, therefore, will only deserve managerial attention when they exhibit one or more of these attributes. Greater attention will be given to those who show more attributes, while those demonstrating fewer attributes are more likely to be disregarded. The typology proposed by Mitchell et al (1997) has been widely adopted and instrumentalised (see Agle et al., 1999; Eesley and Lenox, 2006; Harvey and Schaefer, 2001; Magness, 2008; Winn, 2001).

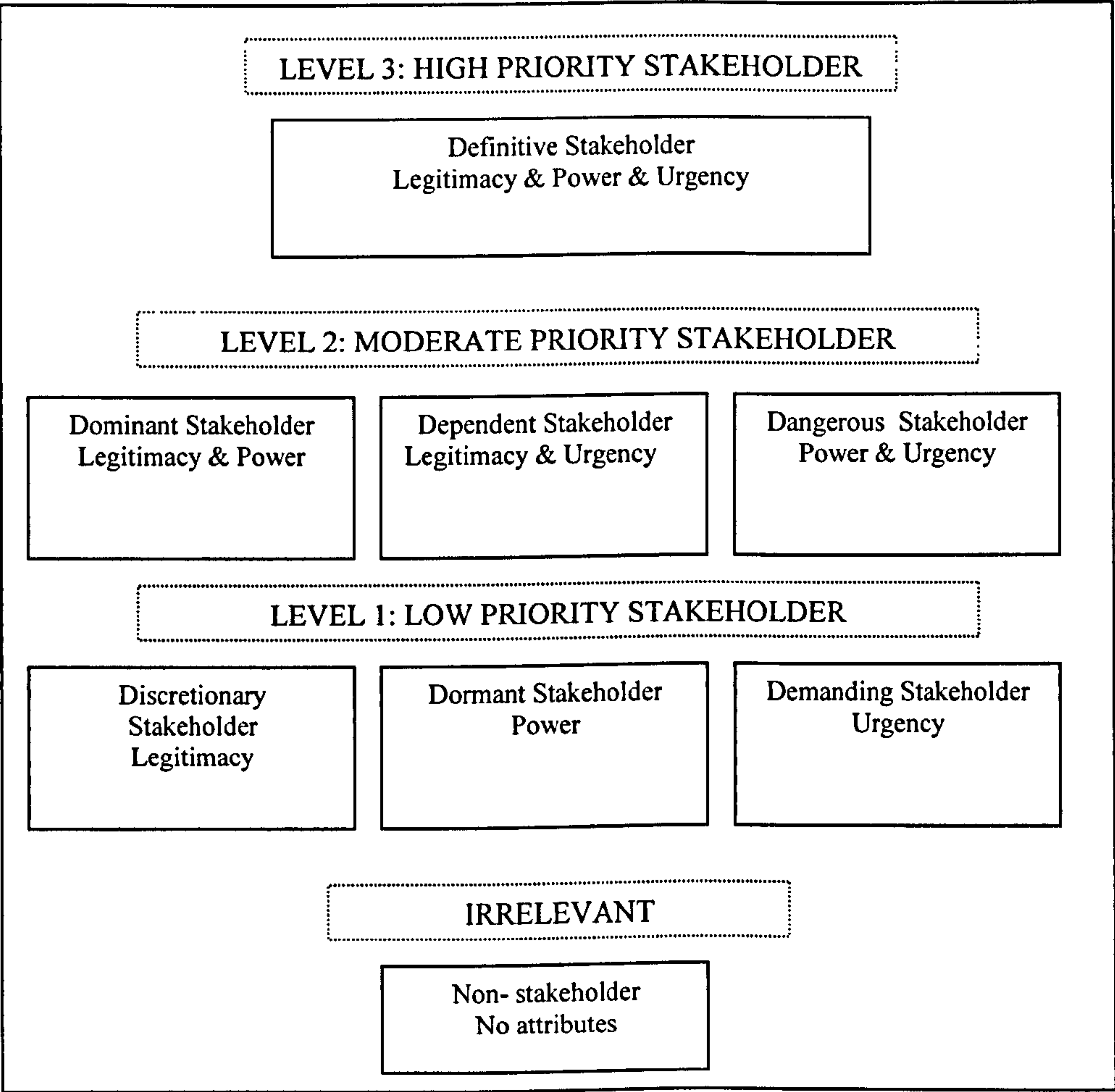
The evaluation of the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders is therefore based on the exchange of perceptions and managerial assessment of stakeholders' possession of one or more of three relationship attributes. The first of these is the stakeholders' *power* to influence the organisation (Mitchell et al., 1995, p.854). Power is the extent to which the stakeholder can demonstrate

coercive power, utilitarian power and normative power. The second stakeholder attribute, i.e. the *legitimacy* of the stakeholders' relationship with the organisation, is "a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed set of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p.574). Legitimacy can be achieved via "contract, exchange, legal title, legal right, moral right, at-risk status or moral interest in the harms and benefits generated by corporate actions" (Mitchell et al., 1997, p.287). The *urgency* of the stakeholders' claim on the organisation is based on two factors: time sensitivity and criticality. Time sensitivity is the degree to which managerial delay in attending to the claim or relationship is unacceptable to the stakeholder, while criticality refers to the importance of the claim or the relationship to the stakeholder (Friedman and Miles, 2006, p. 95). These attributes determine whether a person is a stakeholder to an organisation; absence of all three attributes makes a party a non-stakeholder (Mitchell et al., 1997). Although both power and legitimacy are independent attributes, which can overlap, they can exist independently.

An evaluation of the presence of all three stakeholder attributes would indicate the different types of stakeholders with whom managers are required to deal, as well as suggesting the level of attention and priority they deserve. As presented in Figure 2.3 below, stakeholders with one attribute will be classified as those with low priority, while those with two attributes deserve moderate priority level. Stakeholders who demonstrate all three attributes are classified as definitive stakeholders with their demands and claims highly prioritised by managers. Those who cannot display any attributes are classified as non-stakeholders, so their claims are considered as irrelevant to the organisation. As the presence of attributes is a matter of multiple perceptions and are socially constructed (Friedman and Miles, 2006), a party must be perceived by management to possess those attributes, yet the stakeholders themselves may not be aware that they demonstrate any attribute. For this reason, attributes are said to be "transitory; they can be gained as well as lost" (Friedman and Miles, 2006, p. 95). Figure 2.3

illustrates how stakeholder types and the evaluation of stakeholder attributes determine the level of priority given to stakeholders.

Figure 2.3: Model of Stakeholder Priority for Managers, Stakeholder Types and Associated Attributes



Adapted from Page (2002, p.78)

Applying these classifications and the level of priority to the stakeholder in waste management, Table 2.1 depicts the level of salience for relevant stakeholder groups in waste management and their corresponding stakes:

Table 2.1: Stakeholders and their stakes

Stakeholders	Saliency	Stakes
Central Government	High definitive	Meeting the Waste Strategy targets
Public/Councilor	Moderate dependent	Service delivery Value for money
NGOs	Low discretionary	Pollution Green practices Social cohesion
Private Waste Contractors	Moderate dominant	Service performance Contract compliance

Prior studies on stakeholder saliency and attributes have since evolved significantly with subsequent research providing empirical support for these attributes (Agle et al., 1999; Eesley and Lennox, 2006; Knox and Gruar, 2007; Magness, 2008; Parent and Deephouse, 2007; Winn, 2001). Some have examined it quantitatively and covered the relationship of all three attributes in relation to CEO values and organisation performance (Agle et al., 1999). Of the three attributes, Parent and Deephouse (2007) suggest that power has the greatest effect on saliency, followed by urgency and legitimacy. Power is an attribute that the present study seeks to explore further, so the following sub-section discusses this in greater detail, together with justifications for disregarding the remaining two attributes, i.e. legitimacy and urgency.

2.3.1 Power

Identified as a *primitive* concept due to the difficulty in defining the concept without linking it to other controversial notion (Lukes, 2007, p.477), the most general definition of power is given by Locke (1946) who views those who have the power as those who can affect change. A more general conceptualization of power is given by Lukes (2005) as the capacity to impact the surrounding world, within that includes the capacity to dominate other beings. Based on this, it can be said that a powerful individual or entity has the ability to dominate others.

In relation to power held by stakeholders, it is regarded as the potential ability of stakeholders to impose their will on a given relationship (Etzioni, 1964). A different definition of stakeholder power has been provided by Rowley (1997) who regards it in terms of network structure and position. In her study, Carroll (1989) suggests that many factors may determine the extent of power possessed by a stakeholder, such as size of budget and staff as well as the source of funding. Another account of power is given by Frooman (1999), who views the stakeholder as a structural component rather than as a stakeholder attribute, as is commonly held.

The significance of power as an attribute has been extensively discussed by Daake and Anthony (2000) in their study that compiles the perceptions of six stakeholder groups, including internal and external stakeholders, as well as interface stakeholders within a healthcare organisation. Daake and Anthony point out that it is very important for assessment to be made on stakeholders' perceived relative power vis-à-vis other groups, since underestimating or overestimating a stakeholder group's power base can affect future engagement process. They also assert that stakeholders' own perception of power affects the tendency to be involved in the focal organisation's decision-making or even during the strategic planning process. Another important finding of their study is that a stakeholder group always has the tendency to perceive others as more powerful than themselves, which Daake and Anthony (2000) termed as 'relative powerlessness' (p.97). This therefore results in a lack of willingness on their part to participate due to the belief that they lack the influence and that their opinions do not make a difference to the organisation's practices and decision-making. This in turn affects the organisation's ability to empower their stakeholders (Daake and Anthony, 2000).

On a similar issue, Bryson (2004) has found that an assessment could identify the source of power that might affect the achievement of the organisation's purpose. Moreover, he claims that an inability to consider stakeholders' interests will result

in the failure of any projects implemented thereafter. Such assessment is even more necessary when the stakeholders are involved in the planning process or participate in decision-making regarding the future direction of the organisation (Daake and Anthony, 2000). For this reason, several frameworks and models have been introduced in the literature, all of which have stressed the need to understand the relative power and influence of different stakeholders (Freeman and Reed, 1983; Mitchell et al., 1997; Welcomer et al., 2003) as well as their interest in a particular issue (Crane and Livesey, 2003; Hill and Jones, 1992). The primary issue, therefore, is to determine the level of influence each stakeholder possesses vis-à-vis the organisation and the level of perceived salience granted, and subsequently to evaluate the way in which the level of perceived power affects stakeholder engagement processes and procedures.

The studies discussed above indicate the relevance of power in stakeholder relations management undertaken by organisations, both in the private sector and in public services. This research recognises the influence of power in determining the way in which managers prioritise the demands and claims of stakeholders.

2.3.1.1 Categories of Power

Power can arise from various sources: “access to or control over various support mechanism such as money and votes, or from access to or control over various sanctions such as regulatory authority or votes of no confidence” (Eden and Ackermann, 1998, p.126-7). In relation to this, many researchers have proposed various taxonomies in categorizing the types of power (Carroll, 1989; Freeman and Reed, 1983; Frooman, 1999; Harvey and Schaefer, 2001; Mitchell et al., 1997; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Rowley, 1997).

According to Freeman and Reed (1983), the powers held by stakeholders are formalistic, economic and political. The first refers to the ability of the stakeholders to exercise their voting power. In the case of public sector organisations such as LGAs, the community or residents have the ability to

exercise their voting power through the ballot box. Economic power relates to the stakeholders' ability to influence as a result of marketplace decisions. This category of power may be evidenced among private waste contractors as well as residents, who are also the consumers for waste management services. With regards to economic power, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) highlight three factors that measure the interdependence of an organisation and stakeholder: primacy of resource, substitutability and discretion over resources. The primacy of resource is the relative magnitude of the exchange and the criticality of resource (ibid. p.46); substitutability is the extent to which input or output transactions are made by relatively few significant organisations. It is important to question whether the focal organisation has access to the resource from additional sources (ibid. p.50) and to consider the organisation's perception of the stakeholders' discretion over the key resource, which is defined as the extent of discretion over the allocation and use of resource possessed by another social actor, being the amount of control the interest group has over the resource and the substitutability of the resource for the organisation (ibid. p.47-48). The final category of power, i.e. political power, is the ability to influence through the use of political process. Councillors are a particular stakeholder group who hold this power. Relative to other stakeholders, central government possesses both economic powers due to the provision of funding and political power from introducing and imposing legislation to other entities in the public sector. This therefore results in the central government being a powerful public sector stakeholder who is expected to receive greater attention from an organisation as a stakeholder with more than one type of power perceived to be more salient by managers (Parent and Deephouse, 2007). Omitted from Freeman and Reed's power classification is the recognition of the power held by pressure groups or NGOs.

2.3.1.2 Power as an Attribute

Literature suggests two ways of exploring power as an attribute, the first of which is the relationship between the actors and not of the actors themselves (Frooman, 1999; Jones, 1995; Rowley, 1997). Within this perspective, power is viewed as

structurally determined in the sense that the nature of the relationship – that is, who is dependent on whom and how much – determines who has power (Frooman, 1999, p. 196). Secondly, power is treated as an attribute of the individual (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell et al., 1997). It is this particular view of power that the present research wishes to follow, as one of the aims of this research is to evaluate how power possessed by the stakeholder affects the way in which engagement being undertaken within public sector organisations.

As power has the most effect on perceived salience (Parent and Deephouse, 2007), the present research focuses on the way in which this attribute may affect the stakeholder engagement process within public sector organisations. Eesley and Lenox (2006) and Welcomer (2002) observe that stakeholders have more influence over an organisation when they are perceived to have a greater extent of power. It can therefore be stated that perceived power has the ability to influence the focal organisation. Urgency is considered to have more impact on perceived stakeholder salience than legitimacy, although it has received very little attention in the literature as an important stakeholder attribute. Frooman also disagrees over the importance of legitimacy as an attribute (1999). The very nature of the sustainable waste management context reduces the significance of urgency and legitimacy as aspects to assess. This can be explained by the fact that each stakeholder in the waste management industry has been clearly identified by the Waste Strategy. Moreover, it is not the intention of this research to classify stakeholders into types, so an assessment of the urgency and legitimacy aspects of stakeholders is not required. For this reason, the present study considers only power as an attribute.

As argued by Mitchell et al., (1997), “to achieve a certain ends or because of perceptual factors, manager do pay certain kinds of attention to certain kinds of stakeholders (p.855). Based on this principle, stakeholders of LGAs in this study deserve managerial attention only when they exhibit one or more of these attributes. The more attributes demonstrated by a particular group of stakeholders,

or perhaps the greater density of any single attribute, the more attention this group should be accorded. In the context of this study, it is proposed that stakeholders that possess and demonstrate a certain element of power may have a material impact on the outcome of stakeholder engagement, thus commanding greater managerial attention.

2.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Accountability

Demonstrating accountability, particularly to citizens (Parker and Gould, 1999), but also to other groups of stakeholders has been a concern in the United Kingdom (Gray and Jenkins, 1986). There has been considerable discussion about aspects of accountability, including how it can be improved. While some researchers investigate the meaning of the concept (Erkkila, 2007; Day and Klein, 1987; Mulgan, 2000b; Sinclair, 1995) and how it is changing (Erkkila, 2007; Fowles, 1993; Gray and Jenkins, 1993), others find ways of discharging accountability via activities such as performance measurement (Bolton, 2003; Kloot, 1999; Parker and Gould, 2000; Wisniewski and Stewart, 2004) and financial reporting (Cooper and Owen, 2007; Coy and Dixon, 2004; Dixon and Coy, 2007). A study by Sinclair (1995) has ascertained ways of enhancing accountability through understanding the meaning of accountability from the perspective of the individual. A few others, such as the Financial Management Initiative (Gray and Jenkins, 1986), Best Value (Adam et al., 2000) and two studies on governance structure (Erkillä, 2007; Collier, 2008), have touched on efforts and reforms that have attempted to improve accountability of public organisations.

The wealth of prior work, including the studies mentioned above, illustrates the significance of accountability, particularly in the public sector. The following subsection defines the concept and the aspects that it entails. The remainder of this section discusses several dimensions of accountability relevant to the public sector organisations, before examining how stakeholder engagement undertakings can be a mechanism for organisations to depict accountability.

2.4.1 Notion of Accountability

Many researchers have sought to delineate accountability, although it is very difficult to provide a proper definition (Parker, 1996). The notion has been widely discussed in the literature with many prominent scholars agreeing that this particular concept is an imprecise term (Day and Klein, 1987; Mulgan, 2000b) or 'elusive' or 'chameleon-like' (Sinclair, 1995). Parker and Gould (2000) have cautioned that the term should not be mistaken for responsibility. Parker and Gould (2000) describe the nature and role of accountability as 'complex, contradictory and confusing' (p. 109). Nevertheless, certain themes and a common understanding of this notion do recur (Ahrens, 1996; Robert and Scapen, 1985; Roberts, 1991).

The general idea behind the accountability concept is 'making the invisible visible' (Munro, 1996, p.5), which requires one to assume responsibility for their conduct (Robert and Scapens, 1985). At its simplest, this notion refers to having the right to receive information and the duty to supply it (Gray, 1992). A more comprehensive way of describing accountability is given by Stewart (1984) who specifies two strands of accountability: (i) the element of account and (ii) the element of holding to account, both of which have been widely adopted. Both elements, according to Stewart, should be present to ensure full expression of public accountability, a recommendation that is echoed by Burritt and Welch (1997). The first strand entails a relationship in which people are required to explain and take responsibility for their actions (Edwards and Hulme, 1995; Sinclair, 1995), implying a significant relationship between accountor and accountee. According to Pollit (2003, p.89) accountability requires explanation and justification with the significant other, i.e. the other party to whom an organisation is accountable. The second element assumes that an individual or organisation has certain 'rights' or 'power' to hold others accountable (Buhr, 2001, p. 406). Thus accountability involves not only the provision of information about performance, but also the possibility of voicing questions by accountor and judgment by accountee (Roberts and Scapens, 1985).

It is argued that accountability should also involve *the right to debate and question* any information conveyed (Law, 1999, p.97, emphasis added), which can be used as a ‘voice’ for those whose interests are supposed to be served, in particular for the weaker ones (Mulgan, 2000a, p.88). More importantly, it should be a two-way exchange of information (Crane and Livesey, 2003). It is therefore proposed that stakeholder engagement could be a mechanism for accountability to take place and be demonstrated. Accountability, therefore, in the context of this study, is viewed *as the right to a free flow of information with stakeholders by enabling them to voice their concern via mechanisms made available for this purpose*. The notion of ‘right to free flow of information’ denotes giving an account and enabling voices to be heard, which also embodies the element of holding to account. For that reason, organisations should not be confined to engagement for the purpose of gathering and obtaining information, but should also enable stakeholders to voice their concerns, consulting and involving them in order to demonstrate accountability in the decision-making process.

Following this suggestion that public sector accountability could be enforced from stakeholder engagement (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Neligan, 2003), the current study intends to illustrate the emergence of accountability through the interplay of an organisation and its stakeholders during engagement. In expounding the concept, it will consider participation as an insufficiently explored role of engagement (Neligan, 2003; Rasche and Esser, 2006). The elements of accountability present in stakeholder engagement practices will therefore be evaluated in the next section.

2.4.2 Elements of Accountability

According to Mulgan (2008, p.6), the nature of accountability covers “who is accountable to whom, for what and how”. There are therefore four elements of accountability: the organisation that is held accountable (who); the significant other who demands accountability (to whom); the required features of

accountability (for what); and the process in which accountability is demonstrated (how). This research considers the fourth element of accountability, i.e. how accountability is demonstrated or discharged by public sector organisations. For an organisation to be accountable, there must be a *process* in which ‘a person, or a group of people can be held to account for their conduct’ (Glynn and Murphy, 1996 p.126, emphasis added) by way of giving and demanding of reasons for conduct in which people are required to explain and take responsibility for their actions (Sinclair, 1995; Jones, 1992). While prior studies have looked at various means of discharging accountability through annual reports disclosure and performance measurement, the present study attempts to explore how stakeholder engagement practices support organisations in discharging their accountability.

In evaluating how accountability is demonstrated, it is important to assess aspects of accountability that have to be present within the selected mechanism, in particular, how stakeholder engagement practices can be used as a mechanism for depicting the accountability of an organisation. A central dimension of accountability, according to Hodge and Coghill (2007, p.683), ‘concerns openness and the effects of disclosure of information’. Thus not only is provision of information important for accountability, the nature of information communicated to stakeholders is a significant aspect of the accountability paradigm, including the flow of information provided by the organisation to their stakeholders. In relation to this, unrestricted provision of information is an element of accountability that should be present in stakeholder engagement practices. Another important feature that must be present is bi-directional flow, i.e. not only do the organisations provide information to the stakeholders, but also information is obtained from the stakeholders.

Another definition of accountability states that ‘it should provide *the right to debate and question* any information conveyed’ (Law, 1999, p.97, emphasis added). The process of depicting accountability is therefore to enable free bi-directional flow of information between an organisation and its stakeholders. The

latter should also have the right to demand more information, as well as to raise issues and engage in a healthy debate with the organisation.

2.4.3 Complexities of Accountability in the Public Sector

The issue of accountability in public organisations is not straightforward due to the different nature of relationships between parties involved in public sector organisation (Kluvers, 2003). In principle, public sector organisations are accountable in three ways: that money has been spent as agreed and in accordance with the procedures; that resources have been used efficiently; and that resources have been used to achieve the intended results (Glynn and Murphy, 1996). These three considerations make matters regarding accountability in the public sector more complex than in private organisations. It is therefore important to appreciate the distinctive features of public sector organisations, which have contributed to such complexities.

Firstly, the public sector generally provides goods and services required collectively which the market fails to supply (Flynn, 2002), termed as ‘public goods’, which produce externalities whereby no one can be excluded from the benefits they give. This includes benefits accrued from the skill of educated professionals. Further, public goods also result in no person being excluded from enjoying the benefits associated with the availability of, for instance, street lighting and clean air, so such services should be paid collectively rather than individually. The provision of public services is therefore accountable to everyone who enjoys them (ibid.). Broadbent and Guthrie (1992) provide the following description of this aspect of the public sector:

“The public sector is that part of a nation’s economic activity which is traditionally owned and controlled by the government....is composed of those public organisations which provide utilities and services to the community and which have traditionally been seen as essential to the fabric of the society”. (Broadbent and Guthrie, 1992, p.3)

Most services provided in the public sector are financed by taxation rather than by direct payments from individual customers (Flynn, 2002). They are therefore not normally for sale even if money is available, i.e. the provision of services is outside the normal market relationship. In case of waste management, for instance, all residents in the area can enjoy equal service regardless of their status. Although some market mechanisms have been introduced in the UK public sector - for example, in the healthcare and education sectors - such choice-giving mechanisms are not available in waste services provision. The lack of competition and market choice in services provided by public organisations results in greater reliance on the mechanisms of accountability (Mulgan, 2000a).

In the public sector, the value of public services provided is the key measure of performance, with no motivation to satisfy customers and to persuade them into future transactions (Flynn, 2002). On the other hand, the market segmentation of goods and services by private organisations distinguishes customers, and services are then offered at varying prices to different segments of customers with the hope of repeat transactions in the future. Such is not the case for public organisations, which offer similar services to all users. The absence of the profit motive requirement results services being sold at a price that does not yield a profit. Public sector organisations are not judged on the profit that they make but on the achievement of different policy objectives (Kluvers, 2003).

The complex nature of the goals of public organisations, together with the variety of constituencies to whom they have to answer, presents them with a serious dilemma in balancing the wishes and needs of every group of stakeholders. The absence of shareholders removes the requirement for profit-related information, and in turn strongly necessitates the supply of feedback information and a call for a more stringent structure of accountability (Levaggi, 1995; Mulgan, 2000a).

These features of public sector organisations variously affect their accountability. With the many stakeholders to whom they are accountable, these organisations are

faced with ‘plural accountabilities’ (Roberts, 1992), namely, the diverging demands of the public in various roles as consumers, taxpayers and citizens, all of whom have different perspectives on the performance of the public sector (Jansen, 2008). As a result, their accountability has become even more essential (Pallot, 1992), and accountability is now ranked as one of the most important values in the public sector (Van der Wal et al., 2008).

Another primary distinction between accountability in public services and private organisations is that accountability in the former is democratically-based (Law, 1999) which has resulted in higher expectations from the community (Lively, 1975). As well as being accountable to the community, public sector organisations have further forms of accountability to other stakeholders, particularly to the political leadership (Parker and Gould, 2000). All of these variously affect the nature of stakeholder relations facing public organisations, and it is supposed that in giving an account and holding to account such differences would be addressed. The large number of stakeholders to whom public sector organisations are accountable results in multiple dimensions of accountability. This leads to a further discussion about the various dimensions of the accountability of public sector organisations.

2.4.4 Dimensions of Accountability

The abovementioned intricacies give rise to complex stakeholder relations in public organisations. Such complexities are evident from the many categories of public sector accountability, as presented in Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2: Forms of Public Sector Accountability

	Public Accountability	Personal Accountability	Political Accountability	Managerial Accountability	Legal Accountability	Professional Accountability	Market Accountability
Who is accountable?	Elected representatives (cabinet and ministers)	Public sector officials	Elected representatives (cabinet and ministers)	Managers, staff	Staff, politicians	Professionals	Service providers e.g. schools
To whom?	Public	Oneself	Parliament	Politicians, line managers	Courts	Other professionals	Consumers (e.g. parents and children)
For what?	Responsiveness : all aspects of performances	Fidelity to personal conscience in basic values	Efficiency, probity	Economy, efficiency, Effectiveness, administrative propriety, outputs, policy advice	Legality, propriety	Process, conduct	Output (e.g. examination results)
How?	Election	Respect for human dignity; Accept responsibility for affecting the lives of others	Parliamentary questions, select committees	Reporting mechanism, performance indicators	Judicial review, statutory appeal	Self-evaluation, occupational association	Market forces

(Adapted from Sinclair, 1995 and Law, 1999)

Researchers have endeavoured to categorise accountability into many types, namely, political, public, managerial, professional and personal (Sinclair, 1995). In addition, Law (1999) has provided categories of legal and market accountability. Greater details of these accountability dimensions are presented in Appendix I.

As argued by other researchers, these many-sided dimensions result in a complex and contestable application of accountability in the public sector (Goddard and Powell, 1994; Parker, 1996), with enhanced accountability in any particular dimension entailing another dimension being compromised (Sinclair, 1995). As argued by Core (1993), public sector managers believe that they are accountable to many parties at any one time. For instance, public sector managers are accountable to the elected member in performing their work (managerial accountability). At the same time, they are also accountable to their professional body (professional accountability). Similarly, the elected member is accountable to the public (public accountability) and eventually to Parliament (political accountability) on all aspects of the organisation's performances. It is anticipated that there might be conflict in simultaneously meeting the needs of the public and in dealing with the demands of other groups of stakeholders, including the councillors. It will be

useful to see how one aspect of accountability might be compromised when another is given more emphasis during the process of prioritisation adopted by managers.

2.4.5 Mechanisms of accountability

What emerge from the literature are several mechanisms used to demonstrate accountability. These include provision of information in the annual report as well as the use of techniques for measuring performance. A discussion on how accountability can be discharged in the light of these mechanisms now follows, before engagement activities are proposed as an alternative mechanism of accountability.

Being identified as the ‘lifeblood’ of accountability (Day and Klein, 1987), the supply of information has been widely discussed as a way of demonstrating this notion. This is evident from the numerous studies acknowledging the essential role of information, particularly through the disclosure of financial and non-financial information to illustrate the degree of accountability (Carnaghan et al., 1996; Coy and Dixon, 2004; Coy et al., 2001; Dixon and Coy, 2007; Patton, 1992) and performance measurement (Bolton, 2003; Kloot, 1999; Wisniewski and Stewart, 2004). The importance of information, as noted by Gray (1992), lies in its function to ‘liberate, inform, enable and educate’ (p.414), while the public needs information to assess the performance of their elected representative (Law, 1999).

While there are many means of providing information, the role of annual report disclosure is commonly documented in the literature (Coy and Dixon, 2004; Coy and Pratt, 1998). However, as criticised by Boyne and Law (1991), highly technical information and the accountancy jargon provided in annual reports renders them less easy for stakeholders to comprehend, and therefore less beneficial. Further, as argued by Carnaghan et al. (1996), disclosure provides stakeholders with performance information based only on management perception

of stakeholders' priorities and interests, rather than on a determination of the stakeholders' actual needs.

There has been an attempt to find new means of accountability, one of which is through the practice of 'deliberation' (Erkkila, 2007), and it is argued that the practice of 'deliberation', which involves 'openness of decision-making, transparency of administration and public access to information', (ibid. p.23) are substance to accountability (Mulgan, 2000b).

Having discussed the mechanisms available in depicting accountability and how prior literature links the potential of engagement as a way of depicting accountability, this study proposes to take these studies forward by exploring the extent to which accountability can be demonstrated through stakeholder engagement activities, i.e. the provision of avenues to stakeholders to voice their dissatisfaction and suggestions, and to become involved in making decisions as well as in questioning such decisions. The impact of engagement and participation on accountability is recognised by several scholars (Laughlin, 1996; Sinclair, 1995; Stewart, 1984). Erkkila (2007) poses a similar argument in suggesting 'deliberation' as a mechanism of accountability via dialogue which promotes the exchange of information between public sector organisations and their stakeholders.

In line with Wilmott (1996), demonstrating accountability should not be restricted to the provision of annual statements of accounts or the formal election process. Instead, as Gregory (2003) suggests, organisations should embed stakeholder involvement through consultation, which takes into account their wishes and needs. As effective engagement demands a focus on enhancing stakeholders' capabilities to exercise their rights and responsibilities (Cornwall et al., 2000), engagement activities accord with elements of accountability. For instance, such activities offer the basic element of information provision (Day and Klein, 1988) and extend to stakeholders their rights to debate (Law, 1999).

This study therefore suggests that stakeholder engagement should facilitate the promotion of accountability, since its elements can be made available via stakeholder engagement activities such as dialogue or public meetings. Similarly, other means of engagement, for example, using the Internet, would enable the stakeholder to digest, and more importantly to question, information or decisions, incurring less time and cost. However, the effectiveness of these avenues in allowing proper and genuine debate to be held is an area yet to be explored. In the health sector, for example, it has been found that engagement is used as a means to ensure appropriateness of service provision as well as to enhance project efficiency (Cornwall et al., 2000). With this in mind, the present study is based on the premise that undertaking a meaningful engagement through effective mechanisms and processes would enable an organisation to depict accountability to their stakeholders. In particular, this research attempts to show that engagement activities conducted by organisations to engage with their stakeholders coincide with the ways in which accountability can be demonstrated to stakeholders.

This section has described how the concept of accountability is more complex in public organisations than those in the private sector due to the provision of services that are not governed by the normal market mechanisms. The absence of profit-making aims, together with the diverse groups of stakeholders served by public sector organisations; further accentuate the need to demonstrate accountability to all stakeholders who might not share the same expectations towards these organisations. It has also illustrated how several dimensions of accountability are applicable for this study. In demonstrating accountability, this research investigates the way stakeholder engagement undertakings are practiced by public sector organisations as a process that enables the organisations' accountability to be further evaluated.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed stakeholder theory as a theoretical framework for the present research. An analysis has been carried out on the stakeholder concept, in particular the stakes of an important stakeholder, i.e. the community, in relation to services provided by public sector organisation. It also explores the role of power as a stakeholder attribute, which influences the practices of stakeholder engagement. Substantive studies provide a guide to conceptualising power in this research. In addition, several types of power described in the literature are discussed and applied within the context of public sector organisations. As power is socially constructed and depends on perception, a stakeholder group may be classified as powerful but still dependent on managers who determine the saliency of that stakeholder.

This chapter also discusses the notion of accountability and how the definition to date has been varied and complex. Several elements of accountability and a number of important elements are identified and elaborated. By indicating how accountability differs between private and public sector organisations, this highlights how the latter type of organisation is subject to mechanisms of greater accountability. Following the recommendation of Lindkvist and Llewellyn (2003) who propose that accountability should be merged with social theory, this study explores the possibility of using stakeholder engagement practices as an accountability process. Through engagement, elements of accountability could be fulfilled, thus enabling an organisation to make its accountability transparent to its respective stakeholders. However, this alternative mechanism is not aimed at improving the accountability of public sector organisations; instead this study explores engagement as a mechanism for accountability.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two presented a discussion on stakeholder theory and the accountability concept. The role of power in determining stakeholder salience was acknowledged and the significance of their accountability to public sector organisations was discussed in greater detail. The objectives of Chapter Three are to present a critical review of the literature on stakeholder engagement practices undertaken so far, particularly in the field of sustainable waste management and public sector in general, and to identify the gaps in the extant literature and discuss how the present research attempts to fill such gaps and thus contribute to this literature. Section 3.2 begins with the development of stakeholder engagement and its dimensions, and continues with a discussion of the engagement concept followed by a review of the motivations of organisations which underlie engagement, as gathered from the related literature. Next, the general complexities of stakeholder relations, more specifically in waste management systems, are explored in Section 3.3. Within the context of this study, the importance of engagement in advocating sustainable waste management agenda is then highlighted. Section 3.4 presents the gaps identified from the literature, followed by a summary and a conclusion of this chapter in Section 3.5.

The following section will firstly discuss the extensive body of literature on stakeholder engagement which attempts to describe how engagement is undertaken in both the commercial and public sectors, before focusing on aspects of stakeholder engagement practices in the context of waste management.

3.2 General Overview of Stakeholder Engagement

This section introduces the notion and types of stakeholders and then elaborates on what engagement entails. The significance of engagement for organisational practices is discussed, as well as the strategies that can be adopted by an

organisation in managing their stakeholders while acknowledging the significance of stakeholders' interaction between themselves and with the organisation. Several aspects of engagement are considered, including the levels of engagement and the criteria in ensuring effective engagement. This sub-section will elaborate on these aspects with a specific focus on stakeholder relations in a waste management system.

The role of stakeholder engagement has made impressive progress; in the words of Andriof et al. (2002, p.9), 'stakeholder thinking has evolved into the study of interactive, mutually engaged and responsive relationship that establish the very context of doing modern business, and create the groundwork for transparency and accountability'. Engagement has traditionally been a public relations exercise (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Whysall, 2004) as organisations are more concerned with how stakeholders *see* them rather than being concerned about *the stakeholders* themselves (Roberts, 2003, emphasis added). However, there is now a shift towards partnering and engagement activities that seeks to build bridges between clusters of stakeholders due to the need to 'answer to the simultaneous demands of multiple stakeholders' (Andriof et al., 2002, p.35).

An established framework that specifies the role of stakeholder engagement and dialogue is given in the Institute of Social and Ethical AccountAbility's AA1000, launched in 2005. In an attempt to develop a more comprehensive and robust standard on stakeholder engagement, a substantial revision process began in 2009 and the revised framework is due to be published by the end of 2010. By emphasising dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders as one of the central principles of good accountability practices, the framework specifies the following:

"...designed to improve accountability and performance by *learning through stakeholder engagement*. It was developed to address the need for organisations to integrate their stakeholder engagement processes into daily activities. It has been used worldwide by leading businesses, non-profit organisations and public bodies" (ISEA, 2005, original emphasis)

Previous efforts on stakeholder engagement research can be categorised into three important dimensions: activities, orientations and ethics (Johnson-Cramer et al., 2003). According to these authors, these dimensions, given in Table 3.1 below, influence the direction of stakeholder engagement researches by identifying the perspectives of engagement adopted by researchers from both practical and methodological aspects; this enables a comprehensive view of stakeholder engagement undertaken by organisations.

Table 3.1: Dimensions of Organisation's Engagement

Categories	Views on Engagement	Nature of Engagement Research
Activities	As a bundle of related activities in which organisation manages stakeholder group and its relationship with that group; includes communication, monitoring and explicit negotiation.	Understand the behaviour of organisation in managing each stakeholder relationship separately.
Orientations	Assessed in terms of: 1 Cognition, i.e. to which stakeholders does a firm pay attention? 2 Values, i.e. to which stakeholders does organisation give priority? These include envision of stakeholder orientation in terms of salience.	Understand how organisations assess relative importance of multiple stakeholder groups at the same time.
Ethics	The essence of an organisation's engagement lies in its moral quality and not in its behaviour.	Stakeholders are moral agents, thus it is important to consider the impact of the ethical quality of organisation's behaviour and decisions.

Source: Johnson-Cramer et al. (2003, p.146)

The first group, 'activities', includes the many activities undertaken by an organisation in managing a stakeholder group and its relationship with that group (Corley et al., 2001; Morris, 1997). These include disclosure practices, media

releases and formulation of stakeholder management strategy. The second category is ‘orientations’, which suggests that stakeholder engagement is a general orientation of an organisation rather than simply a set of activities assessed on ‘cognition’ or ‘values’ (Agle et al., 1999; Frooman 1999; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001; Scott and Lane, 2000). In terms of cognition, this includes exploratory studies on those stakeholders to whom organisations pay attention, and value-category studies which consider the stakeholders who are given priority by organisations. The final group of studies investigates stakeholder engagement from an ethical perspective by assessing the moral quality of stakeholder engagement practices (for example, Berman et al. (1999); Jones (1995); Harrison and Freeman, 1999; Jawahar and McLaughlin, 2001). The present study falls into both the first category (activities) and the second category (orientation). By viewing stakeholder engagement as ‘orientation’, the interest of this study is to assess the cognitive aspects of engagement in understanding stakeholder salience, analysed from the perspectives of both managers and stakeholders. In relation to this, the perspective adopted by the present study is to understand how prioritisation of stakeholders is practiced by the LGAs. Similarly, stakeholder engagement is also viewed as ‘activity’, as this thesis seeks to obtain a clearer picture of stakeholder engagement in practice in understanding the behaviour of the organisations by evaluating the challenges, the mechanisms used for engaging and the nature of engagement taking place.

The remainder of this section elaborates aspects of engagement, including the engagement concept and the motives underlying stakeholder engagement undertakings.

3.2.1 Concept of Engagement

Greenwood (2007) warns that the concept of engagement can have different meanings for different people. Several terminologies, such as ‘participation’, ‘engagement’, ‘involvement’ and ‘management’, are used extensively and interchangeably in the present study. It is therefore important to explain the

meanings of these terms. A definition of engagement as ‘processes that seek the views of individuals or groups on policies, plans or projects that may affect them directly or indirectly’ is given by TEC (2007a, p.6), while Johnson-Cramer et al. (2003) describe participation as ‘the degree to which open channels exist for stakeholders to express their concerns, voice their interests and thus, participate in the process by which the organisation formulate policies that, in turn affect a particular group’ (p.149). These definitions describe the avenues that organisations provide to their stakeholders in getting their voices heard. Although in other strands of literature, such as marketing, both terms signify different constructs, where engagement is cognitive and participation is attitudinal (Greenwald and Leavitt, 1985; Sherif et al., 1965), it is not the intention of this study to elaborate on the extent to which each term differs. Hence, both terms will be used interchangeably throughout and are referred to as *the acts in which stakeholders, both internal and external, are informed, and listened to, consulted as well as solicited for their views*. This definition encompasses a range of activities such as communication, discussion and dialogue, including related public or stakeholder meetings organised by LGAs.

Emphasised as a central principle of ‘good’ accountability practice (ISEA, 1999), several other researchers view stakeholder engagement as a developmental process necessary to enhance mutual understanding of sustainability and extend the limits of cognitive, moral and emotional development (Factor, 2003; Waddock, 2001). It encapsulates both ‘a process and an attitude or philosophy’ (Cumming, 2001, p.47), i.e. the process of involving and obtaining the stakeholders’ perspective about issues as well as the extent to which organisations are willing to change according to stakeholders’ wishes. To a certain extent, the concepts of stakeholder engagement and accountability seem to coincide with the established elements of accountability, i.e. giving an account and holding to account (Sinclair, 1985) as both encompass information provision (Stewart, 1984), giving the right to debate (Law, 1999) and involving social interaction and exchange (Mulgan, 2000a). Fuller detail of how both accountability and

stakeholder engagement concepts relate to one another was explained in the preceding chapter, which presented the theoretical framework of this study. Associating engagement with accountability is not new, as previous studies have established that the more an organisation engages with its stakeholders, the more accountable and responsible that organisation is towards these stakeholders (Greenwood, 2007). Similarly, engagement has also been seen as a mechanism by which an organisation can release its accountability to the stakeholders (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Neligan, 2003). Thus, it will be right to suggest that engagement would have an influence on the accountability of an organisation towards its stakeholders, although the impact on the direction of its effect on the organisation's accountability has not been thoroughly discussed in the literature to date. Viewed as a public relations exercise (Whysall, 2004) as well as an avenue for granting empowerment (Selman, 1998), it is therefore important to identify how those involved in this study view the concept and how different those views are.

3.2.2 Significance of Engagement

The Clarkson Centre for Business Ethics (1999) has produced a list of principles that summarise the key features of stakeholder management, as illustrated in Table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2: Principles of Stakeholder Management

Principle 1	Managers should acknowledge and actively monitor the concerns of all legitimate stakeholders and should take their interests appropriately into account in decision-making and operations.
Principle 2	Managers should listen to and openly communicate with stakeholders about their respective concerns and contributions, and about risks that they assume because of their involvement with the corporation.
Principle 3	Managers should adopt processes and modes of behaviour that are sensitive to the concerns and capabilities of each stakeholder constituency.
Principle 4	Managers should recognise the interdependence of efforts and rewards among stakeholders, and should attempt to achieve a fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of corporate activity among them, taking into account their respective skills and vulnerabilities.
Principle 5	Managers should work co-operatively with other entities, both public and private, to ensure that risks and harm arising from corporate activities are minimised and, where they cannot be avoided, appropriately compensated.
Principle 6	Managers should avoid altogether activities that might jeopardise inalienable human rights (e.g. the right to life) or give risks to that, if clearly understood, would be patently unacceptable to relevant stakeholders.
Principle 7	Managers should acknowledge the potential conflicts between (a) their own role as corporate stakeholders and (b) their legal and moral responsibilities for the interest of stakeholders, and should address such conflicts through open communication, appropriate reporting, incentive systems and, where necessary, third party review.

Source: The Clarkson Centre for Business Ethics (1999, p.4)

Principle 7 states that open communication, among many other means, may overcome conflicts faced by an organisation in managing their stakeholders' expectations. This will in turn lead to increased credibility and trust in the organisation by the stakeholders (Friedman and Miles, 2006) as well as transparency and accountability (Andrioff et al., 2002). According to the authors, the process of engagement has managed to create "a dynamic context of interaction, mutual respect, dialogue and change, not one-sided management of stakeholders" (p.1). Engagement is also able to deliver long-term value to both organisation and stakeholders via inclusion of stakeholders' feedback in strategic business planning (Cumming, 2001). Furthermore, by identifying and managing

stakeholders' concerns, organisations are able to avoid attracting negative publicity and increase their social capital (Burchell and Cook, 2006). The same authors also discovered that engaging has enabled organisations to react more effectively to stakeholder concerns and improve their relationship during the process. Engagement has also been recognised as a non-market and non-regulatory mechanism, whereby stakeholder engagement could complement market instrument and regulation in balancing the conflicting demands from stakeholders (Amaeshi and Crane, 2006).

As far as the public sector is concerned, engagement is viewed as a process in which people participate in the affairs of the state (Selman, 1998; 2000) as well as a way of fostering relationships between LGAs and local people (DETR, 1998) and adopting a vital role in building a sense of community (Kruckberg and Starck, 1998). Gregory (2003) demonstrates that engagement with stakeholders is not only a requirement in the public sector, but also highly desirable in providing services to the public. Through engagement, organisations can facilitate the provision of public services, whereby expectations of the services users can be determined beforehand and continuously updated during delivery. Engagement can also act as a mechanism in providing feedback for services delivered (ibid.).

The significance of engagement lies mainly in the benefits it brings to both the organisations and their stakeholders, as outlined in the following table:

Table 3.3: Benefits of Engagement

Learning	Identifying and understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the needs, expectations and perceptions of internal and external stakeholders the challenges and opportunities identified by those stakeholders the material issues of internal and external stakeholders
Innovating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> obtaining stakeholder insights to inform strategic direction and drive operational excellence aligning operations with the needs of sustainable development and with societal expectations
Performing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhancing performance developing and implementing performance indicators that enable internal and external stakeholders to assess the organisation’s performance

Source: ISEA (1999)

In relation to the benefits outlined in the above table, this study is interested in further exploring the first benefit – learning by looking in particular at the way in which engaging could be a means for organisations to identify, understand and manage the needs and expectations of their stakeholders.

3.2.3 Motives for Engagement

Drawing from the literature, previous studies have documented many motives for organisations engaging with their stakeholders. These include promoting empowerment, instilling change and reflecting the need to serve the public interest adequately (Bebbington, 1997; Gray, 2001; Gray et al., 1996; O’Dwyer, 2003; Owen et al., 1997). These motivations are not mutually exclusive since managers could engage with several motives at one time (Unerman, 2007). Further, Unerman (2007) has identified two general motives for engagement. The first of these is to transform business practices to be sustainable, both socially and

environmentally and the second seeks to win and maintain the support of stakeholders, particularly the most powerful. It is interesting to note that engagement can be motivated by being focused only towards those stakeholders who are eligible to exercise influence towards the organisation (Freeman, 1984; Friedman and Miles, 2002; Neu et al., 1998; O'Dwyer, 2005b; Unerman and Bennett, 2004); this implies the significance of stakeholder influence underlying the engagement process. Based on these studies that were performed in the context of commercial organisations, focusing engagement towards influential stakeholders is believed to maximize the importance of shareholders. However, there has been little discussion regarding the motives underlying engagement undertaken by organisations within the public sector. This study therefore hopes to provide insight into this aspect of engagement. Exploring the motives of engagement is important since intentions point to the group of stakeholders who are focused in engaging (Unerman, 2007), indicating that prioritisation is practiced by managers.

It appears that motives also vary between the types of organisation; NGOs, for instance, have very different motives for engagement from those of a normal commercial organisation (O'Dwyer, 2004). Whysall (2004) has discovered that, based on his analysis of media releases and interviews, stakeholder engagement activity undertaken by British retailers is mainly concerned with image building; according to Friedman and Miles (2006), the same motives apply to most organisations. However, it is unknown whether this is the case with public sector organisations, an area that is worth exploring further.

This overview of stakeholder engagement practices is followed by a fuller discussion of these aspects in the next section, in particular the strategies adopted by organisations for stakeholder relations.

3.3 Stakeholder Relationship Management

This section will briefly discuss the way in which organisations manage their stakeholders, including the strategies available as well as the importance of acknowledging the interaction amongst stakeholders and between a stakeholder and the organisation.

A comprehensive method of evaluating how organisations manage their stakeholders has been developed by Johnson-Cramer et al., (2003). These authors propose that the terms ‘procedural’ and ‘substantive’ should be applied in deciding the approach and the quality of an organisation’s management of its stakeholder relationships. ‘Procedural’ refers to ‘how managers formulate and implement stakeholder directed policies (p.148) while ‘substantive’ concerns the ‘moral quality of those behaviours and policies’ (p.148). Both procedural and substantive action considers the management of a group of stakeholders simultaneously with that of several groups of stakeholders. The same authors also recommend the use of this stakeholder management matrix in assessing the stakeholder management approach of an organisation, presented as Table 3.4 below:

Table 3.4: Aspects of Stakeholder Engagement Approach

LOCUS OF ACTION					
WITHIN			ACROSS		
QUALITY OF ACTION	PROCEDURAL	Central concern:		Central concern:	
		Process issues <i>within</i> relationships		Process issues <i>across</i> relationships	
		Questions:		Questions:	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">What kinds of processes exist for managing each stakeholder relationship?How do these processes facilitate information exchange?		<ul style="list-style-type: none">What processes exist to integrate stakeholder interests?Do these integrating mechanisms permit multiple voices to be heard?	
	SUBSTANTIVE	Central concern:		Central concern:	
		Legitimacy of actions <i>within</i> relationship		Legitimacy of actions <i>towards</i> all stakeholders	
		Questions:		Questions:	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do actions respect stakeholder rights?Does the organisation minimise the harm inflicted on a stakeholder group?Are actions honest? Opportunistic?		<ul style="list-style-type: none">How balanced are policies across stakeholders?Is the distribution of goods fair?	

Source: Johnson-Cramer et al. (2003, p.148)

The present study’s analysis of stakeholder relationships observed in the LGAs is based on this matrix. With several groups of stakeholders included in this study, the researcher is interested in evaluating the ways in which an organisation treats each group simultaneously by focusing in particular on the element of power underlying each stakeholder group; the aim is also to assess the types of power present in each stakeholder group and how a particular type of power influences the stakeholder engagement process discussed in the preceding chapter; the interest of the study will then refer to the shaded area of the above table – the procedural-across relationship.

Johnson-Cramer et al., (2003) specify two factors that play an important role in the procedural-across relationship: ‘representation’ and ‘contest’. Representation

refers to ‘the extent to which multiple stakeholders have some degree of representation when decisions that affect multiple groups are being made’ (p.150) and contest denotes ‘the degree of contest between the multiple point of views’ (p.150).

3.3.1 Whom to Engage

The diverse needs and demands of various groups of stakeholders result in the need for the organisation to consider the multiple interactions between them (Rowley, 1997). The complex interactions between stakeholders, termed ‘stakeholder multiplicity’ (Oliver, 1991) acknowledge the role played by various parties such as consumers, governments and employees when studying stakeholder relationships. Specifically, the term refers to ‘the degree of multiple, conflicting, complimentary, or co-operative stakeholder claims made to an organisation’ (Neville and Menguc, 2006, p.377). As stakeholders are not independent of each other (ibid.), organisations respond less to each stakeholder individually and more to the interaction of multiple influences (Rowley, 1997). Taking all their concerns into account and prioritising demands can be overwhelming for the organisation (Amaeshi and Crane, 2006). It is therefore pertinent to recognise that multiple stakeholder influences may appear in positive, complimentary or co-operative relationships. All complimentary claims made by several stakeholders may strengthen and reinforce the salience of any demand (Neville and Menguc, 2006). Blair and Whitehead (1998) have found that managers need to minimally satisfy the needs of marginal stakeholders while satisfying the needs of key stakeholders to the maximum.

Similarly, the interdependence of stakeholder and organisation (Cheney and Christensen, 2001) justifies the need for organisations to engage with their stakeholders (Gao and Zhang, 2006). Literature has widely discussed how the failure to address expectations, needs and values of stakeholders can have detrimental effects on the ability of an organisation to achieve its objectives (Clarkson, 1995; Freeman, 1984). Another significant factor that organisations

should consider is the differences in the objectives of each stakeholder (Andriof et al., 2003), which further complicate the engagement processes and procedures. In relation to this, Cordano et al. (2004) suggest that the significant variability of individuals between and within stakeholder groups is an important factor to be taken into account by an organisation when engaging.

According to the AA1000 framework, the accountability and performance of organisations can be improved by learning through stakeholder engagement and the establishment of a systematic stakeholder engagement process. In deciding which group of stakeholders should be engaged, Agenda 21 recommends that the broadest possible participation should be encouraged. Furthermore, the inclusivity concept in AA1000 requires the consideration of ‘*voiceless*’ stakeholders, including future generations and the environment (ISEA 1999, own emphasis). However, the complexity of stakeholder relations, coupled with the dynamic nature of organisations (Crane and Livesey, 2003), has made it practically impossible to engage with every individual stakeholder in the decision-making process, and, in particular, to ensure a genuinely representative and universally acceptable outcome (Selman, 1998). This therefore demands managers to prioritise various stakeholder claims.

3.3.2 Engagement Strategy

As briefly discussed in the previous section, for the successful fulfilment of stakeholder strategies, organisations need to plan their engagement activities and programme appropriately (Crane and Livesey, 2003; Bendell, 2003; Clemens and Gallagher, 2003; Johnson-Cramer et al., 2003). Stakeholder engagement strategy entails identification and prioritisation (Mitchell et al., 1997) that should aim for an eventual process that must be ‘far reaching, inclusive and balanced’ (Amaeshi and Crane, 2006, p.249).

There are many ways of managing the stakeholders; this can as simple as developing a general strategy for organisations such as ‘offensive’, ‘defensive’,

‘swing’ and ‘hold’ (Freeman, 1984), detailed in the next paragraph, or as specific as recognizing the interdependence and coalition between stakeholder via network positioning (Rowley, 1997). Huse and Eide (1996) propose managing stakeholders by circumventing the control and power of stakeholders and using unethical tactics.

Amongst the early works on devising a stakeholder strategy, Freeman (1984) offers a generic strategy comprising ‘offensive’, ‘defensive’, ‘swing’ and ‘hold’ (p.131). These four strategic forces are very much affected by stakeholders’ potential for change and their relative power, as it recognises Porter’s five forces model, i.e. competitiveness, the relative power of customers and suppliers and the threat of substitutes and new entrants. An offensive strategy is adopted when the aim is to bring about the stakeholders’ co-operative potential and covers such strategies as changing stakeholders’ objectives and perceptions regarding certain positions or programmes developed by organisations. A defensive strategy is to be adopted when the stakeholder is perceived as a highly competitive threat with low co-operative potential. Within this strategy, an organisation would reinforce a stakeholders’ perception towards the organisation and allow stakeholders to steer the programme or activities so that stakeholders will view the programme initiated by the organisation more favourably. The third strategy, i.e. swing, aims to influence those stakeholders who are a relatively high competitive threat and cooperative potential by changing the rules of engagement or even prior decisions. Hold strategies should be adopted for stakeholder groups who are a low competitive threat and cooperative potential. This strategy includes an organisation doing nothing, instead continuing with the current strategic programmes.

Another distinguished work on stakeholder strategy is presented by Savage et al. (1991) who build on Freeman’s model. In their model, the potential for threat is assessed using the quality and durability of the organisation-stakeholder relationship, while the potential to co-operate is evaluated using the

interdependence factor between organisation and stakeholder, whereby the greater the dependence, the greater the stakeholders’ willingness to cooperate. Savage et al., (1991) then classify stakeholders into four groups and match a strategy for each group:

Table 3.5: Stakeholder Management Strategy

		Stakeholder Potential Threat to Organisation	
Stakeholder Potential Co-operation with organisation		High	Low
	High	Collaborate with the Mixed-blessing Stakeholder	Involve the Supportive Stakeholder
	Low	Defend against the Non-supportive Stakeholder	Monitor the Marginal Stakeholder

Source: Savage et al. (1991, p.65)

Supportive stakeholders include managers, employees and parent companies and the corresponding strategy is to involve them. Within Freeman’s model, this group is the offensive group with an ‘exploit’ strategy. An interesting difference between the models introduced by Freeman and Savage et al. is that the latter’s involvement strategy seems to benefit both stakeholders and organisations as opposed to Freeman’s ‘exploitation’ which implies that only the organisation would benefit from it. An important reminder from Savage et al., (1991) is that a stakeholder will not stay in the same classification all the time. Continuous assessment of stakeholders’ classification is therefore indispensable.

To summarise this sub-section on stakeholder strategy, the organisations’ classification and perception towards the stakeholders do influence the way organisations ‘handle’ their stakeholders. Although these strategies were criticised by Bendell (2003) as ‘unprofessional’ and ‘irrelevant to good management practice’, other authors appear to provide support for the use of these models in practice.

Having discussed the relevance of stakeholder strategy and its technique, the following sub-section will elaborate on how to evaluate the level of engagement of stakeholder groups.

3.3.3 Levels of Participation

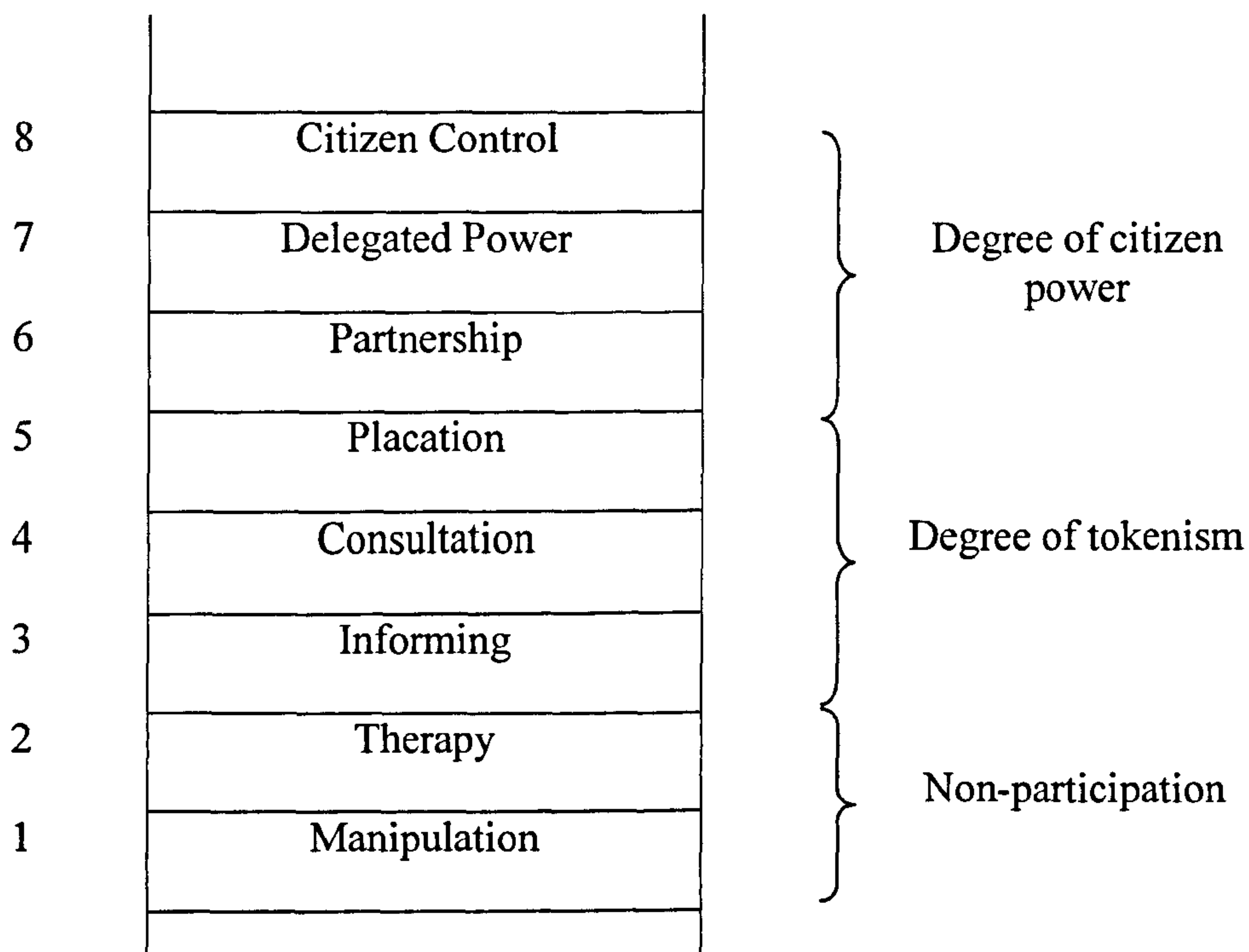
A review of the literature indicates that several authors have attempted to rank the stakeholders' participation in organisations based on their level of influence (for example, Neville and Menguc, 2006 and Harvey and Schaefer, 2001). Possession of all stakeholder attributes, i.e. power, legitimacy and urgency, has made the government as the most influential stakeholder of any organisation (Harvey and Schaefer, 2001; Neville and Menguc, 2006). Harvey and Schaefer (2001) have found that employees are next in terms of influence and customers as the least influential. This ranking on employees and customers is rebutted by Neville and Menguc (2006), who claim that customers are more influential than employees in their role as stakeholders to organisations. This disagreement reflects how the perceived level of influence of stakeholders changes over time. In their study, Neville and Menguc (2006) provide a framework for evaluation of stakeholder influence. Evaluation of influence is determined by several aspects, namely, (1) resource revenue (2) resource allocation and (3) power dependence balance. Further review of the literature indicates that, in general, there are two ways in which stakeholder interest can be addressed. The first is by balancing the interest of the organisation with the stakeholders' interests (Miller and Lewis, 1991) and the other method is by recognising the power retained by each group of stakeholder (Mitchell et al., 1997).

However, both studies fail to provide a comprehensive picture of stakeholder influence as they consider only three groups of stakeholders, i.e. government, customers and employees. The present study hopes to fill this gap by evaluating influences of other stakeholder groups collectively and by assessing their level of participation as perceived by themselves and by others.

Level of participation indicates the degree of stakeholder involvement and participation with prior researchers linking the level of participation to the quality of stakeholder involvement (Arnstein, 1969; Friedman and Miles, 2006). As participation can result in better-informed stakeholders as well as a more credible information base (Chess and Purcell, 1999), it is important to involve stakeholders and encourage greater participation. Conceptualised as a mechanism to promote ‘active citizenship’ (Rodger, 2000) and strengthen community development (Eguren, 2008), participation of all stakeholders, particularly members of the public, is integral to public sector organisations, for example, in their programmes and decision-making processes (McPherson, 2008). While Cumming (2001) has covered this issue from the perspective of commercial organisations, little is known in the context of the public sector. There has therefore been a broad neglect of issues facing stakeholders of public sector organisations in participatory settings. Insights provided by the stakeholders themselves will inform where a particular group of stakeholders are placed onto the ladder. The remainder of this sub-section will describe briefly several ladders of participation available from the literature before selection is made of the ladder to be used in this study, together with a justification for its selection.

A number of studies have attempted to map the extent of stakeholder involvement and participation (Cumming, 2001; Eguren, 2008; Macpherson, 2008; Tritter and McCallum, 2006). Within those related studies, focuses are on several groups of stakeholders, such as youth (Macpherson, 2008), community (Eguren, 2008) and health services users (Tritter and McCallum, 2006). In these studies, which seek to map the extent of participation of stakeholders within organisations, the use of ladders has been noted. Among the early works on participation is a study by Arnstein (1969) who has developed an eight-step ladder of participation, as represented in Figure 3.1:

Figure 3.1: Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Participation



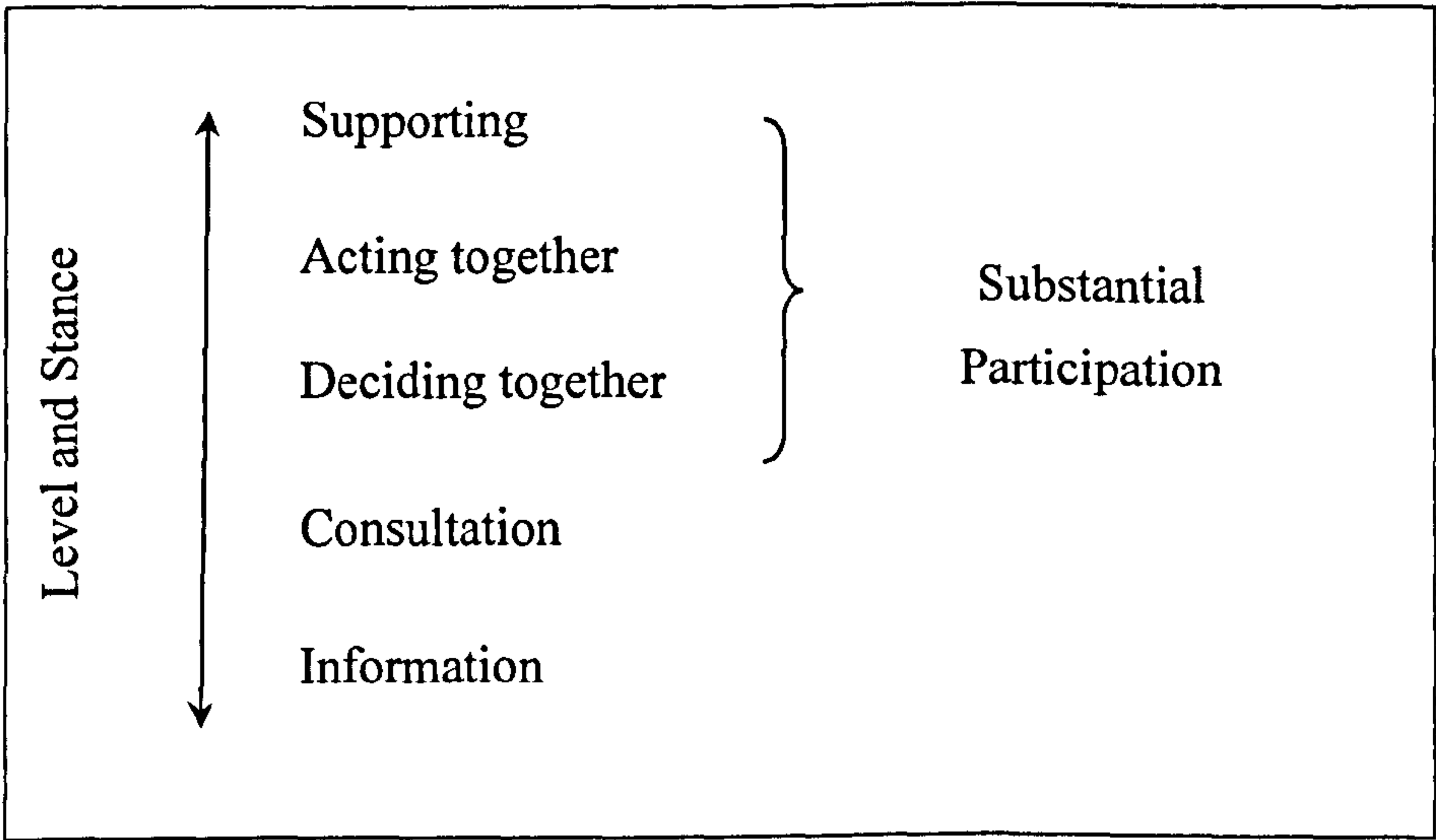
Source: Arnstein (1969, p.217)

The first two rungs of the ladder are classified as non-participative, and enable the holders of power to educate or cure participants through public relations. Informing, consultation and placation are considered by Arnstein (1969) to be the first step towards participation. There is, however, a degree of tokenism with emphasis on either a one-way or two-way flow of information. In the two-way exchange of information, the power holder maintains the right to veto and may not act upon or use the received information. The partnership stage involves some shared planning and decision-making, while the delegated power corresponds to a situation where stakeholders have sufficient authority to ensure that the organisations are accountable for any decision made. The highest level, namely, citizen control, implies a situation where stakeholders take control over the planning and decision-making. Applying this ladder of participation to several national and multinational companies, Cumming (2001) has discovered that engagement in those organisations is either at rung 3 or 4, at which stakeholders are only informed and consulted. Arnstein's ladder is criticised by Tritter and McCallum (2006) due to the over-simplification that participation is a categorical

term for power; the same authors also argue that participation is a rather more complex phenomenon whereby individuals formulate meanings and actions that reflect their desired degree of participation in the individual and societal decision-making progress.

Arnstein’s ladder of participation has since been applied and extended to map out stakeholder engagement in practice (Wilcox, 1994; Miles and Friedman, 2006). In developing a framework for participation, Wilcox (1994) revises Arnstein’s ladder of participation and simplifies it into five levels, as shown in the following figure:

Figure 3.2: Stance of Participation



Source: Wilcox (1994, p. 8)

Rather than identifying which rung is better than the others, as suggested by Arnstein (1969), Wilcox (1994) proposes that no one level is superior to the other as the appropriateness of levels depends on the circumstances in which engagement is undertaken. The information stage is the most basic level to start the participation process if the intention is to empower the stakeholder. However, Wilcox (1994) cautions that more than information-giving is required for absolute empowerment to take place. Gao and Zhang (2001) concur with this by criticising information-giving as a passive mode of engagement. Meanwhile, the second stance, consultation, is appropriate when the organisation is offering only choices,

and not allowing stakeholders to develop their ideas on what they want to do. Making a collective decision, on the other hand, is suitable when the organisation needs fresh ideas without requiring its stakeholders to fully share the responsibility to carry the decisions through. Level four, acting together, involves short-term collaboration with a more permanent partnership in view. The top level entails absolute empowerment by allowing stakeholders to develop and carry out their own plans. This, however, requires a high level of commitment as it is intended that it should be owned by and moved at the pace of those who run the initiatives.

Figure 3.3: Ladder of Stakeholder Management and Engagement

		Stakeholder management tool and nature of response	Intention of engagement	Level of Influence	Style of dialogue and associated examples
Degrees of stakeholder power	Proactive or responsive/trusting	12. Stakeholder Control	Majority representation of stakeholders in decision-making process	Forming or agreeing to decisions	Multi-way dialogues e.g. community projects
		11. Delegated Power	Minority representation in decision-making process		Multi-way dialogues e.g. board representation
		10. Partnership	Joint decision-making power over specific projects		Multi-way dialogue e.g. joint ventures
Degrees of involvement		9. Collaboration	Some decision-making power afforded to stakeholders over specific projects	Having an influence on decisions	Multi-way dialogue e.g. strategic alliances
		8. Involvement	Stakeholders provide conditional support; if conditions are not met, support is removed. The organisation decides the extent of conformity		Multi-way dialogue e.g. constructive dialogue
Degrees of tokenism	Responsive/neutral	7. Negotiation	Organisation has the right to decide. Stakeholders can advise.	Being heard before a decision	Multi-way dialogue e.g. reactive: bargaining
		6. Consultation			Two-way dialogue e.g. questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, task forces, advisory panels.
		5. Placation	Appease the stakeholder. Stakeholders can hear and be heard, but have no assurance of being heeded by the organisation.	Knowledge about decisions	Two-way dialogue e.g. workshops
		4. Explaining	Educate the stakeholders		One-way dialogue e.g. verified corporate social reports
Non-participation	Autocratic/cynical	3. Informing	Educate the stakeholders		One-way dialogue, e.g. briefing sessions, leaflets, magazines, newsletters, green glossy social corporate reports, or other publications
		2. Therapy	‘Cure’ stakeholders of their ignorance and preconceived beliefs		
		1. Manipulation	‘Misleading’ stakeholders attempting to change stakeholder expectations		

Source: Friedman and Miles (2006; p.162)

Based on Arnstein’s model (1969), Friedman and Miles (2006) have developed a model of stakeholder management with twelve distinct levels, as presented in

Figure 3.3 above. They classify engagement at levels 1 and 2 as bad practice since both levels reflect a pure PR exercise aimed at changing stakeholder expectations. In general, the lower three levels refer to situations when organisations merely inform stakeholders on the decisions made. Levels 4 to 7, on the other hand, contain some element of tokenism for participation, whereby there is no guarantee that stakeholders' concerns will affect any decision made although they are given the avenue to voice their concerns. Levels 8 and 9 allow stakeholders a certain degree of involvement in and influence on the decision-making process although the organisation still controls the ultimate outcome. The top three levels imply joint decision-making between the organisation and stakeholders.

In this sub-section, several ladders of participation are discussed. In evaluating the extent of stakeholders' involvement, this study employs the ladder of engagement developed by Friedman and Miles (2006). By mapping out the level of engagement adopted by LGAs from the perspectives of various stakeholders, the current level engagement of each group can be determined and further analysed. Friedman and Miles's ladder is used in preference to the others owing to its comprehensiveness in allowing for mapping of stakeholder involvement and participation. Both Arnstein and Wilcox's ladders have been criticised due to their oversimplification and missing rungs (Tritter and McCallum, 2006). Thus, the use of Friedman and Miles (2006), with more rungs on the ladders will hopefully enable the researcher to map the level of stakeholder involvement. Having discussed the ways in which extent of engagement could be mapped, the next issue to consider is how engagement can be 'meaningfully' conducted.

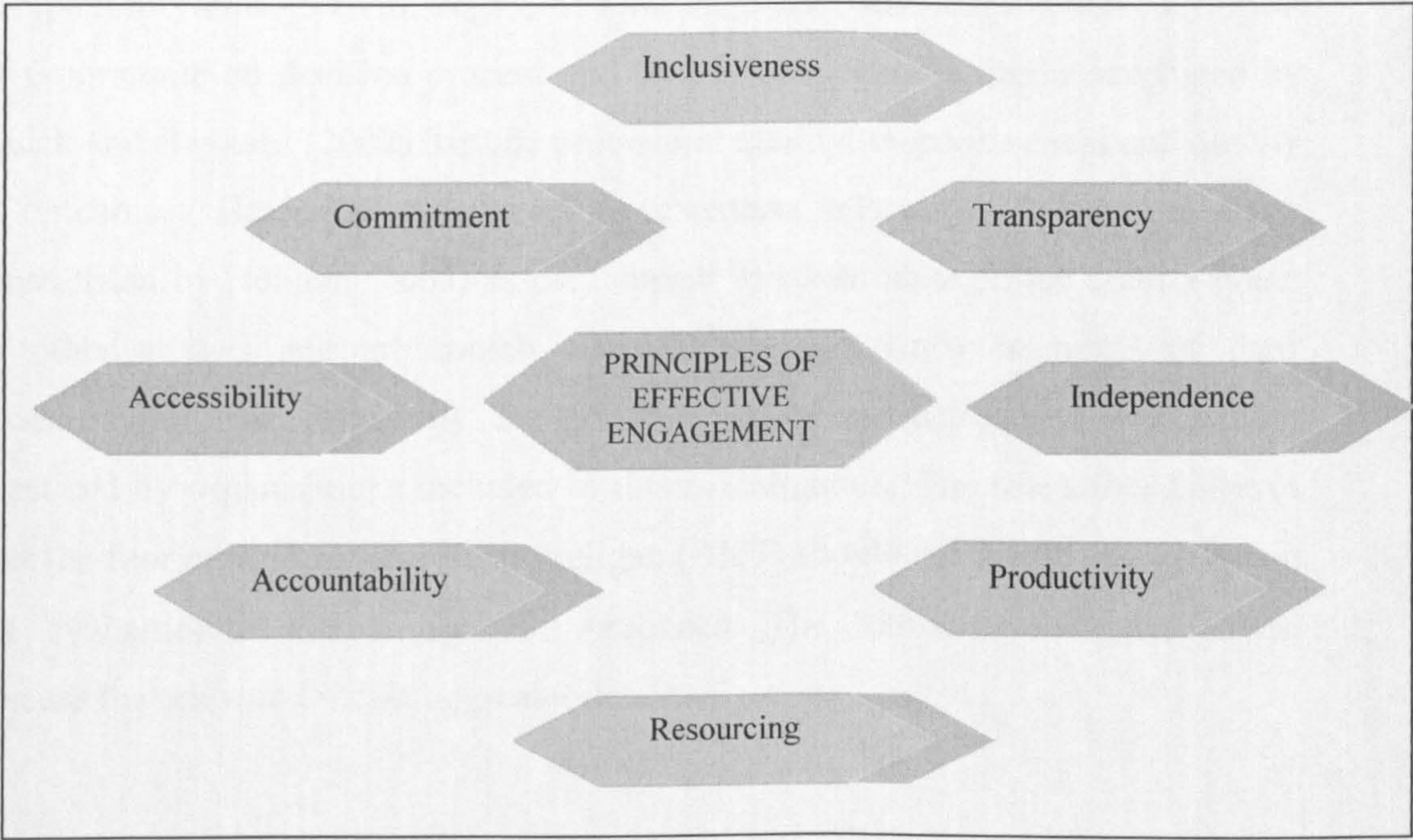
3.3.4 Effectiveness of Engagement

In evaluating the effectiveness of engagement, assessment can be carried out on either the *process* or the *outcome* of engagements (Chess and Purcell, 1999). Between the two, the emphasis should be more on the 'process evaluation' (ibid.) since a better process leads to a better outcome (Bayley and French, 2008). What will follow in this sub-section is a discussion on how effectiveness can be

evaluated as proposed by previous studies. It will then describe the criteria to be used in evaluating stakeholder engagement practices for the purpose of this study.

Drawing upon the review of literature, many factors contribute to a quality engagement and there are numerous ways of determining the effectiveness of engagement. The Environment Council in their ‘*Better engagement in the waste sector*’ guidelines provides a similar but more comprehensive evaluation of effectiveness of engagement:

Figure 3.4: Effectiveness of Engagement



Adapted from TEC (2007a, p. 26)

In addition, many academic studies suggest factors that contribute to an effective and quality engagement (Amaeshi and Crane, 2006; Bendell, 2003; Neligan, 2003; Petts and Leach, 2000; Ravenscroft et al., 2002; Zadek and Raynard, 2002), with several research projects undertaken in the public sector context. For other factors that must be present for an engagement to be effective, ISEA (1999) provides the general criteria whereby an organisation should be able to anticipate and manage conflicts; improve decision-making from management, employees, investors and other external stakeholders; build consensus amongst diverse views;

create stakeholder identification with the outcomes of the organisation's activities; and build trust in the organisation (p.107). For instance, Bendell (2003) proposes four important dimensions that should be considered when enhancing the quality of an engagement: inclusiveness, procedures, responsiveness and outcomes. Neligan (2003) suggests four criteria - representativeness, responsiveness, stakeholders' satisfaction and the extent to which there is a mismatch between stakeholders' objectives and expectations. Petts and Leach (2000) in their technical report for the Environment Agency recommend an extensive list of factors to be considered, including representativeness, effectiveness of method, compatibility of objectives, degree of awareness and knowledge achieved, impact of programme on decision process and cost effectiveness. Criteria developed by Zadek and Raynard (2002) include procedural quality, responsiveness and quality of outcomes. Having considered all these criteria, this study has opted to apply those listed by Neligan (2003) as they appear to consolidate all the criteria given in other studies and are mostly relevant for this study in terms of their measurability and objectivity for the purpose of evaluating the engagement practiced by organisations included in this investigation. The researcher believes that the four criteria developed by Neligan (2003) should sufficiently assist her in the evaluation of the engagement practiced. The following sub-section will discuss the relevant criteria in greater detail.

3.3.4.1 Representativeness

Representativeness, which could also refer to inclusiveness (Accountability, 1999) is concerned with an organisation's decision regarding who to include in the engagement process (Bendell, 2003). Many academics emphasise the importance of this particular criterion, which suggests that participation of relevant stakeholders in engagement activities is important in ensuring the effectiveness of engagement programmes. More importantly, this criterion assesses the extent to which the participants are representative of all stakeholders with a potential interest in waste management (Petts and Leach, 2000). This criterion is also linked to the credibility of the engagement process, as it is further emphasised that non-

representativeness could lead to a loss of credibility of the engagement process (ibid.). These authors also argue that the key question in this respect is the need to consider whether views gathered could be considered as representative of the views of the majority who are not direct participants. This calls for a distinction to be made between representation and representativeness, whereby engagement should seek to achieve the input of a range of representative interests, rather than of representatives if the purpose is to understand the range of views that may exist in a community and if these are to influence the decisions (Petts, 2000). This range of representative interests exists naturally in any community, including religious, educational and environmental communities (Petts and Leach, 2000).

3.3.4.2 Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the degree to which various parties respond to engagement (Bendell, 2003) and the way organisations deal with their stakeholders' views (Zadek and Raynard, 2002).

3.3.4.3 Stakeholder's Satisfaction

Engagement will only be effective if stakeholders are satisfied with the level of participation at which they are involved (Wilcox, 1994). In relation to this, Strong *et al.* (2001) suggest three important features for stakeholder satisfaction, i.e. 'THE' rules: timeliness, honesty and empathy. Timeliness of communication relates to the extent of management's responsiveness to performance that does not meet expectations; honesty evaluates whether or not the organisation sets out expectations for performance and assessment prior to exchanges; while empathy is the perception of the stakeholders of the gap between expectation and performance. Management often overlooks the interdependencies amongst stakeholders, as satisfaction of one stakeholder group is influenced by satisfaction of other groups (ibid.). The same authors also emphasise the significance of community and relationship-building activities in ensuring stakeholder satisfaction. They come to a rather oversimplified conclusion that managers are

able to satisfy several groups of stakeholders simultaneously by merely maintaining a constant level of communication. However, the researcher argues that a greater effort should be made to satisfy the stakeholders, as communication may be insufficient; managers should acknowledge that the expectations of diverse groups of stakeholders differ. Some groups of stakeholders may expect more from an organisation in comparison with other groups - for instance a more powerful stakeholder may demand more information than the less powerful (Georgakopoulos and Thomson, 2008).

3.3.4.4 Mismatch of Stakeholder Objectives and Expectations

Satisfaction also relates to the level of stakeholders' expectations and the organisation's ability to meet those expectations, as any mismatch may impede successful engagement (Taylor, 1993). The greater the mismatch between stakeholder objectives and expectations, the less effective the engagements are.

This discussion of the way in which engagement can be evaluated is followed by an assessment of how engagement is undertaken. Four criteria are applied as indicators of the effectiveness of engagement: representativeness, responsiveness, stakeholder satisfaction and mismatch between stakeholders' objectives and expectations. This evaluation is presented in Chapter Five, Section 5.3.6.

3.3.5 Challenges to Engagement

This sub-section considers some of the key barriers to participation as identified in the literature. Several of these include regulatory constraints and poor execution of engagement methods (Hartley and Wood, 2005). Other factors such as the nature of ‘voiceless’ stakeholders, including the future generation and the environment, make engaging difficult (Unerman and Bennett, 2004). For these stakeholders, engagement can only be undertaken with other stakeholders acting as their proxies whose interest may not coincide with the interest of the original stakeholder (Unerman and O’Dwyer, 2006). Further, Petts and Leach (2000), in their technical report published by the Environment Agency, cite organisational barriers as the greatest challenge in engaging with the public sector organisations.

Other difficulties faced by organisations in engaging with minority and hard-to-reach groups involve language barriers and cultural differences (Petts and Leach, 2000). The leadership element, by way of having a ‘stakeholder champion’, is therefore cited as a contributory factor in ensuring success in an engagement programme (Gable and Shireman, 2005). This stakeholder champion should be a person who is respected, has credibility, is unafraid to speak honestly about consequences and who is able to deliver bad news or bold recommendations whenever necessary. Gable and Shiremen (2005) also recommend that an organisation should have a stakeholder team with broad representation from various departments within the organisation, i.e. marketing, communication, operations, environmental and governmental affairs, human resources and investor relations.

Having discussed the various aspects that contribute to stakeholder engagement practices from the literature, Section 3.4 that follows will explore the stakeholder relationship in waste management systems and identify the wide range of stakeholders that LGAs, as waste management entities, need to serve.

3.4 Stakeholder Relationships in Waste Management

A general requirement for LGAs to engage with stakeholders in the waste management is given in the Waste and Emissions Trading Act (2003) which stipulates that their obligation is to ‘consult anyone and their representatives with interest and those affected in the area of waste disposal authorities’ (Section 27(2)(a-c)). A more detailed guideline on engagement is provided by the Waste Strategy specifying who, when and how to involve communities and stakeholders. Apart from the Waste Strategy, TEC produces several guidelines (TEC, 2003; TEC 2007a; TEC, 2007b) to improve engagement in the waste sector.

3.4.1 Stakeholders in Waste Management

As in other industries, stakeholder relations are important in waste management systems due to the interdependency between LGAs and stakeholders in reaching various objectives set by the Waste Strategy (DEFRA, 2007). It is, therefore, useful to identify the stakeholders in the waste management industry to which LGAs are accountable.

Table 3.6: Stakeholders in Waste Management

Stakeholders	Description	Examples	
Internal Stakeholders	Officers and members within authorities who should be consulted on the strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elected Members ▪ Finance Officers ▪ Planning Officers 	
Strategic Stakeholders/ External Partners	Represent particular interest groups and/or bodies that must be consulted for social and environmental accounting purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Defra/Govt Office ▪ Environment Agency ▪ Waste Management Industry ▪ Community Recycling Network ▪ Mayor of London (London Authorities only) ▪ Regional Development Agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Countryside Agency ▪ English Heritage ▪ English Nature ▪ Neighbouring Authorities ▪ Regional Assembly ▪ Women's Environmental Network ▪ Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth
Community Stakeholders	Individuals and organisations who are or should be interested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The general public ▪ Youth, religious and recreational groups ▪ Housing and residents' association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local businesses ▪ Chambers of Commerce ▪ Residents' Association

Source: DEFRA, 2007 (Information Sheet 1, p. 4)

A stakeholder in waste management is 'any person or organisation who has, or perceives themselves to have, a stake in a situation or decision' (TEC, 2007a, p.6). As illustrated in Table 3.6 above, identification of stakeholders that LGAs are responsible for involve a diverse range of groups as stated in the extreme right column of the table. LGAs need to serve a diverse group of stakeholders including communities, waste management industry, national NGOs and other relevant public bodies as well as other groups with a wider interest in waste management who may not have such an involvement with the specific place or area under consideration. An important point that is worth emphasising here is the central government and DEFRA are important stakeholder to the LGAs due to their extensive involvement in the formulation of policies in sustainable waste

management practices. As given in Table 3.6, both central government and DEFRA are identified as strategic stakeholders or external partners to the LGAs. Likewise, as stated by Wilcox (1994), a community is a complex group to deal with as it is made up of individuals who may belong to different communities with different needs and expectations. Thus, differences in needs and opinions may therefore emerge from extensive consultation of various parties (ibid.).

3.4.2 Objectives of Engagement

Related guidelines (DEFRA, 2007; TEC, 2003; TEC, 2007a; TEC, 2007b) specify several reasons for the waste sector to conduct engagement, benefiting both LGAs and their stakeholders. These include (i) sharing ownership of waste issues (ii) informing a decision (iii) reducing or preventing conflict (iv) complying with the requirements of legislation and (v) improving governance and social cohesion (TEC, 2007a, p.11). There are four stages or levels of engagement in the waste management context, namely, informing, consulting, involving and partnering (DEFRA, 2007). Each could be undertaken with its corresponding objectives and output, as shown in Table 3.7 below:

Table 3.7: Objectives of Engagement

Engagement Stages	Objective	Output
Informing	To provide stakeholders and/or the public with information, to increase understanding and awareness about a particular strategy, process or proposal	Improved public understanding
Consulting	To obtain feedback and constructive comments from the public on a draft strategy or proposal	Critical comments and alternatives for a particular proposal
Involving	To work directly with the public, constructively discussing issues and eliciting views, with the aim of ensuring that public concerns and values are fully understood and public knowledge gathered	A detailed understanding of community knowledge, perspectives, values and preferred options
Partnering	To establish a genuine collaboration between public representative, technical experts and decision-makers. The aim is to resolve conflict over evidence, interpret expert knowledge, understand and explore opposing perspectives, solve problems and find common ground	Locally-sensitive decision making, conflict resolution, with increased legitimacy and public trust. Often a set of authoritative recommendations for decision-makers.

Source: DEFRA (2007)

3.4.3 Mechanism of Engagement

As stakeholder engagement covers ‘a multitude of practices where an organisation adopts a structured approach in engaging with stakeholders’ (O’Dwyer, 2005, p. 29-30), a variety of channels provided for stakeholders would enable their voices to be heard (Gao and Zhang, 2006). These include questionnaires, focus groups, open forums/workshop meetings, in-house newspapers, interviews, web/phone hotlines, briefing sessions (Swift, 2001) as well as internet forums (Unerman and Bennet, 2004). It is, however, difficult to identify the best method to engage. According to Chess and Purcell (1999), this should be determined by the stakeholders themselves rather than by the organisation. However, prior research suggests that face-to-face communication is the most effective (Nixon and Shapores, 2009; Read, 1999). Davies et al. (2005) observe that reactions received are better when the source of the information is trusted; they go on to suggest that

perhaps more trust can be developed via face to face communication. As for other means of engagement, printed materials such as newspapers, mailings and posters are effective provided they are combined with other sources, as multiple sources work best (Nixon and Shapores, 2009).

Guidelines on engagement in waste management prescribe that the techniques to be used in involving stakeholders largely depend on the main aim of the involvement strategy.

Table 3.8: Mechanism of Engagement

Aim of Engagement	Informing	Consulting	Involving	Partnering
Techniques	Door knocking, brochures, fact sheets, media stories, advertisements, stalls, websites, seminars, public information nights	Distribution of documents for comments, surveys, workshops, public meetings, area committees	Workshops, community consultative committees, deliberative polls, citizen juries, search conference	Deliberative forums, collaborative project committees, consensus buildings and conflict resolution.

Source: DEFRA (2007)

In their study on participatory process of dialogue, Hill et al. (1998) emphasise that an improved mechanism of engagement should enable organisations to mobilise their stakeholders, particularly those who are difficult to involve. With an appropriate means of engagement, stakeholders would be more receptive and more likely to participate. Similarly, mechanisms employed should also deal effectively with the minority group of stakeholders who are generally less assertive than other stakeholder groups. They also find that an ideal mechanism of stakeholder involvement is that with formal representation of stakeholders, such as a stakeholder-Board Committee.

This discussion of the various aspects of engagement, with reference to the waste management context, is followed in the final section by an identification of some of the gaps in the literature on both stakeholder engagement and in the waste management context, with particular emphasis on the role that engagement plays

in promoting improved public services delivery within a local government authority context.

3.5 Gaps from the Literature and Research Objectives

The purpose of this section is to summarise key findings from the literature and place the present study in the context of the existing literature and how it attempts to fill several gaps identified.

A review of literature indicates that stakeholder engagement practices have been considered from various perspectives including a dialogic approach (Bebbington, et al., 2007), an arena framework (Georgakopoulos and Thomson, 2008), a social learning approach (Bull et al., 2008) and Habermasian discourse (Foster and Jonker, 2005; Rasche and Esser, 2006; Unerman and Bennett, 2004). Compared with other theories, stakeholder theory has been used extensively in stakeholder engagement studies. Apart from a few researches such as those by Blair and Whitehead (1999) and Bucholz and Rosenthal (2004), only limited studies have been conducted using stakeholders in a public sector context. The present study hopes to shed more light into engagement practices within public sector organisations using stakeholder theory, investigating how engagement is being operationalised in several LGAs in England. It also examines the significance of engagement from the perspectives of both managers and stakeholders alike. In particular, it explores the way in which, power, an important stakeholder attribute, influences the engagement undertakings and the level of stakeholder salience. This study also attempts to link engagement practice and the accountability concept, with three main objectives, which are discussed below.

a. To determine the way stakeholder engagement practices are operationalised by public sector organisations.

In following this objective, the researcher is interested in exploring several aspects of engagement. These include the mechanisms used by the LGAs to engage with their many groups of stakeholders as well the challenges they face in undertaking engagement; it is claimed that, with so many mechanisms of engagement

available, nothing works for everyone, every time (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Cumming, 2001). The feedback obtained will inform organisations on what works for specific groups of stakeholders in certain situations. Other aspects considered in this study include the intentions and motivations underlying engagement. Additionally, understanding is obtained of how the various actors involved conceptualise engagement, after which an evaluation of engagement effectiveness is conducted. This can undoubtedly yield insights, as it is important to explore the process of engagement including the manner in which it has been carried out and the methods adopted (Chess and Purcell, 1999; Petts and Leach, 2000). Engagement is the only way organisations can determine stakeholders' expectations (Unerman and Bennett, 2004) and this is very significant in ensuring the success of the engagement programme (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Tritter and McCallum, 2006).

The views of stakeholder engagement offered so far are partial, in that they consider only a particular group of stakeholders, mainly the managers of the organisation (Bull et al., 2008; Kochan and Rubinstein, 2000; Petts, 1995a; 1995b; Weaver et al., 1999). Very few have evaluated engagement from the perspectives of several stakeholder groups (Hartley and Wood, 2005). Prior studies give a reminder of the importance of determining stakeholders' expectation in ensuring the success of any engagement programme (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Tritter and McCallum, 2006) since the involvement of stakeholders has a greater tendency to fail if there is a mismatch of expectations or of methods of engagement. Evaluating stakeholders' expectations towards the engagement and means employed by the LGAs is therefore significant in ensuring that both current and future engagements are successful. Interestingly, most of the discussions on stakeholder engagement and participation in the literature fail to give extensive cover to the expectations and evaluations of diverse group of stakeholders towards engagement. Thus, by compiling the perspectives of various groups of stakeholders, including both primary and secondary stakeholders in waste management, it is hoped that more inclusive views of engagement can be

brought together. The expectations of these stakeholders can be obtained and, most importantly, LGAs are able to determine the extent to which their expectations are met. Thus, research questions posed under this objective are: *“What are the mechanisms used and the challenges faced whilst engaging? What is the nature of engagement performed and how effective is it?”* By examining the processes of engagement by which the LGAs engage with other stakeholders and each other, the differing perspectives that surround engagement strategies and practices can be further explored. In doing this, the researcher can analyse the relations between the LGAs officials and their stakeholders, as well as the perceptions of everyone involved regarding their relationship with the LGAs and with other stakeholders.

The complex and contested relations between and within groups of stakeholders (Crane and Livesey, 2003), particularly in public sector organisations, offers a different understanding of stakeholder engagement activities within different contexts (Gao and Zhang, 2001). Only by understanding the influence of every stakeholder group can effective stakeholder management be possible (Reed et al., 2009). It is therefore essential to ascertain how diverse stakeholder groups view their level of stakeholder engagement and participation. Furthermore, as different stakeholders have their own unique set of claims, demands and objectives (Crane and Livesey, 2003), it is vital to gain understanding of their needs and expectations in ensuring effective engagements are carried out.

Furthermore, this study will construct the stakeholder theory and explain the stakeholder engagement phenomenon. It is also important to recognise the presence and eventual influence of stakeholder power in affecting the way engagement is performed, as well as being aware of the underlying prioritisation of stakeholders' demands and expectations. According to stakeholder theory, a more powerful stakeholder will be granted greater salience, which will in turn lessen the manager's focus on the expectation of the least powerful ones; this has already been discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two. Engagement activity will

therefore be influenced by the managers' perceptions of this aspect of stakeholder saliency. It is suggested that the flow of information may also depend on this perception of saliency. This leads to the second objective:

b. To understand the level of participation of various stakeholders and the relative importance of 'power' in the stakeholder engagement process.

The influence of power towards stakeholder engagement practice appears to be prevalent (Mitchell et al., 1995). A power imbalance, for instance, is seen as preventing any meaningful engagement (O'Dwyer, 2004). Although work by O'Dwyer focuses on engagement between NGOs and commercial organisations, it is important to appreciate the significance of the power element in the way in which engagement is carried out as well as how it is perceived by stakeholders. There has been little explanation of the mechanisms used by managers to choose between mutually exclusive stakeholder expectations (Unerman and Bennett, 2004). In this regard, Blair and Whitehead (1998) have previously called for a study analysing stakeholders' power in an attempt to understand more fully the process and strategies involved in effective stakeholder management employed by organisations (p.164). However, there seems to be very little comment within the academic literature regarding this aspect in public sector literature. The present study aims to contribute towards stakeholder engagement literature by addressing this issue and attempts to answer these questions: *"How do stakeholders perceive power? How significant are the different types of power in the engagement process? How do stakeholders perceive their extent of power and influence? What is the extent of stakeholders' levels of involvement?"*

The next aim is to assess the *outcome*, i.e. the results of engagement. This study aims to evaluate both aspects suggested by Chess and Purcell (1999), whereby the *process* part is addressed in Research Objectives (a) and (b), while Research Objective (c) deals with the evaluation of the *outcome* of participation. With regard to evaluating the *outcome* of engagement, the study explores how

stakeholder engagement performed by LGAs might have an impact on public sector accountability. This leads to the final objective of the study:

c. To identify how engagement may have an impact on the accountability of the public sector organisations.

It is conceptualised that stakeholder engagement activities have the potential to impact on the accountability of the organisation. While it is unknown whether engagement will actually promote accountability, literature suggests that it should to a certain extent affect the way ‘accounts’ are given by an organisation to its stakeholders (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Neligan, 2003). This study therefore proposes that certain processes, relationships and forms of interactions affect the wider accountability concept of the organisation due to a greater extent of responsiveness and reflexivity provided to stakeholder groups. Engagement in this study is viewed as an activity that provides a platform for an organisation to interact and communicate the organisations’ performance. Diverse engagement activities will differ in impact on the giving and receiving of accounts thus an understanding of how and to what extent engagement may influence the accountability of public sector organisations is therefore valuable. Engagement is also seen as a mechanism by which organisations can release their accountability to the stakeholders (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Neligan, 2003), thus, it is appropriate to suggest that engagement would have an impact on the accountability of an organisation towards its stakeholders. However, the way in which engagement affects accountability is unexplored in the literature. To consolidate all the issues mentioned, it is one of the aims of this study to investigate the extent to which the wider context of stakeholder engagement may improve and/or compromise public sector accountability in the context of sustainable waste management and answer these questions: *“How does engagement fulfill the elements of accountability? How does engagement affect the dimensions of accountability? In what way can engagement be a mechanism of accountability?”*

The role of stakeholder engagement in enhancing environmental sustainability is also acknowledged in the literature (Amaeshi and Crane, 2006; Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed and McAlpine, 2006). It has been studied in many different contexts: sustainable aviation (Amaeshi and Crane, 2006), water management (Lundin and Morrison, 2002) and air quality (Dooley and Lerner, 1994). In addition, many stakeholder engagement studies have been conducted in sustainable waste management contexts (Adams et al., 2000; Bull et al., 2008; Butler and Hooper, 2000; Colins et al., 2006; Petts, 1995; Petts, 2008; Petts and Leach, 2000; Powell, 2000; Tucker, 1999; Tudor et al., 2007). To date there has been little literature that discusses accountability of public sector organisations from stakeholder engagement perspectives. It is this aspect that this study seeks to fill by associating aspects of engagement with elements of accountability.

This chapter has focused on providing discussion on sustainable waste management in the UK and on stakeholder relations in that context. In particular, the findings of previous studies have been acknowledged, suggesting further exploration is necessary into stakeholder engagement practices in the public sector and their effect on accountability in public sector organisations. Such investigation, with particular emphasis on the role of power influencing the engagement process, requires a methodology. This is described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Having described the theoretical perspectives of the study in Chapter Three, this chapter illustrates the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research. The chapter also focuses on the choice of methodology as well as approaches to data analysis, and is presented in several sections. The following section discusses and justifies the philosophical foundations upon which the research questions and design are based. Section 4.2 reiterates the main aims of the study as well as the research questions that this study attempts to answer. The ontological and the epistemological stances are then provided in Section 4.3. Section 4.4 provides a brief description of the pilot study conducted, as well as issues arising from it. In Section 4.5, the criteria used for selecting the organisations included in this study are justified and presented. Section 4.6 then discusses the methods used in gathering the data, together with a description of how the data is analysed. Next, Section 4.7 raises the issues of enhancing the validity and reliability of the research, and finally, Section 4.8 summarises the issues discussed in the chapter by highlighting the importance of having a clear link between research methodology and research methods in undertaking the research.

4.2 Purpose of Study

As stated in Chapter One, the main aim of this study is to obtain an understanding of the stakeholder engagement processes carried out by LGAs. Chapter Two offers Stakeholder Theory as a framework that acknowledges the interaction between stakeholder groups and the role of stakeholder attributes in the management and prioritisation of stakeholder relationships. The research objectives presented in the preceding chapter are the central point of the study in which all data gathered and analysed offer contributions to these aims. With these objectives in mind, the next section discusses how the research can be undertaken

by, firstly, identifying the way in which the research process should be approached.

4.3 Ontology and Epistemological Stances

Many researchers (for example, Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 2008) have pointed out that salient features such as research paradigms, research designs, and methods of data collection and analysis are influenced by the research questions, by theories underpinning the investigation and by philosophical orientation. Although in many studies the assumptions about ontology, epistemology and the role of the investigator are normally not made explicit, acknowledging these assumptions are important in ensuring that the researcher is aware of the potential biases underlying the approach adopted before proceeding with the empirical work (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). With regard to this thesis, the assumptions in the theoretical framework are made explicit; how an element of stakeholder attribute - namely, power - affects the prioritisation process as prescribed by the stakeholder theory. This aspect of the stakeholder theory is then matched to the findings (and vice-versa) via an iterative process. In this regard, the main research method used in this study is based mainly on interview data supported by data gathered from the observation of meetings as well as extracts from document review. The remainder of this section discusses further the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning this study and how it has influenced the choice of method.

4.3.1 Ontological Assumption

The researcher's belief about the world is reflected in the way the research is conducted and analysed, focusing on assumptions regarding ontology, epistemology and methodology. As posited by Morgan and Smircich (1980):

‘....choice and adequacy of a method embodies a variety of assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge and the methods through which that knowledge can be obtained, as well as a set of

root assumptions about the nature of the phenomena to be investigated' (p.491)

The researcher, therefore, has to take a stand on what constitutes reality and how it is defined, constructed, explained and discovered, since understanding philosophical issues is valuable in clarifying the research design as well as determining the way in which data is collected and analysed. Two main paradigms in research, namely positivist and naturalist, can be contrasted in the following table:

Table 4.1: Contrasting Positivist and Naturalist Axioms

Axioms about	Positivist	Naturalist
The nature of reality	Reality is single, tangible and fragmentable.	Realities are multiple, constructed and holistic.
The relationship of knower to the known	Knower and known are independent, a dualism.	Knower and known are interactive, inseparable.
The possibility of generalisation	Time and context-free generalisations are possible.	Only time and context-bound working hypothesis are possible.
The possibility of causal linkages	There are real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects.	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.
The role of values	Inquiry is value-free.	Inquiry is value-bound.

Source: Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.37)

Ontological assumptions refer to the study of reality, which the researcher holds to exist, and question the nature of reality as perceived by the researcher. The positivist paradigm views reality as *‘singular, apart from the researcher’* (Creswell, 2003, p.5) and recognises the world externally, whilst the naturalist perceives that there is no real structure to the world, whereby the world does not exist independently from us. Thus, a positivist paradigm is only appropriate for researchers who *‘view the social world as concrete structure and reduce the role of human beings to elements subject to an influence of a more or less deterministic set of forces’* (Morgan and Smircich, 1980, p. 491). Naturalists, on the other hand,

view reality as *'subjective and multiple as constructed by participants in the study'* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.37).

Given that this study deals with the human experience of the stakeholder engagement phenomenon, the researcher believes that the philosophical orientation of the study is the naturalistic paradigm, as she views the world as a social construction which can only be understood by human investigation, whereby individuals give meanings to a particular phenomenon. The researcher sees the subject matter of the study through the world view of the participants, so to understand a particular social action, as the instrument in the data gathering process s/he must *'grasp the meanings that constitute that action'* by interpreting what the actors are doing (Schwandt et al., 2000, p.191; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Having explained the ontological assumptions regarding this research, the next section discusses the epistemological stances and their relevance to the current research.

4.3.2 Epistemological Stance

Epistemological assumptions refer to the manner in which the researcher views the world and conveys this understanding as knowledge to others (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). As stated in Table 4.1, the positivist views the researcher as independent of those being researched, while the naturalist believes that the researcher interacts with the researched (Creswell, 2003). The epistemological stance adopted in this study is based on the assertion that understanding emerges internally, requiring interaction and proximity between the researcher and the researched. By assuming that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation, there is no objective knowledge independent of rational human beings. This therefore demands the researcher to see the world from the view of the subjects s/he is studying (Flick, 2006). According to Blumer (1969), this perspective is based on three basic premises:

- i) Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that these have for them.
- ii) The meaning of such objects and events is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellow human beings.
- iii) The meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the objects and events he encounters.

Hence, in developing interpretations about the phenomenon, the researcher is involved with what is being researched. These interpretations, obtained from reconstructing the subject's viewpoints, are then used to analyse the social contexts.

It has been envisaged that qualitative research would be the most suitable methodology as it yields richer data to provide a holistic and in-depth picture of the dynamics of stakeholder interactions. In this regard, qualitative methods can be used '*to gain novel and fresh slants*' on aspects about which '*little is yet known*' or which '*quite a bit is already known*' or too intricate or '*difficult to convey with quantitative methods*' (Strauss and Corbin, 2008, p.19). Qualitative research is also suitable for stakeholder theory, as a theoretical framework which stresses the importance of studying real people in naturalistic settings (Strauss and Corbin, 2008) or in 'real life' situations or contexts, which will enable the development of detail about an individual or place with a high degree of involvement in the actual experience of the participants (Creswell, 2003). Further, as it is 'evolving rather than tightly prefigured' (ibid, p.180), observations emerging at certain stages in the research may provide further direction for the study, forming reflexivity between the researcher and the researched (Flick, 2006). It also enables the researcher to demonstrate a variety of perspectives, particularly the respondent's knowledge and practices as well as the subjective meaning of certain situations (ibid., p.6), in this case, how stakeholder engagement practices and the notion of accountability are viewed and conceptualised by the respondents. Furthermore, objective measurement of stakeholder attributes using quantitative methods is

“very difficult and also perhaps unnecessary, given that managers will respond to their perceptions of stakeholder influence, not any objective measurement outside their perception” (Harvey and Schaefer, 2001, p. 254).

Having discussed the ontological and epistemological stances of this research, the following section presents the pilot study conducted before the empirical data was collected for the research itself. More importantly, the discussion revolves around the issues ascertained during the study and how they influenced the actual data collection process.

4.4 Lessons from Pilot Study

In refining the data collection plan, a pilot study was performed for two weeks in March, 2008. The main purpose of this was to obtain a broader insight into stakeholder engagement practices in waste management, covering both substantive and methodological aspects of the actual study. For the pilot study, three methods were employed in gathering the data: interview, document review and an observation of a meeting. The same methods were employed for the actual cases of LGAs included in the present research.

The pilot study covered a single LGA, i.e. a county council located in the East Midlands, England (referred as County Council A). In selecting County Council A as the pilot case, factors suggested by Yin (2003, p.79) - namely, convenience, access and geographical proximity - were used as the main criteria. County A is located very near to where the researcher is based. County Council A is responsible only for waste disposal services to all areas within the county, excluding areas under the purview of the city council within the same area. Other district councils in the same county perform waste collection services. During the two-week period, an interview was conducted with the Regional Waste Manager of County Council A, which was later transcribed and analysed. The researcher also observed one public meeting organised by County Council A, as well as reviewing several documents available at County Council A. Leaflets were

obtained from the LGA's reception areas whilst other documents were made available by the Regional Waste Manager.

As the actual study involved gathering of data using three methods - interview, document review and observation of meetings - an important logistical issue derived from this pilot case was the order in which the three methods were performed. In the pilot study, the review of documents and observation of meetings were only performed after the completion of the interview. Having analysed the interview, the researcher believed that the reverse should be done for the actual study so that enquiries could be made on more aspects and/or discussed during the interview. This was due to the fact that issues identified during the document reviews and observations would influence the interview questions, providing more information about the actual conduct of stakeholder engagement practices. For example, issues noted during meetings, such as the turnout of residents, could be prompted during the interview, allowing for clarification and thus enabling the researcher to gain a better understanding of the operationalisation of engagement activities.

Another lesson learnt from the pilot study concerned the types of council to be included in the study. In the UK, unitary councils deliver the full range of local government services, whereas councils within a two-tier structure work together to deliver the full range of local government services. The smaller district councils deal with issues such as housing and tourism, while their larger counterparts, the county councils, deliver services such as education and social services. For waste management, county and district councils within a two-tier structure have different responsibilities, whereby the county councils have a remit for waste disposal while the district councils provide waste collection services. County councils therefore engage only with organisational stakeholders i.e. private waste contractors, while district councils handle aspects of engagement activity with the public and other groups of stakeholders. Unitary councils, on the other hand, perform both waste

collection and waste disposal functions and engage with all groups of stakeholders.

As the piloted LGA is a county council, and therefore a waste disposal authority, engagement involves only the private waste contractor and not the general public and other stakeholder groups. While the aim of the present study is to obtain a comprehensive picture of engagement undertakings with several groups of stakeholders, including the councillors, NGOs (non-governmental organisations), members of the public/residents, as well as the private waste contractor, it is important that the LGAs to be included in this research handled both waste collection and disposal functions. For this reason, the sampling basis for the actual study has considered only unitary councils, as opposed to councils in a two-tier structure.

4.5 Case Study as a Research Strategy

In exploring how the stakeholder engagement initiatives are undertaken by LGAs, the use of cases permits the researcher to illustrate the study in greater detail. A case study is ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (Yin, 2003, p.13). The use of this particular research method is deemed suitable considering the interpretive nature of the present study, which seeks to understand the stakeholder engagement phenomenon in its natural context with the belief that reality is subjective; it is a social product constructed and interpreted by humans and social actors according to their belief and value systems. Moreover, this approach is recognised as a dominant method since it permits rich and detailed description of a particular setting, phenomenon, organisation or event in raising questions and highlighting areas of concern (Cooper and Morgan, 2008). This assertion is further supported by Yin (2003), who states that case studies are mostly suitable when the researcher is interested in the “how and why questions of a contemporary of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (p.9) such as “how did this stakeholder

influence the way things are done” and “why is that stakeholder important”. The same method has been commonly applied in prior general stakeholder engagement studies (Johansson, 2008; Unerman and Bennett, 2004) as well as those undertaken specifically within the context of waste management (Bull et al., 2008; Hartley and Woods, 2005; Harvey and Schaefer, 2001; Petts, 1995a; 1995b) in an effort to better understand this phenomenon.

Compared with a single case study, which is ‘vulnerable’ due to lack of ‘analytical conclusions’ (Yin, 2003, p.53), it is argued that the multiple-case study is preferable as it ‘offers the researcher an even deeper and greater understanding of processes and outcomes of cases’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.26) and facilitates a ‘more powerful analytic conclusion’ (Yin, 2003, p.53). Furthermore, evidence derived from multiple cases is ‘more compelling and regarded as more robust’ (ibid, p.47). Recognised for its ability as a powerful means for independent corroboration of specific propositions, researchers have encouraged the use of several mini cases (Eisenhardt, 1991). The successful use of mini case studies has been widely reported in stakeholder engagement and waste management literature (Hartley and Wood, 2005; Harvey and Schaefer, 2001; Parent and Deephouse, 2007; Petts, 1999; Powell 2000).

In deciding the number of councils to be covered in this study, the researcher has taken into account suggestions made by scholars who support the use of multiple-case study. Yin (2003) recommends at least two cases, while Eisenhardt (1989) proposes four or more. Although it is beneficial to have as many cases as possible, the conduct of a multiple-case study requires extensive resources, and time is a particular concern for a single researcher (Yin, 2003). Following other research studies into waste management, which used four cases - for example, Hartley and Woods (2005) and Harvey and Schaefer (2001) - four LGAs from the Midlands region were included in the present study.

4.6 Criteria for Selecting Organisations

Recognising the importance of waste management in promoting the sustainability agenda, previously explained in Chapter One as the research context, this study focuses on the extent to which stakeholders are engaged in the promotion of sustainable waste management context.

For reasons explained earlier in Section 4.4, only unitary councils and their engagement with relevant stakeholder groups are considered in the current study. These councils should have the resources and the infrastructure needed to engage with their respective stakeholders. To restrict the scope of this study further, only councils in England are included. Although it would be valuable to include the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland authorities in the sample, these bodies are categorised as ‘Devolved Administrations’ and are subject to different rules and legislations from their counterparts in England.

In the current study, the main unit of analysis is the stakeholder engagement process and activities implemented in LGAs. The selection of LGAs is based on the recent results of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), a framework developed by the Audit Commission in 2002 to evaluate the performance of LGAs in the UK. It determines whether the services of a council are ranked as excellent, good, fair, weak or poor by drawing on a range of information sources such as performance indicators, assessments of corporate capacity, audit and inspection reports and stakeholder opinions. CPA acts as a scrutiny mechanism to challenge LGAs on the target set and to provide assurance to the community on the achievement of public services provided. This mechanism ranks LGAs according to four criteria: namely corporate assessment, use of resource assessment, service assessment and direction of travel assessment. As the fourth criterion assesses how likely the council is going to improve in the future, the first three categories are combined to give an overall star category, which reflects performance. The corporate assessment is undertaken over a three-year period and involves an evaluation of the council’s ability to lead its local community by clearly

identifying its needs and ambitions. As far as the use of resources assessment is concerned, this comprises five themes: financial standing, financial reporting, financial management, internal control mechanism and value for money. The third criterion that contributes to an overall star rating is assessment of services provided. Services are divided into two levels, 'Level 1' and 'Level 2'. Services categorised as Level 1 are those concerning children and young people as well as adult social care and benefits, and Level 2 services are related to housing, environment, culture and fire. In assessing these services, the national performance information and inspection judgments are used. Public satisfaction of services measured by performance indicators take into account their opinions and perspectives. An overall star category is given for each council, ranging from excellent, good, fair, weak or poor, 4 being excellent and 0 being poor.

The list of unitary councils to be studied has been chosen from the Comparator Tool Analysis provided on the Audit Commission website (<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa>), based on the most recent CPA results available to the researcher at the time i.e. for the year 2007, and published in February, 2008. In April, 2009, CPA was replaced by Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) which evaluates the area delivered by LGAs and their partners, including the private and voluntary sectors.

The rating used in selecting the LGAs is the Overall Star Category, which reflects the performance of councils as a whole. Based on the Audit Commission report, common features of good and poor performance partly entail how councils engage with their stakeholders, particularly the public, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 4.2: Common Features of Good and Poor Environmental Performance

The best performing councils	Common features of poor performance
Have good consultation mechanisms and focus on what matters to local people	Lack of focus on users or partners
Take a preventative approach to environmental management	Achieve low levels of public satisfaction
Use environmental services to contribute to wider sustainable aims	Act in a reactive, rather than a preventative, way

Source: Audit Commission (2006, p.29)

A total of four councils have been selected - a council from every ranking category, enabling comparison on the extent to which stakeholder engagement differs across the councils ranked as ‘excellent’, ‘good’, ‘fair’ and ‘weak’. To ensure the validity of the selection basis, a sample of the selected LGAs is checked against the following year’s CPA results i.e. those for the year 2008, published in March 2009. Based on the CPA for the year 2008, no significant difference is identified with that of the year 2007.

While the CPA provides many other ratings, the overall star category is considered to be the most comprehensive and provides the best selection basis. Nevertheless, evaluations can be made in relation to other ratings available, such as those on Waste. However, according to information provided on the Audit Commission’s website, only nine unitary councils out of forty-six are rated for their performance on waste. The unavailability of ratings on Waste for all the LGAs renders this unfeasible as a basis for selection. Ratings on Environment are also considered. This rating signifies the performance of a council in relation to planning, waste and transport. A review of the inspection reports on the councils’ rating for this service, published on the Audit Commission’s website, indicates that among the elements assessed in determining the rating include the performance of waste management, such as recycling, waste minimisation activities and the level of public satisfaction. All unitary councils are given a rating on Environment;

however, seven out of the forty-six councils are rated as 2 star and thirty-nine councils are given a 3 star rating. None of the councils is given a 1 star or 4 star rating. As the majority of the councils are within a 3 star category, there is no variation of councils' performance for inclusion in the present study. This decision has therefore been informed by principles provided by Strauss and Corbin (2008), who place emphasis on the need to look for 'similarities and variations among cases' as this will 'increase understanding of the concepts' (p.285). Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain the importance of including 'as much information as possible' (p.201) from cases to be studied. For this reason, the Environment rating is viewed as less useful as a selection basis.

Given the time frame for the doctoral study, the selection of councils is made on the basis of both the CPA rating and the convenience for the researcher. As a result, only unitary councils located within a seventy-mile radius from Nottingham, where the researcher is based, have been considered, to ensure that the researcher could observe residents' meetings (normally held at anti-social hours) and conduct interviews with the councils. It also guarantees that any data obtained from observations is drawn from direct evidence, since it is 'best to observe what actually happens' (Denscombe, 1998, p.137). Further, it enables the researcher to enter into the world of her participants and observe the behaviours of the relevant actors, allowing her to better understand the 'reality' of stakeholder engagement activities.

Based on the abovementioned criteria, the selected LGAs are:

Table 4.3: Selected Councils

Unitary Councils	Overall Star Rating
City Council A	4
City Council B	3
City Council C	2
City Council D	1

To further support the selection of these councils, it is argued that these cases are suitably relevant for this study. As highlighted by Flick (2006, p.66), it is important to use ‘relevance of cases’ instead of ‘representativeness’ as the sampling criterion for qualitative studies using case study as a research strategy. Representativeness, which is common in quantitatively-oriented studies, requires operational enumeration of the entire pool of potential respondents. Application of this criterion is only for those studies that aim to evaluate the prevalence of a phenomenon which is less relevant for the present study, defined as ‘evaluation research’ and aiming to describe a phenomenon in the real-life context in which it occurred (ibid, p.15). The current study is not concerned with population, and the desire to generalise (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) results in less emphasis on the principle of representativeness and more on the relevance of cases.

The relevance concept (Flick, 2006), or replication as termed by Yin (2003), should follow replication logic, whereby each case is carefully selected so that they either (a) predict similar results i.e. literal replication or (b) predict contrasting results but for predictable reasons i.e. theoretical replication (ibid, p.47). With this in mind, relevance of cases in relation to this study is concerned with ensuring that cases selected are able to provide comprehensive stakeholder engagement phenomena, both in terms in activities undertaken and the variety of relationship between stakeholder and the LGAs. Insights obtained from several exploratory interviews conducted with these four LGAs demonstrate that their engagement activities are relevant for the purpose of the study and would assist in

providing answers to the research objectives given in Section 4.2 above. The researcher therefore believes that the present investigation has benefited from a maximum variation sampling basis (Patton, 1980) in terms of the diverse engagement activities performed and the different nature of relationships between the LGAs and their stakeholders, providing the broadest range of information possible (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The extent of similarity between cases, together with an explanation of how they provide contrasting perspectives between one another, is provided in the following sub-section

4.6.1 Cases Included in the Study

As presented in Table 4.3 above, empirical data for this research has been gathered from all four LGAs, although only the first three cases are included for analysis purposes. During the data analysis stage, the researcher witnessed a saturation of collected data, reached when data is gathered to the point of diminishing return (Bowen, 2008, p.140), whereby no new insights are obtained, no new themes are identified and no issues arise regarding a category of data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Bowen (2008) warns of the importance of being rigorous, thorough and transparent in achieving saturation, particularly for those studies that are framed within an interpretive paradigm. He identifies the saturation procedures to be followed, with which the researcher has complied.

Having analysed the data from all four cases, it appears that data obtained from the fourth LGA does not add anything new to the existing data so far collected. Preliminary analysis indicates that findings from the fourth case (Council D) are very similar to those from Council C, contributing nothing new to the empirical evidence obtained. Lincoln and Guba (1985) termed this ‘the point of redundancy’ (p.235) which suggests that information obtained from a similar group of respondents may exhaust all available information, with the result that new information becomes progressively scarcer. Lincoln and Guba (1985) go on to suggest that whenever a researcher faces this circumstance, it signifies that the current sampling number should suffice, and thus further sampling cases should be

terminated. Council C rather than Council D is therefore included as it provides contrasting perspectives of stakeholder engagement in relation to the nature of relationship between the private waste contractor and the council. The researcher believes that this will provide valuable data of stakeholder engagement practices by LGAs. For this reason, data from three cases (Councils A, B and C) is analysed in the forthcoming chapters as it presents contrasting situations and activities, which is beneficial in providing a theoretical replication rather than a direct replication of study findings (Yin, 2003). Although the researcher planned for a four-case analysis, this modification is deemed justifiable, as it does not influence the original theoretical concerns and the research objectives, and by no means affects the rigour of the study procedures (Yin, 2003). The findings of empirical data to be discussed in the following two chapters will therefore only cover data gathered from the three LGAs.

4.6.2 Issues of Anonymity

An important decision faced by the researcher in reporting the results of the cases covered in this research concerns the identity of the LGA and the participants. As several respondents during data collection stage were assured of anonymity, it has been decided that all related information regarding the identity of everyone involved should remain anonymous.

Moreover, several other issues were considered in arriving at this final decision. At first, there appeared to be no sound reason for concealing the identity of the LGAs since the topic under study is neither controversial nor confidential; the researcher did not therefore intend to anonymise the cases. However, during the interviews with several respondents, especially the staff of the selected LGAs, several spoke only on the condition of anonymity. These respondents felt that they were able to express themselves more freely without fear or worry that their statements could be related to them. Some, for instance, had criticised the government and the councillors. The identities of all individual respondents have therefore not been revealed. Nevertheless, their job positions have been disclosed

as the researcher feels that job role is valuable in providing the context for the responses gathered and discussed for the purpose of this study. However, in particular LGAs there was only one job position - for instance, there was only a single Sustainable Development Manager of an LGA at a particular point in time. Even if the name of the individual was not revealed, it was therefore still possible to identify the respondent from the name of the LGA and the job position, and so the identities of the LGAs involved in this study have also been concealed.

4.7 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

In attaining the research objectives stated in Chapter One, this study has used several methods to gather information and data: interview with individual respondents, observation of meetings and excerpts from documents reviewed. As this research employs case studies, data should not be limited to a single source as case studies are more valid if they are derived from a variety of data sources (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, information obtained from different sources is also more valuable in counteracting biases that may be present during collection and analysis of data (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.234-235). For instance, the presence of the researcher in meetings may affect the behaviour of the participants. Yin (2003) warns of how the researcher's values and beliefs may influence the collection and selection of data, and may affect the way the study is analysed and interpreted. It is hoped, therefore, that the convergence of this information gathered by several methods has provided multiple measures of the same phenomenon, which will in turn generate substantial and reliable information (Yin, 2003) in understanding the larger 'picture' of stakeholder engagement practices in LGAs. Flick (2006) concurs that the integration of several sources of data allows a data triangulation that will enhance the validity of an investigation.

4.7.1 Interviews

Interviewing is the most widely used technique for conducting systematic social inquiry (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997). The interview is deemed as the best method to understand 'the reality' as it enables the researcher to achieve

information about social worlds (Miller and Glasner, 2004) which is ‘subjective and multiple constructed’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 37). The advantages of using the interview as the main data collection method have been widely discussed in the literature. Miller and Glasner (2004, p.137) draw attention to ‘the opportunity it provides to collect and rigorously examine narrative accounts of social worlds’, while Kvale (2007, p.144) comments on its ability ‘to obtain a privileged position for producing knowledge of a conversational world’. Moreover, the interview is considered necessary as a way to complement shortcomings of document review, such as the unavailability of documents due to confidentiality and lack of completeness (Creswell, 2003). Interview questions can be tailored to accommodate specific research objectives and may reveal certain aspects of study, which have not previously been identified, thus enabling related research areas to be further explored.

Interviews are the most appropriate method of collecting the data required for this study to understand the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of the stakeholder engagement processes and procedures undertaken by LGAs. The main focus of the interview is to explore respondents’ views on the aims of stakeholder engagement, the degree of ‘success’ it has achieved and the experience of the individuals involved in the processes. In establishing the impact of stakeholder attributes on engagement processes, the views and opinions elicited from the interviews assist in providing the empirical data. Interviews also uncover conceptions and enactments of the concept of accountability in determining how such a concept is internalised and experienced by LGA officials, and they provide the stakeholders’ perspectives on the same issue. Data obtained from these two groups allows the researcher to compare and contrast the views of respondents on stakeholder engagement activities undertaken by LGAs.

In this study, a semi-structured interview approach has been used as it allows interviewees some degree of freedom to explain their thoughts and experiences. Structured interview is not considered beneficial due to its main weakness in

predetermining specific answer categories, thus limiting the interviewees from elaborating their responses (Denscombe, 1998). Further, although unstructured interviews may provide more (but unfocused) information given by interviewees, they may not prove useful for the purpose of this study. A semi-structured technique by way of a 'conversational approach' (Powell and Lovelock, 1987) has therefore been employed to encourage respondents to recount their views in a relatively free way. Moreover, the aim of 'discovering' in semi-structured interviews, rather than 'checking' in structured interviews (Denscombe, 1998, p.113), coincides with the objectives of this study. In encouraging respondents to provide detailed responses to the interview questions, many on-the-spot probing questions are used spontaneously in order to clarify or amplify an account, enabling the researcher to 'continually clarify meanings' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 131). The ability to allow for the probing of thoughts and experiences of interviewees therefore makes adopting semi-structured interviews useful.

In selecting the LGA officials to be interviewed in each LGA, a review has been undertaken of the criteria for a 'good informant' prescribed by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). These include the need for the informant to have the necessary knowledge and experience of the issue with the capability to reflect and articulate. Following personal correspondence between the researcher and the LGAs during the exploratory stage, it has been discovered that the engagement activities are handled differently between the LGAs. In several LGAs, the waste management department decides and implements their engagement strategies and activities. In other LGAs, the activities are managed by a centralised department and organised by a 'stakeholder champion'. In view of this, relevant personnel, including the sustainable development manager, environmental manager, waste manager, recycling officer, engagement policy officer, neighbourhood or community officer and stakeholder champion, have been invited to take part in the interview.

As the study also seeks to map the extent of participation from the stakeholders' perspectives, and to obtain their opinions, it is necessary to interview several

stakeholders of the selected councils. Their views comprise the main source of data from the stakeholder perspective on stakeholder engagement practices. Both the primary and secondary stakeholders described in Chapter Two are included. For the primary stakeholders, views are obtained from community representatives and councillors, while NGOs and private waste contractors represent the secondary stakeholders.

Since the aim of public sector organisations is to benefit the community (Broadbent and Guthrie, 1992), it is logical to propose that resident communities are the primary stakeholders to be served and prioritized by LGAs. Obtaining insight from this predominant group of stakeholders is therefore pertinent. Views of primary stakeholders are sought from the resident association or community representative and the elected members, i.e. the councillors. Views of the councillors in selected councils are also obtained due to their important role in providing community leadership and a vital link between the local authority and the community (Local Government Act, 2000). Councillors who sit on the relevant committees in each LGA, including the Climate Change and Sustainability Committee, have been contacted for their views.

The opinions of secondary stakeholders have been obtained from the local NGOs. As they were established to represent the voice of the local community (Plowden, 1994), they play a crucial role in representing the views of specific groups of less economically powerful citizens (O'Dwyer et al., 2005a), including their views on engagement. The NGOs covered in this study are 'self-governing, private, not-for-profit organisations that are geared towards improving the life of disadvantaged people' (Vakil, 1997, p.2060). Efforts have been made to contact the locally-based NGOs as well as nationally-based organisations like Groundwork, Transition and Friends of the Earth in an effort to obtain their views on stakeholder engagement as practiced by LGAs. In selecting the NGOs to be included in the study, contacts have been established with the relevant NGOs present during community meetings and ad-hoc meetings organised by the LGAs. Many contacts are provided by the

managers of the LGAs, therefore ensuring that the NGOs included in the study are closely connected to the LGAs and able to represent their views on stakeholder engagement activities.

The private waste contractors are another group of secondary stakeholders included in this study. It was discovered during the exploratory stage that private waste contractors employed by Council C jointly undertake engagement activities with the council staff, while in other LGAs these contractors work independently. As waste management services are contracted out to private firms, they are the only group of stakeholders holding economic power who have been included in the study, illustrating the extent to which economic power might influence the stakeholder engagement process in waste management. It is worthwhile noting that, due to the context of the study, which is confined to engagement on waste management, other suppliers are not included. It is argued that the inclusion of waste private contractors is sufficient to represent the supplier group of stakeholders.

A list of interviewees, together with their expected responses and the corresponding research objectives to be obtained from each group, is given in Table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4: List of Interviewees and Expected Response

Interviewees	Expected Response	Research Questions*
LGA Managers & Officers	Operationalisation of stakeholder engagement process Challenges in undertaking stakeholder engagement Views on adequacy and effectiveness of engagement Stakeholder prioritization and the role of attributes Views on the impact of engagement on accountability	1 1 1 2 3
Residents' Association Representative	Views on adequacy and effectiveness of engagement Views on the role of attributes in stakeholder engagement	1 2
NGOs	Views on adequacy and effectiveness of engagement Views on the role of attributes in stakeholder engagement Views on the impact of engagement on accountability	1 2 3
Private Waste Contractor	Operationalisation of stakeholder engagement process Views on adequacy and effectiveness of engagement Views on the role of attributes in stakeholder engagement Views on the impact of engagement on accountability	1 1 2 3
Councillor	Operationalisation of stakeholder engagement process Views on adequacy and effectiveness of engagement Views on the role of attributes in stakeholder engagement Views on the impact of engagement on accountability	1 1 2 3

*Research Questions:

1. How do public sector organisations conduct stakeholder engagement activities? What are the mechanisms used and the challenges faced whilst engaging? What is the nature of engagement performed and how effective are they?
2. Which stakeholder groups are perceived as the most important? How does this relate to perceived stakeholder saliency?
3. How does engagement affect public sector accountability?

The data obtained from the interviewees assists in theorising the study in several ways. Firstly, the information relating to the operationalisation of stakeholder engagement provides an understanding of the nature and mechanisms of engagement undertaken by LGAs. This allows the respondents (i.e. the LGA managers) to construct the context (Creswell, 2003) by describing the aims of stakeholder engagement and which mechanism works best in each LGA. Secondly, perspectives provided by the stakeholders allow their levels of participation to be mapped, and in turn offer a fuller picture of the LGAs' intentions of engagement. Mapping is then made on Friedman and Miles' (2006) ladder of engagement, as discussed in Section 3.3.3 in Chapter Three. Thirdly, views from both the primary and the secondary stakeholders illuminate how power

and influence are managed and negotiated in practice. An implicit or explicit prioritisation of stakeholders may be evident in managing the multiple stakeholders with different levels of interest, influence and power. Finally, it also informs the extent to which accountability is affected by engagement practices.

4.7.1.1 Selection of Interviewees

Interviewees have been selected on the basis of two criteria: (i) possession of sufficient knowledge and (ii) adequate level of involvement with regard to issues under investigation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). All interviews with Council staff, councillors and representatives of private waste contractors have taken place in their work place. Apart from NGO3A, other interviews with the NGOs are held in the University where the researcher is based. The LGA officials who deal with environmental and waste-related matters have been approached for possible interviews. Officers dealing with consultation and engagement related matters for each LGA have also been contacted. Interviewees include Waste Managers, Recycling Officers, the Climate Change Officer, the Policy Officer and the Consultation Officer.

Interviews have been conducted with those councillors who are the portfolio holders for either Environment or Waste in each LGA. In deciding which councillor to interview, the researcher has consulted a list of councillors available from the LGAs' websites and compiled a shortlist of potential respondents. During her observations of meetings, the researcher has approached some of these shortlisted councillors. She has also sent emails to those who could not be met in person, introducing herself and requesting the possibility for an interview. In Council A, as well as the portfolio holders for Environment, the councillors who sit in the Regeneration and Sustainability Task Group have also been approached and eventually interviewed. For both Councils B and C, interviews have been arranged with the Head of the Climate Change Committee and the portfolio holder for Environment.

Contact with the resident association representative in each LGA has also been established during attendance at residents' meetings. The researcher has found this to be the most difficult group to approach despite assuring them about the confidentiality of interview and promises of anonymity. Out of a total of six residents' meetings attended in all three LGAs, only one resident in Council A has been interviewed face-to-face. Additionally, a Ward Officer in Council B has assisted in connecting the researcher with one resident on the telephone for a short twenty-minute recorded interview. No one in Council C has been willing to be interviewed, although contacts were made via the Housing Manager and the Consultation Officer.

Contacts with a private waste contractor in Council A have been established through their Waste Strategy Manager, who provided the researcher with three sets of contact details, although only one company has been willing to be interviewed for the study. Nevertheless, that company caters for about 75 per cent of waste generated by the Council; in the researcher's opinion, this should adequately represent the views of the private waste contractor for this LGA. The private waste contractor interviewed for Council B is the only contact given by their Waste Manager, who states that this company covers about 80 per cent of waste management services for that council. For Council C, only one company, identified as Company C, handles all waste management services through a twenty-five year PFI contract with this council. Although the researcher has approached the manager of Company C, he has declined to be interviewed, instead referring her to two officers from Company C, who have agreed to be interviewed.

A total of three representatives from non-governmental organisations have been interviewed with regard to Council A. A list of interviewees is presented in Table 5.1 in Chapter Five: NGO1 and NGO2A are social NGOs while NGO3A is an environmental lobby group. Regarding Council C, the researcher has interviewed only one representative of an environmental lobby group. No NGO representative has been interviewed for Council B; one vocal NGO worker had earlier agreed to

be interviewed but eventually declined to be involved in this study for undisclosed reasons.

4.7.1.2 Analysis of Interview Data

In analysing the findings of this research, the variable-oriented strategy prescribed by Miles and Huberman (1994) has been used in a search for themes that are common to all cases. This strategy enables 'pattern clarification' (ibid.p.175). They offer several tactics which have proved useful, such as contrasting and comparing, noting relations between variables, as well as identifying patterns and themes, a technique - termed by Yin (2003, p.116) as 'pattern-matching logic' - which compares an empirically-based pattern with a predicted one based on theoretical propositions, i.e. stakeholder theory and those mentioned in the literature. When a pattern coincides, internal validity is strengthened (ibid.), allowing the researcher to draw a conclusion on the phenomenon observed. As the present research is made up of multiple cases, the aim is to build a general explanation that fits each individual case, thus enabling theoretical replication to be made for sequential cases that are analysed.

Interviews typically last between forty-five to ninety minutes and, with permission of the respondents, are recorded and transcribed by the researcher for analysis. The transcriptions aim for a more formal written style, so ignored pauses, emphases in intonation and emotional expressions. This is permissible, since the present study does not focus on linguistic style and social interaction in which pauses, overlaps and intonations in speech interactions are less important (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). Verbatim transcriptions are coded by attaching one or more key words to a text segment. Priori coding strategies are employed which involve the use of theory and literature to develop categories to be used for the analysis. This procedure, also known as thematic coding (Strauss and Corbin, 2008; Flick, 2006), is based on the assumption that in diverse social worlds or groups, differing views are found.

The research analysis is an iterative and reflexive process, a significant process of a qualitative inquiry (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The data collection and analysis has been undertaken concurrently to ensure that data represents the subjective viewpoints of various groups of stakeholders who shared their experiences and perceptions towards engagement practice and accountability during the interviews.

Thematic analysis used in this study incorporates the hybrid approach, a combination of theory-driven and prior research (Boyatzis, 1998) in developing the codes. This enables the use of stakeholder theory and prior research as a guide for articulation of meaningful themes. It relies on ‘thoughts, ideas or perceptions’ and allows the researcher to ‘compare and contrast’ the data obtained from the cases (ibid., p.52). The first process involves listening to the interview recording, as well as reading the interview transcripts and summarizing the raw data from observation memos and extracts of document reviewed. During this process, the researcher has noted themes established in prior research that were present in the transcripts, as well as identifying additional key points mentioned by the respondents.

In the second stage, these key points are analysed thematically, whereby the researcher searches for patterns of experiences from direct quotes or from the paraphrasing of common ideas using the transcribed interviews. Similarities and differences between separate groups of data emerging at this stage indicate common areas and issues that differentiate the engagement practices between councils.

In the final stage, more data gathered for the classified patterns, using all of the quotations that fit a specific pattern, is identified and expounded on; these patterns are then combined into sub-themes. Themes emerging from the respondents’ stories are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experiences which the researcher can link together and use to construct a

conceptual framework of the data; this assists in the theoretical evaluation and interpretation of stakeholder engagement practices within these authorities. This method allows elaboration of correspondences and differences between the various groups studied. In this case, comparison of views can be made between groups of stakeholders regarding stakeholder engagement process and procedures.

For example, themes developed under the code 'Challenges to Stakeholder Engagement', include themes cited by the literature, such as institutional factors and stakeholder attitude, and identified from the transcripts. Within the theme of 'stakeholder attitude', sub-themes of 'reluctance to engage' and 'managers' attitude' are further developed. At this stage, any similarities and differences between the councils are noted and further analysed.

4.7.2 Observations

As realities cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), it is important for an inquiry to be conducted in the 'real world', dealing with 'real' problems and issues in an actual setting. Public and resident meetings involving face-to-face interactions between councils and their residents are therefore observed. Identified as 'the most powerful source of validation' (Adler and Adler, 1994, p.389), observation supplements the evidence of stakeholder engagement practices in waste management. Observations of meetings shed light on the operationalisation of face-to-face engagement and provide a greater understanding of the role assumed by different stakeholder groups, as well as the nature of dialogue undertaken during those meetings. More importantly, it may also reveal the balance of power amongst diverse stakeholder groups - for instance, the manner in which the meetings are conducted, possible domination by certain people present in the meeting, as well as how issues are treated during the meeting, may be noted.

A direct observation approach (Yin, 2003) is used for this study; the researcher is a passive observer in that she refrains from participating in any of the discussions

at the events or meetings she attends. Such a role, which Flick (2006) terms 'non-participant observer', has been recognised as an effective way of minimising potential biases that may occur in conducting observations (Yin, 2003) by following the flow of events (Adler and Adler, 1994). In this way, the researcher is able to work as an external observer, allowing sufficient time to take notes and reflect on those 'observed'.

Prior to the observations, the researcher has contacted the personnel in charge to explain her overall aims of the study and notify them of her intention to attend the meetings. Generally, no previous approval has been obtained nor is the researcher formally introduced at the beginning of a meeting. Although this may be ethically contestable (Lofland and Lofland, 2006), observation of this nature should nevertheless not violate any ethical perspectives in this particular context since community and councils meeting are open to any member of the public who is interested in attending. The majority of these meetings are 'public' and therefore prior approval has not been sought. On several occasions, the researcher is introduced by the LGA official as 'someone from the University' when this has seemed necessary. Apart from that, she has not elaborated in any detail to other attendees on her purpose of observation.

In selecting meetings to be observed, the main criterion used by the researcher is the agenda of the meeting itself. As 'relevance' should be the principal characteristic in collecting data (Flick, 2006), only meetings with waste management-related agenda items, such as the promotion of recycling activities or environmental education, are attended. Between three to five meetings are observed in each LGA. These include residents'/community meetings, public and council meetings, environment-related meetings and the Councillor's Forum. For every meeting attended, voice recorders are used and field notes made. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.39) suggest that 'the very act of observation influences what is seen', while Lofland et al., (2006) warn qualitative researchers to consider invalidating effects which result from the influence of the researchers' presence or

behaviour on the phenomenon under study. As a non-participant observer, Flick (2006) gives a reminder of the importance of ensuring that the observed are oblivious to the process of observation. Although the use of video cameras is allowed in some meetings, the researcher has decided against the use of such equipment as an attempt to limit bias resulting from her presence.

In observations, description of matters observed is important. As Patton (2002) states, the researcher needs to describe the setting that was observed, the activities that take place in the setting, and the people who participate, so that the reader can enter into and understand the situation described. For this purpose, observation guides recommended by Lofland et al., (2006) are followed in the present study. In addition, two concepts - namely, inclusive and continuous - developed by Bales (2009) in his interaction process analysis, are used in documenting and analysing the meetings observed. Categories are inclusive when 'every act, which can be observed, can be classified in one positively defined category' (p.77); while continuous noting requires the researcher 'to make a classification of every act they can observe, as it occurs in sequence so that their work of classification and scoring for any given period of observation is continuous' (p.77). Although no scoring is carried out for the observations, recording of matters in accordance to their sequence are adhered to. This includes documenting how the meetings begin, the conduct of the meetings, and how it ends. The researcher has also considered, as far as possible, the behaviour of all those present during the meeting. Similarly, strict conventions suggested in the literature (Kirk and Miller, 1986; Silverman, 2001), reproduced in Table 4.5, are followed.

Table 4.5: Conventions for Field Notes

Sign	Convention	Use
“ ”	Double convention marks	Verbatim quotes
‘ ’	Single quotation marks	Paraphrases
()	Parentheses	Contextual data or fieldworker's interpretations
< >	Angled Brackets	Emic concept (of the member)
/ /	Slash	Etic concept (of the researcher)
_____	Solid line	Beginning or end of a segment

(Adapted from Silverman, 2001)

Following these conventions, the researcher has noted her observations every five to ten minutes, documenting the details of the activity involved, the interactions between stakeholders and the LGAs officials, as well as exchanges amongst the stakeholders who attend the meeting. Any remarks made by anyone present are also noted down verbatim if possible. Among specific aspects that the researcher has looked out for are:

- (i) the nature of interactions between various individuals present in the meeting
- (ii) how specific issues are raised and consequently addressed by relevant LGA officials present (if any) during the meeting
- (iii) any particular instances when mutual decisions made are influenced (or vetoed) by someone else
- (iv) the way in which issues relating to waste are handled in the meeting (For instance, are the issues being considered viewed as a shared problem, or only regarded as a secondary concern?)

The observation schedule is constructed as shown in Table 4.6 below:

Table 4.6: Observation Schedule

LGAs:		
Date and Time:		
Name of the Meeting:		
Matters Observed	Researcher's Comments	Issues/Remarks to be followed up

The first column ('Matters Observed') includes items such as the description of the setting, a brief description of those present in the meeting, as well as the emotional tone of the meeting. The second column ('Researcher's Comments') incorporates the researcher's interpretation of the situation or matters observed. Any ideas or questions arising from the observations are noted in the final column and used to inform the later part of the data collection phase, i.e. the interviews with the stakeholders and the managers. This permits an emergent research design of the study by allowing it to 'flow, cascade and unfold as the researcher cannot know sufficiently well the patterns of mutual shaping that are likely to exist' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.41). Any reflections and insights are also recorded, insofar as possible, immediately after the meetings, since, as claimed by Lofland *et al.*, (2006), the quantity of information forgotten is slight within a short period of time but accelerates quickly as time passes.

4.7.3 Document Review

As a 'contextually relevant source of information' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.277), document analysis is necessary for the purpose of gathering more information on stakeholder engagement initiatives performed by LGAs. Yin (2003) stresses the importance of using documents as these allow the researcher to 'corroborate and augment evidence from other sources (p. 87). In reviewing documents, Rapley (2007, p.113) offers a reminder that interest should be on *the rhetorical work of the text*, how the specific issues it raises are structured and organised and, most important, *how to seek to persuade the reader* about the

authority of their understanding of the issue. In doing so, data is compiled from several relevant publications. Information on specific stakeholders, as well as any other stakeholder engagement activities, is important in order to address the first research objective of determining the nature and mechanism of stakeholder engagement undertaken. Further, review of documents such as public meeting records enables inferences to be made about the extent of stakeholder involvement and participation. Yin (2003), however, cautions that these inferences should only be treated as clues to research as opposed to definitive findings, as the documents are normally written for specific purposes other than those of the case study undertaken (ibid., p.87). Thus, information obtained at this stage is descriptive in nature and consequently provides bearings for the formation of interview questions. Such an exercise may also enable mapping of stakeholder involvement based on Friedman and Miles' (2006) ladder of engagement, explained in Chapter Two. The analyses of matters disclosed in documents are derived from the following:

- i) Environmental Policy
- ii) Climate Change Strategy
- iii) Local Strategic Partnership
- iv) Community Partnership/Engagement/Consultation Framework
- v) Minutes of Public Meetings
- vi) Leaflets, Memos and Bulletins distributed for circulation to the public

The documents have primarily been downloaded from the LGAs' websites as well as obtained from the LGA officials interviewed.

The review of documents uses thematic analysis in supporting theme identification and theory elaboration from interview data. Key themes, trends and differences of stakeholder engagement activities mentioned in the documents published by the LGAs have been extracted. Before a document is analysed, every page of the document is numbered to ensure that quotations extracted can always be traced back to their source should the need to do so arise. During the

review, relevant sentences are highlighted and extracts are then compiled in tabular format to facilitate comparison between cases.

4.8 Enhancing Validity and Reliability of Data

In maintaining the quality of a research project, two important aspects need to be addressed, i.e. validity and reliability. Validity refers to the accuracy in measuring a particular concept, while reliability refers to consistency from one measurement to the next (Creswell, 2003). These two aspects are normally more appropriate to investigations that are positivistic in nature compared with qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Several canons of soundness demand attention when responding to the validity or trustworthiness of a research project. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to these tenets as credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, as presented in Table 4.7 below:

Table 4.7: Maintaining Trustworthiness for Qualitative Data Inquiry

Canons of Trustworthiness	Qualitative	Quantitative
Truth value	Credibility	Internal validity
Applicability	Transferability	External validity
Consistency	Dependability	Reliability
Neutrality	Conformability	Objectivity

(Adapted from Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290-301)

The credibility criterion requires a study to be conducted in such a manner that ensures the subject is accurately identified and described in order for it to be ‘credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.296). This study has addressed this criterion by providing an in-depth description of the setting, i.e. the LGAs involved in the research, together with a detailed account of the meetings observed. An attempt has also been made to cover the situation - i.e. the stakeholder engagement phenomenon - in depth via observations conducted. The researcher believes this constitutes another technique

that adds credibility, which Lincoln and Guba term 'persistent observation', enabling the characteristics and elements that are most relevant to the issue to be identified and focused upon in more detail. Moreover, techniques such as member checks (ibid.) and communicative validation (Flick, 2006) are also used - the agreement of interviewees have been obtained together with the contents of their interview transcripts, further strengthening the credibility factor of this study. Such techniques result in a 'negotiated outcome', as the researcher aims to reconstruct the respondent's construction of realities (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 41).

Another construct proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is transferability, which demands the argument of how the findings of the present study will be useful to others in similar situations with similar research questions. This study argues that the multiple interviews, together with the use of several sources of data, are capable of significantly strengthening its transferability. It is believed that the probable range of information may provide the thick description (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) required for that purpose. For instance, in discussing the findings of the study, quotations from interviews performed have been included to help readers to formulate their own ideas and feelings about the perspectives of the people who have been studied. Similarly, a range of data gathering methods may corroborate, elaborate and illuminate the stakeholder engagement process in making more sense of data collected, resulting in 'converging lines of inquiry' (Yin, 2003, p.98).

The last two canons of trustworthiness, dependability and conformability, are said to be achieved when credibility and transferability are demonstrated (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This is also supported by Robson (1993) who claims that 'a study that is shown to be credible is also dependable'. As explained in the preceding paragraphs, methodical and planned procedures have been followed in ensuring that the credibility factor has been satisfied, which in turn guarantees that

dependability has been met. In the same way, the triangulation techniques adopted have ensured that the claim for conformability is met.

Reliability, according to Flick (2006), is concerned with two aspects. Firstly, it should allow differentiation between the statement of the subject and the researcher's interpretation. Secondly, the researcher must use an explicit procedure to recheck data from both interviews and observations. In this study, reliability is believed to have been met by following several recommended procedures for collecting data. For the observations, a standardised and strict convention in note-taking produced by Silverman (1993) has been followed. The procedure of maintaining separation between "concepts of the observed from those of the observers" (Flick, 2006, p.370), as explained in Section 4.5, has been known to increase the comparability between cases observed. The field notes separate 'Matters Observed' from 'Researcher's Comments', as illustrated in Table 4.6.

Regarding the interview data, the guide produced at the beginning of the data collection phase has been continuously improved to incorporate generative questions arising from previous interviews, as well as matters noted during observations and at the document review stage. This has allowed greater understanding of issues in relation to stakeholder engagement process and practices, enabling a more reflexive data collection process.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has provided detailed information regarding the methodologies employed in this study and their respective justifications. The methodological stance chosen for this thesis leads to the use of the case study in order to evaluate how stakeholder engagements are undertaken by LGAs and the way in which such engagement may affect their accountability. Data is gathered using a qualitatively oriented inquiry via interviews, observations and document reviews. The chapter also explains how these methods enable relevant data to be collected for the

purpose of achieving the objectives of this study, as well as how they relate to the ontological assumption made by the researcher.

An account of the organisations to be included in the study is included, together with the basis for their selection. Related background information regarding these cases is also presented in order that issues relating to the validity and reliability of data to be obtained can be discussed.

While this chapter has established the methodology used in this research, Chapter Five presents the analysis derived from all sources of evidence, including the interviews with both primary and secondary stakeholders.

CHAPTER 5

OPERATIONALISATION OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN WASTE MANAGEMENT

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data and analysis of empirical findings of this study. These are discussed in the following two chapters, with the current chapter providing the contextual information of the LGAs involved in this study as well as several preliminary findings of the study. The aim of this chapter is to address the first research objective specified in Chapter One, i.e. to understand the way stakeholder engagement practices are operationalised in the context of sustainable waste management. The remaining research objectives will be discussed in the following chapter. In Chapter Five, the researcher assesses the way in which stakeholder engagement was practiced by several selected LGAs, beginning with a brief discussion of the issue of the respondents' anonymity. Section 5.2 presents how the sustainable waste management agenda was advocated in all three LGAs selected for this study. The following section analyses stakeholder engagement practices as carried out by the three LGAs. Within this section, mechanisms of engagement employed and the motivation behind engagement undertakings are both discussed and interpreted. Section 5.3 also describes the barriers faced by the LGAs in their efforts to involve the stakeholders, followed by an explanation of how both LGA managers and their stakeholders perceived stakeholder engagement concept and activities. This section ends with an evaluation of stakeholder engagement from several aspects, namely, representativeness, responsiveness, stakeholders' satisfaction and the extent to which there is a mismatch of stakeholders' objectives and expectations. Section 5.4 concludes this chapter with a summary of the discussion presented.

Listed in Table 5.1 below is the list of respondents who were interviewed for this study:

Table 5.1: List of Respondents

No	Interviewee	LGA	Respondent Code
1	Sustainability Development Manager	Council A	Manager 1A
2	Waste Strategy Manager	Council A	Manager 2A
3	Procurement Waste Manager	Council B	Manager 3B
4	Waste Manager	Council B	Manager 4B
5	Climate Change Manager	Council C	Manager 5C
6	Waste Assistant Manager	Council C	Manager 6C
7	Strategy Assistant Manager	Council C	Manager 7C
8	Recycling Officer	Council A	Officer 1A
9	Ward Officer	Council B	Officer 2B
10	Ward Officer	Council B	Officer 3B
11	Climate Change Officer	Council B	Officer 4B
12	Recycling Officer	Council C	Officer 5C
13	Climate Change Officer	Council C	Officer 6C
14	Policy Officer	Council C	Officer 7C
15	Consultation Officer	Council C	Officer 8C
16	Councillor 1	Council A	Councillor 1A
17	Councillor 2	Council A	Councillor 2A
18	Councillor 3	Council A	Councillor 3A
19	Councillor 1	Council B	Councillor 4B
20	Councillor 2	Council B	Councillor 5B
21	Councillor 1	Council C	Councillor 6C
22	Councillor 2	Council C	Councillor 7C
23	Resident Association Representative	Council A	Resident 1A
24	Resident Association Representative	Council B	Resident 2B
25	NGO1a – Social	Council A	NGO1aA
26	NGO1b – Social	Council A	NGO1bA
27	NGO2 – Social	Council A	NGO2A
28	NGO3 – Environmental	Council A	NGO3A
29	NGO1 – Environmental	Council B	NGO4B
30	Private Waste Contractor 1	Council A	Contractor 1A
31	Private Waste Contractor 1	Council B	Contractor 2B
32	Private Waste Contractor 1a	Council C	Contractor 3C
33	Private Waste Contractor 1b	Council C	Contractor 4C

Altogether, thirty-three respondents were involved in this study with twelve interviewees from Council A, ten interviewees from Council B and the remaining eleven representing Council C. Generally, interviewees were supportive, although several respondents spoke only on condition of anonymity. For reasons described in Section 4.6.2 in the preceding chapter, the names of all respondents are concealed, instead using a respondent code as presented in the final column of the table above for interview responses referred to and cited throughout this thesis.

The respondent code contains an alphabet letter - A, B or C - that refers to the LGA with which the respondent is associated, i.e. Council A, B and C respectively.

5.2 Sustainable Waste Management in Practice

This section will briefly discuss how the sustainable waste management agenda was taken forward by all three LGAs involved in this research. The sub-sections introduce each council in turn, giving demographic details as well as other related information. For reasons stated in Chapter Four, Section 4.4, every LGA involved in this study is located in the East Midlands and is a unitary council responsible for both waste collection and waste disposal services in their area of locality.

5.2.1 Council A

This Council is centrally located with a population of over 273,000. It is also part of the UK's core cities group, i.e. those cities that have been identified by the Government as one of the powerhouses of the economy. The City is divided into twenty electoral wards. The Waste Strategy for the Council was first developed in 2006; it was recently revised, together with the Climate Change Strategy, and completed at the end of 2009. According to the officers, this new Strategy enables the Council to concentrate on waste minimisation and waste prevention (Councillor 3A; Manager 2A). The importance of waste management to the Council was documented in the Environmental Policy No. 4 with the ultimate aim of preventing landfill in the future.

The Council started their recycling programme with the introduction of kerbside recycling in 2000. Since then, over 65 per cent of the City is on a three-bin programme: Bin 1 for household waste, Bin 2 collects dry recyclables such as paper, cardboard, tins and certain types of plastics, while Bin 3 takes garden waste. With alternate week collection, the Council is now able to record around 35 to 40 per cent recycling rate and aspires to achieve a recycling rate of 50 per cent by 2018. However, recycling in certain parts of the city, particularly in the

inner city area, is still in a trial period and will only be rolled out later in 2010. The Council is still struggling to meet the recycling rate, its current rate being only 30+ per cent, which is still low compared with other unitary councils of the same size with a 40+ per cent recycling rate. Compared with these councils, the council is rather slow in implementing a sustainable waste management programme. Several factors, including the availability of incinerators and a short-term agreement with the private waste contractors, are blamed for the delay (Manager 2A).

The wide range of socio-economic profiles in the inner city area, together with the type of accommodation, which comprises mainly of flats and terraced houses with small backyards, are cited as two important factors contributing to the delay in implementing recycling to this part of the City (Manager 2A). Implementing the three-bin recycling programme is not possible due to limited garden space for storing all three recycling bins in every household within these areas, and the council resorts to communal bins for the flats. For this reason, there is a focus on food waste composting with the objective of increasing the quality of overall recycling tonnage, since food waste is identified as the main source of contamination for dry recyclables (Manager 2A).

5.2.2 Council B

The second council included in this study, Council B, has a population of over 233,000 and is divided into seventeen electoral wards with a neighbourhood board that consists of three local ward councillors, local residents, representatives from local communities and other related partners such as the police, voluntary groups and the NHS. Council B handles around 120,000 tonnes of household waste and about 14,000 tonnes of municipal waste per annum.

In terms of sustainable waste management practices, this particular Council has a more impressive record compared with Councils A and C, by recycling 42 per cent of its waste, the highest recycling figure of the three. With an annual waste of

about 125,000 tonnes, the Council claims that it has managed to reduce waste sent to landfill by 20,000 tonnes², from 90,000 tonnes in 2008 to 70,000 tonnes in 2009. The Council currently uses a kerbside system with an alternate weekly collection for its recycling services to all of the residents, covering over 90,000 properties throughout the city, which represent about 90 per cent of the total number of properties.

This Council also uses a three-bin system: a black bin collects household waste; a brown bin is for organics and garden waste, including food waste; and a blue bin takes in dry recyclables such as plastic, cans and glass. In addition to this bin system, the Council maintains a bag system for its residents, using a blue bag to collect papers and magazines, and a red bag that takes textiles and shoes. As with Council A, this council has an in-house service for waste collection by employing staff to carry out the collection and maintain contracts with private waste firms to process the material.

5.2.3 Council C

Named as one of the oldest cities in England, it is populated by more than 294,000 and is divided into twenty-two electoral wards. It is a multi-racial city, with nearly 40 per cent of the population representing ethnic minorities or mixed race. The city also has a large student population that is associated with its two universities within the area. The Council has played an active role in stewardship on the city's environment and was awarded Beacon Council status on several occasions. This Council developed a Waste Development Framework Core Strategy with a nearby County Council in 2008, which replaced the Waste Local Plan of 1995-2006. This Strategy sets out policies and proposals for development and use of land for waste management within the plan area. Waste minimisation and waste reduction are mentioned as one of the key areas to which the Council is committed in their Environmental Policy.

² <http://www.councilB.gov.uk/Environment/RubbishWasteReCycling/?qsNavSettings=max>
(Accessed on 13th April 2010)

This is the only LGA included in this study with a long-term contract, i.e. twenty-five years with a large reputable private waste contractor, labelled Waste Contractor 3C, under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangement. The financial package for an integrated waste management service amounts to £300 million, in which £30 million has been pledged by DEFRA in PFI credits and awarded to Council C in 2003. During the 25-year period, the contract aims to divert 70 per cent of waste away from landfill. The waste management department of this LGA is placed in the same building as the staff of the Private Waste Contractor.

Council C uses a combination of kerbside recycling and community recycling centres, as well as a ball mill and anaerobic digester which currently diverts about 60 per cent of waste from landfill³. Across the city, the council has set up about sixty recycling banks and two community recycling centres for garden waste, paint, timber, electrical appliances, televisions, mobile phones and car batteries. With Waste Contractor C, the Council has created a state of the art recycling facility, Ball Mill, a fully mechanised waste processing and recycling plant designed to treat all household waste. This facility can extract all metal, cardboard, plastic and organic material and sends these for recycling, composting or energy recovery. In a similar situation to that faced by Council A, this Council has had a vast number of immigrants from Eastern Europe and India into the City, which has resulted in engagement being conducted at the lowest level (Manager 6C), activities revolving around provision of information to the stakeholders in an attempt to educate them.

5.3 Stakeholder Engagement In Practice

This section describes engagement in waste management across the three LGAs involved in this study. It begins with a brief discussion on their engagement strategies and the means they use for engaging. Several motivations underlying

³

http://www.letsrecycle.com/do/ecco.py/view_item?listid=37&listcatid=264&listtemid=5229§ion=info (Accessed on 14th August 2010)

engagement practices are then presented before highlighting the challenges faced in undertaking engagement and how engagement is perceived by both managers and stakeholders. The section ends with an evaluation of engagement effectiveness from four aspects: representativeness, responsiveness, stakeholder satisfaction and the mismatch of objectives and expectations.

5.3.1 Operationalisation of Engagement

The researcher noted a rich pattern of interaction between the LGAs and their stakeholders, involving many activities. Annually, all three LGAs conduct a council-wide survey in an effort to offer residents the opportunity to have their say about the services provided for them in the city. Council C handles this survey in-house through their consultation team, while both Councils A and B use private companies. This serves as a comprehensive means of engagement for the council as a whole and contains around five or six questions on waste management services as well as seeking the public's views on their involvement in the council's decision-making process. Council A, for instance, has a programme called 'Your Choice Your Voice' which involves a series of events throughout the year, enabling residents to express their views in shaping the future services in the City. Amongst the main objectives of such programmes is the empowerment of the communities by instilling confidence, skill and authority to influence local decision-making for the provision of public services. Similar programmes are available in both Councils B and C. A similar survey was administered to the residents in Council C entitled 'Recycling – What do you want?' to inform a recycling scheme for a particular area with the intention of gathering the expectations and needs of the residents in that area. The residents were asked to describe their general opinions of recycling, to comment on the current recycling service and to suggest further improvements.

In terms of the engagement strategy, it was noted that all three LGAs develop only a general departmental strategy and monitor their engagement activities for waste management purposes. There are no specific action plans for stakeholder

engagement. Any engagement in waste-related matters is performed on an ad-hoc basis. For example, before a recycling programme is rolled out to an area in Council A, meetings are held with the Area Committee and Board Members of the Residents' Association to inform them of the Council's decision on planned recycling programmes. Significantly, in Council C, their private waste contractors are involved in the formulation of the waste engagement strategy, according to those interviewed (Manager 6C; Contractor 3C).

To a certain extent, the execution of engagement programmes differs among these LGAs. In Councils A and C, the programmes are not centralised, but carried out by the respective departments, while in Council B engagement is conducted centrally through its Corporate Communications Department. This department handles various types of communication with its stakeholders, including general messaging and consultation services for the council. In this LGA, plans for engagement programmes are reviewed and implemented by the Communications Department and, according to one of its officers, this has its own advantages in that it facilitates a more effective engagement in considering important details, such as residents' demographic background, that might be overlooked by the individual department (Officer 8C). Despite the significant role of the stakeholder champion in heading stakeholder engagement activities and programmes in organisations (Gable and Shireman, 2005), there was no stakeholder champion identified in either Councils B or C. In Council A, this role was fulfilled by the Waste Strategy Manager.

Outcomes and feedback obtained from this general engagement provide the direction for engagement in waste management (Manager 2A; Manager 4B; Manager 6C). In addition, engagement includes raising awareness among stakeholders on new activities or projects to be implemented and involving the public by organising activities that promote partnership between the LGAs and their stakeholders. Leaflets providing information on waste-related matters are distributed bi-monthly to the residents in Council A. These leaflets contain basic

guidance on recycling: the importance of recycling, sorting recyclables, information regarding waste that can be recycled and the location of bring-to-site recycling facilities in the cities. In Councils B and C, however, such information is only provided when the need arises.

There appears to be no systematic planning process for stakeholder engagement in any of the three LGAs. In Council A, for instance, an indirect approach to engagement has been adopted (Officer 1A, Manager 2A) whereby strategies on engagement are formulated on an ad-hoc basis (Officer 1A). According to a councillor who is also the portfolio holder of waste, events held specifically for promoting sustainable waste management do not receive as much attention as they deserve. For this reason, in an effort to promote better waste management practices, especially in the less affluent areas where recycling has only been recently introduced, an indirect approach is seen as a more effective means of reaching out to the residents (Councillor 3A). Events such as Fun Days are held across the cities with the purpose of disseminating information on waste management to the general public.

A significant view of engagement shared by managers and officers of Councils A and C is the need to deal with a particular resident segment, i.e. immigrants. It was noted, however, that this is not an issue for Council B, possibly due to its demographic nature in that it does not have to deal with 'inflow' of migrants. In Councils A and C, the inner city areas are made up of many distinct immigrant communities, mainly from Eastern Europe and India, who are not natural recyclers (Councillor 3A) and who are struggling with poverty to survive in Britain (Officer 1A). These groups of residents, who include asylum seekers, may have more pressing issues in their lives, which distract them from using sustainable waste management practices. Due to the poor command of English of some of these residents, dissemination of information on waste-related matters to them presents a challenge to both councils. These areas are also heavily populated by students, identified as one of the most difficult group of stakeholders with whom to engage

(Councillor 3A; Manager 6C) due to their lack of sense of belonging to the city. The presence of many distinct sub-groups has resulted in a no-one-size-fits-all approach to engagement, therefore creating considerable difficulties (Manager 2A). Similarly, there is an inevitable need to tailor the engagement approach to suit the needs of the stakeholders. For example, when communicating with immigrants, engagement has to be as basic as ensuring that waste is properly binned:

“Those who don’t have English as the first language have a very little concept of waste, collection and recycling just on basic level. So, just getting people to put waste in a bin is a major step.” (Officer 1A)

Dealing with a huge inflow of immigrants and the transient nature of the student population has resulted in managers perceiving engagement as an overwhelming venture. Among several efforts made by the LGAs to overcome this obstacle is their use of faith groups to act as a ‘connector’ between the general public and the specific groups of immigrants:

“You have to sell the message in their terms based on their belief set because you can bet that every single faith stream have their holy book say something about being green.” (Manager 1A)

According to several managers, the use of faith groups is advantageous over other community groups due to their basic belief in the importance of preserving the environment. This is the main strategy employed by Council C in particular (Manager 5C; Officer 6C). They have so far managed to establish a good working relationship with Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, and current efforts are being made to include other groups such Sikhs and Hindus. However, this is not without a struggle, as the council needs to ensure that their representative’s agenda in engaging with the public coincides with their own agenda (Manager 5C). Recognising the significant role of faith groups in engaging with other stakeholders, similar plans have been mentioned by managers in both Councils A and B.

In general, it can be said that the three LGAs share similar engagement practices. However, some distinct aspects within these three LGAs are recognised in the following discussion.

5.3.1.1 Council A

An interesting insight which has emerged from the interviews with respondents from Council A is the importance of the economic factor, which in turn has affected the nature of engagements performed. Apart from the need to meet the central government target for recycling rates, further motivations for recycling and the promotion of other sustainable waste management practices include the financial benefits to be gained from the income that the Council generates when supplying dry recyclables to the end market. The Waste Manager singled out this factor during the interview:

“We tend to make decisions based on the biggest return [to the Council].” (Manager 2A)

Apparently, the higher the quality of dry recyclables supplied, the more income is generated by the council. It is therefore vital that the contamination level of dry recyclables is maintained at its lowest (Manager 2A). As a result, Council A has focused on maximising the recycling tonnage in an effort to generate more income, thus influencing the manner of engagement performed here. According to the manager, the focus on engagement has been directed towards two groups within the city. The first of these comprise the residents in several affluent areas in the city who are very involved in sustainable waste management practices and who are therefore receptive to the idea of promoting the sustainable waste management agenda; they are identified as ‘habitual recyclers’. According to the Waste Strategy Manager, this group of residents have contributed significantly to recyclables tonnage, as all recycling programmes have been implemented in these areas.

Another group of residents targeted by Council A are the students who occupy areas surrounding the two main universities, identified as University One and University Two respectively. Housing areas surrounding University One in particular, are mainly made up of both terrace and semi-detached houses, with the majority of houses converted for multiple occupancy for student rental. Although students were identified as ‘a difficult group who couldn’t be bothered about recycling and the most difficult to convert’ (Councillor 3A), their population in large numbers result in the production of a high level of recycling tonnage.

Manager 2A provided an interesting insight into how engagements differ between these two groups. In the affluent areas, a more lenient approach is used, while in the other area which are heavily populated by students, the council adopts a ‘stick approach’ by which penalties are imposed on the occupants, i.e. the students or their landlord, for failure to dispose off their waste appropriately. It appears that the type of engagement performed varies according to the residents’ social status.

An important point worth highlighting here is the influence the central government has on the way engagement is being practiced. Whilst this might also be applicable to other LGAs, this influence is particularly evident for Council A. As described earlier, the need to comply with the recycling target set by the central government has been acknowledged as one of the indirect factors affecting the way engagement being practiced by Council A. In order to maximise their recycling rate, engagement has somewhat been focused on two important groups of residents i.e. the habitual recyclers and the students.

5.3.1.2 Council B

This particular case provided a different insight into engagement as at the time that data was being gathered from interviews and observations, the council was in the process of building a new incinerator as part of a new waste management plan for the city. Planning applications had been submitted and were to be reviewed by the Planning Committee. Interviews performed with officials and stakeholders of this

council therefore centered not only on general engagement practices but also on engagement issues specifically relating to the planned incinerator.

During observations of residents' meetings in Councils A and B, the researcher noticed the differences in interplay between various non-governmental organisations, pressure groups and stakeholders between the two councils. Strong opposition on the proposed incinerator from stakeholders, particularly from the residents and a reputable environmental NGO, has provided an opportunity for the researcher to observe the way the managers handle such opposition. These are described in an account of public and residents' meetings in Section 5.3.2.1 and also in a discussion of stakeholders' attitudes in Section 5.3.4.2.

5.3.1.3 Council C

The third case offers contrasting perspectives of engagement in a partnership between the LGA and the private waste company (referred to as Waste Contractor C) resulting from a 25-year Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract awarded from the central government to Council C. Both the waste management department and the staff of Company C are situated in one building. The PFI contract has resulted in a 'close' relationship between the waste management department and the private waste contractor (Manager 6C), which has influenced the nature of engagement performed in this LGA, as well as the general planning of engagement programmes and activities undertaken. Several members of staff of Waste Contractor C, together with the waste management department of Council C are responsible for delivering engagement programmes. Although the Waste Manager gives final approval to engagement decisions, staffs at Company C exert some influence in the formulation of engagement strategies (Manager 6C; Contractor 4C).

An important aspect that must not be overlooked in relation to the engagement practices in these three councils are the role of central government and DEFRA in

engagement practices. Both DEFRA and the central government has direct influence over the engagement process practiced in the LGAs, making them an important and influential stakeholders amongst others. For instance, the government's policy may adversely affect the allocation of funding received by the LGAs has somewhat affected the extent of engagement performed. Simialry,

5.3.2 Mechanisms of Engagement

Generally all three LGAs use a variety of mechanisms to engage with their stakeholders. These methods include public meetings, leaflets, promotional stands, focus groups, citizens' panels and interviews. All of the LGAs involved in this study have a centrally-based customer service department which collates feedback, comments and complaints of issues, including those relating to waste. Face-to-face methods of engagement are commonly cited as the most effective. Despite many issues relating the potential impact of the Internet, particularly with its interactive ability to promote engagement as practiced by commercial organisations (Unerman and Bennett, 2004), there seems to be very little use of the Internet by the LGAs for such purposes, apart from providing information to their stakeholders. According to the LGA officers, there is greater reliance on verbal engagement via face-to-face meetings than on their websites, since it is 'much easier to keep people interested in the topic' (Officer 2B) and 'the stakeholders are more likely to be persuaded' (Officer 1A).

The use of suitable mechanisms may make it easier to reach stakeholders, which in turn may encourage recycling activities (Petts and Leach, 2002). The interviews highlighted various mechanisms employed by the LGAs to overcome the difficulties in engaging with a wide range and large numbers of stakeholders. These include factors such as the diversity of the demographic profile. For instance, the low level of literacy among residents in Council C has rendered the questionnaire survey as an inappropriate way of soliciting opinions. Similarly, the vast population of Eastern European migrants in Councils A and C has resulted in

the use of leaflets with a high level of pictorial content in order to communicate effectively with these residents.

All three LGAs have undertaken a traditional engagement programme, which includes face-to-face communication such as public and resident meetings. When asked about the most commonly used mechanism of engagement, an interviewee specified that this was the face-to-face method due to its effectiveness:

“We get really good response from speaking to people face to face.” (Manager 2A)

On the condition that it would be an undemanding venture, the same method was also supported by one of the stakeholders:

“What I think works best is verbally, face to face and try to make it as simple as possible.” (Resident 1A)

It was highlighted by an interviewee that different means of engagement are used for different groups of stakeholders:

“The techniques for different stakeholders would be different in terms of approach; the media we use would probably be different as well.” (Manager 4B)

Such differences can be related to the intention behind the engagement, since different engagement modes and techniques can have varying impacts on stakeholders (Manager 4B). The same respondent revealed, for instance, that different groups need to be “motivated” and “persuaded” in diverse ways to achieve similar end results. They attributed this to many factors, including the attitude of the residents towards recycling. The residents’ demographic background, such as their level of education, plays a role in this (Councillor 5B; Officer 3B). According to this interviewee, the higher their level of education, the more likely they are to recycle items, and so require less persuasion by the LGA (Manager 4B).

5.3.2.1 Public and Residents' Meetings

Within the three LGAs, a system of regular ward community meetings has been established across all electoral wards involving both councillors and local residents. In order to evaluate the conduct of face-to-face engagement, several observations of meetings were made by the researcher in all three LGAs. Information relating to residents' meetings was disseminated via the councils' websites and leaflets distributed to residents in those particular areas. In Council A, several meetings were observed, including the Regeneration and Sustainability Select Committee Meeting, two residents meetings, Area 4 Committee Meeting and Children's Forum Meeting. The residents' meetings are held in the evenings, while other meetings take place in the council offices during working hours. The agenda, the minutes of previous meetings and lists of confirmed attendees are disseminated through the Council's website, with the exception of the Children's Forum - these details are not published for safety and privacy reasons, and attendance is by invitation only.

Two residents' meetings and a Climate Change Committee Meeting in Council C were also observed.

The researcher observed two residents' meetings in Council B, as well as a Climate Change Committee meeting and a Children Participation Network meeting, the latter two meetings by invitation only. Both residents' meetings, on the other hand, were open to everyone, held to discuss the proposed new waste treatment plant. In these meetings, the researcher had the opportunity to observe interactions between NGO bodies, the general public and LGA officials. The proposed waste treatment plant had received significant opposition from a reputable environmental NGO body in the area. During both meetings, the same representative distributed leaflets justifying their opposition to the plan on environmental grounds, including potential pollution and the adverse effect on the population in the surrounding area. A petition was also circulated amongst those present opposing the plan. During the briefing made by the Waste Manager, there

was a tendency among several attendees, including the NGO representative, to dominate the meeting by vehemently expressing their dissatisfaction. Domination of ‘noisy’ people affected the meeting by complicating engagement with the local residents as it inhibited attempts at explanation and clarification from the LGA officials. After continuous warnings from the Chairperson, further comments made by those residents and the NGO representative were ignored.

Attendance at Meetings

In general, attendance varies between the different types of meeting. The attendance of stakeholder representatives at committee meetings was satisfactory, nor did the researcher notice any individuals seeking to dominate the meetings she observed. All those present were given the opportunity to voice their opinion. For example, in the Regeneration and Sustainability Meeting, attended mainly by council staff and councillors together with several representatives from a few non-governmental organisations, an NGO representative (NGO3A) was invited to give his comments on the draft strategies. The Area 4 Committee Meeting was attended by several active social NGO area representatives as well as members of the trader’s association. The chair was taken by the Neighbourhood Manager in the presence of all of the area’s councillors. In both meetings, the council set the agenda for the meeting. Only a few opinions were sought, instead clarifications of the decision taken by the council staff were made to the councillors and others present.

All residents’ meetings observed were poorly attended, and were unrepresentative of the residents living in that area. For example, there were only four residents present at one residents’ meeting in Council A, and all of these were the committee members of that residents’ association; the council was not represented. Conversations that followed with the resident association representative indicated that, in their area, the residents themselves initiated neighbourhood meetings. The representative could not identify any reason for such a low turnout other than the residents might not have any pressing issues that they wanted to raise:

“I guess it is hard to make people come [to public meetings] unless it really affects them. It’s really hard to get people to come along. You have got to do some kind of carrot or incentives.”
(Resident 1A)

The attendance at another residents’ meeting was also unimpressive, although not as poor as the one above. Despite being an area that is heavily populated by university students, there were no students present. The majority of those who came to the meeting were mature and elderly adults. Meetings were also taken up with much clarification and reasoning on the part of the council’s officers. For instance, on one occasion, a group of residents who requested a recycling bin were utterly confused with bin colours for specific types of waste. On several occasions, a number of residents expressed dissatisfaction with what they considered to be unfair treatment.

On all occasions, only mature and elderly adults attended the residents’ meetings with a complete absence of representation from ethnic minority and youth groups. It therefore appears that public meetings are not a suitable avenue for engagement as they cannot attract all sections of the public.

Content of Meetings

The meetings cover a range of issues. The residents’ meetings cover day-to-day concerns such as safety, traffic management and waste-related matters. Apart from one residents’ meeting, observations demonstrated that the council’s officers and councillors dominated the residents’ meetings with little evidence of open discussion and meaningful interaction with members of the public, although according to Petts and Leach (2000), public meetings could be potential avenues for the council to engage meaningfully with its residents. Although the face-to-face nature of Neighbourhood Forums generates more meaningful interaction, this did not occur in those meetings observed. In other meetings such as the Regeneration and Sustainability committee meeting, discussion focused more on policy matters, including the development of a Climate Change Strategy and the

Waste Strategy for the council. Similarly, the Area 4 committee meeting discussed ways in which the most deprived area within the council could be developed, and the need to address waste management problems in the area.

Two meetings involving youth and children were observed in Councils A and B. The Children's Forum, in Council A, was handled by an active social NGO (NGO1) in the city, who invited several children from seven primary schools within the council's locality to involve them in deciding how funds should be allocated to the most deserving schools that had applied for funding. In Council B, the researcher had the opportunity to observe a Children's Network Panel meeting, attended by several active NGOs in the council, involving discussions on social issues for children. Neither of these meetings discussed matters relating to waste or other environmental concerns. The researcher was informed that parks and playground infrastructure were the only environmental topic ever discussed by the Network and the Forum in their meetings. Since many respondents commented on the importance of instilling awareness in children and young people of sustainable waste management and its impact on the environment (Manager 1A; Manager 2A; Manager 4B; Manager 6C), the researcher had expected to observe use made of these meetings for this purpose.

It was significant to observe the diverse nature of relationship between different NGO groups in meetings in Council B. The council appeared to be more hostile to the NGOs representing the environment compared with those concerned with social issues. It could be claimed that this is understandable in view of the 'noise' made by the environmental NGOs about the planned waste treatment plant.

Use of Public Meetings

In all three LGAs, public meetings are used as a way of engaging with the residents and enabling members of the public to voice their concerns (Manager 2A; Manager 4B; Manager 6C). Council B, for instance, emphasises the importance of public meetings for engagement purposes as a 'direct link between

local communities and providers of public services' (Neighbourhood Working in Council B, p.5). Public meetings also enable those present to offer reasons for issues raised in the meeting. However, the use of public meetings is somewhat restricted due to their inability to encourage attendance and participation from all sections of the population:

“The attendance to forums I would say does not reflect the population. The vast majority of people who attend the forum are older people; you don't see many young people. Very rarely [do] you get people from culturally diverse [background]; black and minority ethnic communities” (Officer 2B)

Apart from the connection between LGAs and community and faith groups, the researcher is not aware of any other steps taken by the LGAs to encourage greater participation of cross-sections of the public. Based on these observations, the use of public meetings as a way to engage widely with diverse groups of stakeholders might not be considered a success. Public meetings were also criticised by an officer who felt that a vast amount of resources needed to be allocated by the LGAs in order to achieve the desired outcome of engaging with wider sections of the public:

“If you want to go to a community and reach to many people as you could, probably you have to do 5-6 meetings of the very same thing, but at different times of the day in different venues to get the maximum number of people, that is resource hungry work, and that is one of the biggest problem.” (Officer 5C)

Another respondent felt that the use of public meetings is limited as they attracted only certain groups of people. This did not therefore allow the LGA to gain a balanced perspective on the issues discussed during those meetings:

“The public meeting is normally a waste of time; I hate to say this because the only ones who attend are those who are normally strongly objected to it. Those who are in favour of it may be at the meetings but tend not to have their say because they are so outnumbered.” (Manager 3B)

5.3.2.2 Published Documents

Another common means of engagement employed by the three LGAs is the dissemination of information via various mechanisms such as leaflets and newsletters. This particular means of communication has been used for a variety of purposes, including the promotion of a new service, e.g. a new environmental education service (Leaflet1, p.1), as well as notifying the residents of new recycling schemes being introduced to a particular area; brief information on the consultation taking place is included, together with details of the pilot roll-out to be implemented (Leaflet 3, p.1). Also included are step-by-step instructions on how to recycle correctly in order to minimise contamination level of recyclables (Leaflet 6, p.3). Leaflets have also been used to send out the message of how every individual resident can make a difference by taking a small step, for instance, by emphasising the importance of recycling and providing a rationale on why everyone should be involved (Leaflet1, p.3). Moreover, the promotion of waste management road shows taking place in a neighbourhood, such as the Big Spring Clean Week (Leaflet 4, p.20) and Recycling Week in the City with a specific focus on reducing waste (Leaflet 2, p.14). These leaflets focus on the impact on 'their pockets' by promoting the savings residents can make. According to Councillor 5B and Manager 1A, this strategy is quite effective for those in the lower class, although the impact on middle class residents does not appear to be significant. Several pages of these leaflets are printed in alternative languages such as Polish and Urdu in an effort to reach a wider readership of stakeholders with English as their second language, demonstrating the principle of equal opportunities.

5.3.3 *Intentions of Engagement*

As described in Section 3.2.3, the engagement undertaken by an organisation could be due to one or more motivations underlying those practices. Further exploration has involved an analysis of the intentions of engagement as implied from quotations from the interviews as well as from a review of documents from all LGAs involved in the study. The underlying incentives for engagement, which

have emerged from this analysis, have been compiled and then mapped onto and linked with the stakeholder management and engagement ladders by Friedman and Miles (2006).

The following quotations illustrate that certain ideas are conveyed through campaigns in order to engage stakeholders:

“We need to be slick about what our campaign is, we’re selling ideas.” (Manager 4B)

It was evident from the above quotation that there could be many intentions underlying any stakeholder engagement and management projects undertaken by the LGAs. Whilst many motives could be present at one time (Unerman, 2007), this sub-section hopes to uncover some intentions evident from the responses gathered from the respondents. The remainder of this section presents the occurrence of several motivations of engagement.

5.3.3.1 Evidence of Manipulation

Manipulation, the lowest level of engagement based on the ladder of engagement suggested by Friedman and Miles (2006) and referred to in Chapter 2, involves ‘misleading’ the stakeholders by attempting to change stakeholder expectations. In considering the evidence of manipulation within stakeholder engagement practices, occurrences and quotations illustrating the intention of shifting the stakeholders’ demands have been extracted and analysed. Key words like ‘changing’ and ‘convince’ have been used to indicate this level of engagement:

“The big challenge at the moment is to *convince* them with the need to go ahead with this in order not to be taking waste to landfill.” (Councillor 5B)

“We will undertake this [environmental education] by providing relevant advice and information and by making the best environmental choices *as attractive as possible* (Council A’s Environmental Policy, p.9)

“...that did take a lot of teaching people, talking to them and *convincing* them.” (Officer 7C)

It appears that, in the case of the LGAs, the above sentiments are convincing, as it is pertinent to ‘convert’ those who simply do not believe in the importance of recycling, or even in the need to care for the environment. In the words of one interviewee:

“We’ve got to speak to people’s lives, you’ve got to make people realise that they are not on an island, every decision that they make has an impact on somebody else, somewhere else in the planet or something else somewhere. The job of a local authority is to enable people to start that journey from being white and ‘move’ them to pale green, mid green to dark green as much as they can.” (Manager 1A)

5.3.3.2 Evidence of Therapy

Persuasion is termed by Friedman and Miles (2006) as therapy, the second rung on the ladder of engagement. On this rung, engagement is aimed at ‘curing’ the stakeholders’ ignorance and preconceived beliefs (p.162). Within this type of engagement by the selected LGAs, key words like ‘encourage’ and ‘persuade’ have been identified, indicating an element of persuasion or therapy. It appears from the analysis undertaken that LGAs employ this level of engagement for two main reasons: either to enhance stakeholders’ awareness or to persuade them to be involved with the promotion of the sustainable waste management agenda. For instance, the quotations below demonstrate that engagement has been undertaken to enhance stakeholder awareness regarding the services provided by the LGAs:

“I think the more engaged they (i.e. the residents) are, the more we actually *raise their awareness* about what we are supplying.” (Manager 6C, emphasis added)

“Provide information and support to both the public and to staff at all levels *to raise environmental awareness and encourage responsible attitude.*” (Council A’s Environmental Policy, p.1, emphasis added)

Further incentives underlying engagement, presented below, involve the portrayal of an image to stakeholders in order to persuade them to take part, as well as to encourage them to maintain their current practices of sustainable waste

management; one of these is to persuade them to accept the idea underlying these practices:

“This is another aspect of social engineering itself, to try and *persuade* people that (it) is coming along, (and that) this on the whole is good. Yes, there are some changes to the way you need to do things but it’s doable.” (Manager 3B)

“What we are telling people is *encourage* them to be part in one of the most successful recycling scheme. We are *beefing it up* by saying ‘this is a good scheme to be in.’” (Manager 4B)

Promoting a certain kind of image to the stakeholders whilst engaging has been cited by many prior studies conducted in the context of commercial organisations (Friedman and Miles, 2006; Whysall, 2004). It can therefore be suggested that motives for engagement in the public sector are similar in this respect to those of commercial organisations.

5.3.3.3 Evidence of Informing

An evaluation of the nature of engagement performed by the LGAs indicates that the flow of interactions tend to be one-way. This is evident from words such as ‘speaking to’, as presented in the following excerpt:

“We’ve done quite a lot of engagement activities and that enables us to *speak to* about 500-600 people in a week sometimes.” (Manager 6C)

Similar occurrence of informing as engagement is also present in the environmental policy of Council B, an extract of which is given below:

“Encourage and assist the people of B to take responsibility for their own activities and enhance our local environment by providing appropriate *environmental advice and information*.” (Council B’s Environmental Policy, p.10, emphasis added)

Although this nature of engagement is perceived as passive (Friedman and Miles, 2006), the level of engagement shown here is indispensable, especially when communicating with newly-arrived immigrants (Officer 1A; Manager 6C).

Similarly, another LGA officer reflects that informing is a vital process in educating stakeholders about practices of sustainable waste management:

“We sometime have to focus on some of those more simplistic things because those are things that make the biggest impact to the area, especially when we are dealing with those who are new in the UK.” (Officer 1A)

5.3.3.4 Evidence of Explaining

This level of engagement is assumed to occur when there is an element of two-way education of stakeholders, which enables them to respond to the LGAs:

“With the engagement side of it, we spend a lot of time explaining why we made a decision, why certain policies come about and why we stick with our policies. For example, here we have a smaller bin scheme, which is relatively controversial. So, we spend a lot of time explaining, making sure that they understand why we have such a system.” (Manager 6C)

This particular approach has been used extensively by Council B in dealing with the opposition over the proposed waste treatment plant within the city:

“It’s been very effective; we have been very open, we give them all the information they asked for, we’ve had extensive seminars in the Market Hall here and other places where all technical people from the company have been available to be questioned.” (Councillor 5B)

5.3.3.5 Evidence of Placation

Placation occurs when stakeholders are asked for their input, although there is no guarantee that this input will be accepted (Friedman and Miles, 2006). This level of engagement, however, is a starting point for stakeholder involvement, and the following quotation indicates that some input is being considered by the LGA:

“We look at everything that was put forward, and look at all ways that it could go forward, if anything suggested hasn’t been thought of...So any ideas that come forward are looked at.” (Manager 3B)

Reflecting on the above evidence, levels of engagement seem to be concentrated at the lower level of Friedman and Miles’s ladder of engagement (2006), i.e. the bottom five rungs of the ladder. In particular, engagements, which aim at

‘informing’ the stakeholders, are observed to be quite common among all three LGAs. One interviewee explained the rationale behind it in pointing to the nature of the local population, i.e. the proportion of students and immigrants from new ethnic backgrounds coming into the City:

“I think there will always be a need for that basic level of education and information especially with the transient population that we have. So, we need to make sure that we are engaging with them at a certain level constantly.” (Manager 2A)

“We have at least forty thousand odd students in the city, that’s a lot of people that come and go within a couple of years. The transient population that we need to deal with do have a big impact.” (Manager 6C)

In discussing several motivations underlying engagement, this sub-section has suggested that one of the intentions is to promote a specific image to the stakeholders; this has also been established in prior studies conducted within the context of commercial organisations. These intentions also draw attention to an important aspect of engagement, i.e. the need to engage with a specific group of people or stakeholders to achieve certain objectives. For instance, in Council B, motives of engagement tend to be more focused on explaining ideas to the residents and NGOs and persuading them to accept the feasibility of a waste treatment plant in their area, while hoping that they will eventually agree to that decision, thus reducing opposition to the plan. In Councils A and C, efforts are directed towards the immigrant groups by ‘informing’ and raising their awareness of the importance of sustainable waste management practices. This supports Unerman’s claim (2007) about the significance of exploring the motives of engagement and the corresponding groups on which these intentions are focused in obtaining a greater understanding of the wider picture of engagement.

5.3.4 Challenges to Engagement

One of the themes discussed during the interviews were the challenges faced by both managers and stakeholders during engaging. Various factors were cited as

barriers to effective engagement. These factors can be grouped into institutional factors and stakeholder behaviour.

5.3.4.1 Institutional Factors

According to Petts and Leach (2000) various institutional factors act as a major deterrent to effective undertaking in engagement. Institutional factors are those that relate to the current structure, and also include resources such as manpower and funding. Lack of manpower as experienced by many respondents, who reported this as a factor inhibiting the extent of engagement exercises they could carry out:

“I sit on two neighbourhood boards. And I have another colleague who is on another two as well and I’m saying we’re not going to do it anymore until somebody decides how we are going to facilitate this because I haven’t got any staff to go around.”
(Manager 4B)

The above statement highlights the problem faced by LGAs regarding their manpower to conduct engagement programmes and activities. A councillor from Council B also raised this problem:

“It takes so much of the officer time, it is actually quite difficult.”
(Councillor 4B)

Another manager from Council C concurred with this:

“We are very limited in manpower. I ran this service with only 11 people so you can imagine the pressure on those people when we provide the service to a city that is quite large.” (Manager 6C)

Affordability is also one of the deterrents to more effective engagement by these LGAs, affecting their ability to meet the various demands of their stakeholders. As stated by the following interviewee, without sufficient funding, there are understandable restrictions on LGAs in offering a variety of engagement activities and programmes to their stakeholders:

“I think what we need is more investment to capacity build in the area to encourage more participation from the residents. When we’re working on a limited budget, all you’re reduced to is to put

up an event that is free, and there is not much you can do.” (Officer 3B)

The fact that councils are limited due to funding provided by the central government does indicate some extent of economic power held by central government in programmes organised by councils, including those related to engaging activities provided to other stakeholders. More elaboration on economic power held by the central government is provided in Section 6.2.1 in the following chapter.

It seems that although the input from stakeholders is worth pursuing, these ideas might be abandoned due to lack of monetary resources:

“When you look at the cost of that (to meet the stakeholders’ expectations), we just haven’t got that extra million quid a year to double the collection service and follow their suggestion.” (Manager 4B)

The problem of affordability may have repercussions on the need to initiate engagement in the first place, a concern that is expressed by another interviewee:

“We are also aware that we don’t want to consult on a document that proves to be undeliverable because it is not affordable. There are a lot of internal discussions going on at the moment about how we bridge that aspirations and affordability problem.” (Manager 2A)

Criticism was made of the government’s failure to understand the difficulties experienced by LGAs in undertaking engagement:

“Government has tried to persuade LGAs to engage, and quite conveniently for the Government (to do that) I suppose. It is not the Government who are doing the work; it’s the local authority. And it is very easy to sit in the ivory tower and say – ‘before you do anything in any community, make sure they are on board with whatever you are trying to achieve.’” (Manager 2A)

Additionally, a manager from Council A raised concern about the inadequate support for engagement provided by the current structure of the council:

“I just don’t think the whole way we’re set up is geared to listening to stakeholders.” (Manager 1A)

An environmental NGO representative of the same Council commented that while council did provide the structure for engaging in terms of listening to their stakeholders, the structure in place seemed to be ineffective:

“The current structure means that they (i.e. the Council) are listening to more people and it also means that people have to spend more time talking to the Council in ways that are structured by the Council, you spend more time having less effect.” (NGO4B)

This representative was comparing the current structure to that of previous years, stating that NGOs have been prevented from influencing the decision-making process because of the over-bureaucratic nature of the council’s structure.

On the other hand, an officer felt that whilst Council C listens sufficiently to its stakeholders, the current structure seems to be lacking in giving feedback:

“We are quite strong in going out consulting people but often we don’t feedback to people very well about things.” (Officer 7C)

According to these respondents, the current method of engaging is restricted to obtaining information without a suitable structure to make sure that the information obtained is thoroughly analysed and reflected in the formulation of future policies and programmes; and also to ensure that stakeholders are appropriately updated about how they have affected changes within the council. Similar cases of organisations that do not sufficiently feed back to their stakeholders after engaging have been cited in the literature (Klewes, 2005)

5.3.4.2 Stakeholder Attitude

A significant factor mentioned by many respondents as one of the greatest barriers to engagement is the mindset of all those involved. An interviewee drew attention to the importance having an appropriate attitude to engagement:

“One of the big issue is there is no point of having low carbon building if you haven’t got low carbon people living in them.” (Manager 5C)

The need to emphasise the promotion of behavioural change amongst the stakeholders, particularly the residents, was repeatedly recommended by respondents as a driving force towards better sustainable waste management practices:

“We’re trying to sort of get people to basically take a major behavioural change i.e. by reflecting on the consequences of getting rid of the waste products.” (Manager 2A)

As stated by the following interviewee, behavioural change is an issue on which the LGAs should focus to ensure the achievement of targets set by the central government:

“To meet some of the stringent targets that the country has for waste, there will have to be a significant element of behaviour change, whether that’s forced or not.” (Manager 1A)

Similarly, changing the residents’ behaviour is also on the NGOs’ agenda, but with a specific focus on waste minimisation (the top section of the waste hierarchy) and on shifting the responsibility for this on to the manufacturers, e.g. reducing packaging.

“It is about making effective use of resources so you’re not producing any waste in the first place.” (NGO3A)

According to one manager, promoting a change in behaviour is important in facilitating the achievement of the council’s target for a sustainable development agenda as set by the central government:

“We just realised that we are not going to hit these carbon targets unless we do some major stuff to change people’s behaviour.” (Manager 1A)

The council has organised many activities, such as seminars and road shows, to encourage and persuade people to change. The central government is seen as the major player in pushing this further, particularly in providing sufficient resources for the council to promote change amongst the residents. Similarly, the role of other agencies, including the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and other government bodies were cited as exerting influence:

“The lobbying agencies and different bits of the Government have a huge role to play in persuading people why people ought to be green. And then, when more people think that they ought to be green, they then can challenge the Government or parties that aren’t putting enough resources in helping them to do it.”
(Manager 1A)

Thus, this highlights the role of the Government as a salient stakeholder in relation to sustainable waste management engagement programmes and exercises.

Referring to Council A’s engagement exercises, Manager 2A blamed ‘apathy and consultation overload’ for its failure to engage with the residents as often as it is required to do so. Such indicates some element of urgency, or rather the lack of urgency demonstrated by the residents resulting in low engagement with the LGAs.

Another interviewee suggested that there should be more penalties to expedite behavioural change amongst residents. In Council A, for instance, penalty approaches for littering and fly tipping have been enforced since the beginning of 2009 and widely publicised in newsletters and billboards throughout City A. The Recycling Officer further clarified that penalties for non-adherence of prescribed sustainable waste management practices, such as the failure to segregate dry recyclables items, will be implemented more extensively in the very near future to cover other aspects of waste management. However, charges will be imposed only after two warnings.

Reluctance to Engage

In addition to institutional factors, several LGA managers drew attention to another major challenge in engaging with stakeholders. Specifically, many expressed their frustrations over the unwillingness of stakeholders to engage:

“We’re putting information out there but most people don’t bother to read it. We put a leaflet through every door of every residential property to say what are our collection arrangements and what material can go into which bin. But [the] majority of them looked at it as junk mail and they will throw it out without even looking at it. And then,

you'll get calls from them that we haven't told what we're doing. So, there isn't much that you can do really." (Manager 3B)

As described in the quotation above, passive stakeholder behaviour towards LGA initiatives to involve them demands greater ingenuity on the part of the LGAs to create ways of ensuring that engagement is viewed positively by the stakeholders.

An interviewee suggested a possible reason for lack of involvement by the residents:

"I think it is important for local people to have the confidence, to have the knowledge, the awareness of how important it is for them to engage with the Council." (Officer 2B)

As emphasised by Young (1998), it is very important for LGAs to instill confidence and assurance in their stakeholders that views sought are significant. Lack of response from the residents is also due to the fact that many of them view engagement as a formal exercise by the LGA rather than as a genuine undertaking to involve them in the decision-making process:

"Engagement is very much of the formality, and you need to keep on pushing for it, then only you should see something at the end of it." (Resident 1A)

"It's the feeling that I've been consulted before but nothing ever changes." (Resident 2B)

As illustrated above, the disappointment of these residents in prior experiences in engaging with the LGAs had affected their current involvement. Another respondent, who is a ward officer, reasoned that the reluctance to engage could be due to many factors, one of which is the perception that engagement and consultation are not able to introduce change:

"Maybe they (i.e. the residents) feel that they haven't got any power, so other people just won't listen to them." (Officer 2B)

It appears that stakeholders' perceived level of power affects their active involvement in programmes and activities initiated by the LGAs. The perceived power of stakeholders has been suggested by Eesley and Lenox (2006) and

Welcomer (2002) as a determining factor for stakeholders' involvement in the activities of organisations. Furthermore, the residents' prior experiences in engaging also influence their inclination to engage with the LGAs in the future:

“We need to be able to feel that we have been listened to. There is a general feeling of having been let down in the past.” (Resident 2B)

Insights into the residents' unwillingness to engage with LGA provided by one respondent reveal that the problem underlying such reluctance is deeper than at first appears:

“None of them (the residents) want the responsibility to take charge; there is no sense of belonging to the area. I guess that has something to do with the capitalist system that we live in where people's aspirations are always outside of themselves. I mean rather than looking inwards, people always look outwards. They always forget that it is inwards where our happiness comes from.” (Officer 3B)

A respondent from Council B was of the opinion that areas that are poorly served by the LGA tend to have low levels of participation. Several demographic factors amongst residents, such as low levels of education and high rates of unemployment (Officer 3B) were blamed as a factor that discourages residents from engaging with the council; further, residents may be preoccupied with other concerns that they feel are of greater importance than the need to engage or even to practice basic sustainable waste management. Both Councils A and C face the same situation in dealing with areas that are economically deprived. Thus, it can be said that in the case of the residents, low level of urgency exhibited have resulted in lack of engaging done by the LGAs with this particular stakeholder group.

With regards to encouraging greater involvement from commercial organisations, the LGAs have developed a number of programmes for that purpose. In Council A, commercial organisations have welcomed these ideas and contribute positively towards the council's activities (Manager 1A). However, Council B faces a similar reluctance to engage from their organisational stakeholders. One of the councillors expressed his disappointment:

“Out of 15 directors approached by the Council, only six actually engaged with the process. And that is quite upsetting.” (Councillor 4B)

A lack of financial resources may be the reason for this council’s inability to promote greater involvement from commercial organisations, according to one officer, who felt they could receive more encouragement:

“The difficulty is we can’t offer them a carrot; for example, you need to reduce your energy but we don’t have the means of transacting those energy reductions to a bigger budget for them because they’re not spending so much energy because we physically can’t break it down that way. So, you know that was one way that we try to raise the awareness and it brings more problems than it solves.” (Officer 4B)

It appeared to one interviewee that such reluctance to engage by both individual and institutional stakeholders reflects how much priority they give to engagement:

“Engaging is just one of many competing priorities that they [i.e. the stakeholders] [have] got and probably it is those with the lowest priority.” (Councillor 4B)

It can be suggested that this is an area on which the LGAs should focus further. In emphasising to their stakeholders the benefits of engagement, councils could encourage them to understand the significance of their role in any engagement activities and become more involved. Additionally, it is also important for stakeholders to be informed on the extent to which engagement would achieve certain results. As suggested by the following interviewee, it seems beneficial to be cautious while engaging in order to avoid future disappointment and frustration if expectations are not met:

“...that parameters and guidelines are set from the outset so there is no misconception about what it’s all about, what can be achieved and what cannot be achieved. We don’t want to raise people’s expectations too much.” (Officer 3B)

This observation has also been made by Burchell and Cook (2006), who note that the nature and expectations of any engagement programmes have to be made explicit to the stakeholders in ensuring an effective form of engagement. Lack of proper definition on the broader process of engagement may result in stakeholders' disappointment.

Addressing this reluctance to engage, one councillor did not eliminate the possibility that LGAs may need to resort to a completely different strategy for future engagement by implementing a penalty-style approach:

“We haven't gone down the stick approach yet. However, I'm afraid that I think the time will come before long when the stick will be wielded.” (Councillor 4B)

An LGA official felt that the current way of undertaking engagement practices would not achieve many of the changes required:

“In terms of actually addressing and give an impact at policy level, it (i.e. engagement) is still got some way to go. It's still a long way to go in affecting real change at policy and that's where I would then see it as being really effective.” (Officer 2B)

Another respondent expressed some pessimism over the ability of engagement to influence behavioural change among the residents:

“Gross wastages have come down, we would like to think that it is through our effort but it is more likely due to economic situation, for the fact that there is less packaging out there, we're realistic in that. It is very difficult for local authorities to actually affect the gross tonnages that people produce.” (Manager 3B)

A resident representative shared the same sentiment, asserting that the effectiveness of engagement, particularly in its ability to affect real change, is questionable due to the LGA's inability to inform and update the stakeholders adequately:

“They do engagement with the local people but I think sometimes the kind of communication isn't always strong enough to inform or let people know in advance of what's happening.” (Resident 2B)

The unwillingness to engage described in this sub-section reflects the perspective of those interviewees in Council B, so it can be posited that this reluctance may be connected with the current nature of engagement in relation to the proposed waste management plant previously mentioned in Section 5.3.1.2.

Attitude of Managers

Another equally complex barrier to engagement lies in the negative perceptions of the LGAs' officers themselves. There is a widespread resistance to the belief that engagement could be successful. Many staff complained about the failure of engagement to yield an expected outcome, and they had little confidence in the engagement process as a means for instigating change, feeling instead that there is little to be gained. From the conversations held, it appears that this is due to the difficulty in arriving at unanimous decisions, a view that is reflected generally among the following interviewees:

“I have yet to see where everybody agrees for a start.” (Manager 1A)

“Taking on board what the communities' points of views are but ultimately I'm an experienced professional in waste management and that I'm quite good at my job. It [engagement] is really counter-productive as it slows down the process. When you have clear aims and aspirations, it is just what you want to achieve regardless.” (Manager 2A)

It appears that undertaking engagement is constrained by the need to reach an agreement among all the stakeholders involved. This might be difficult to overcome as it depends on the willingness of stakeholders to reach a consensus and to minimise conflict throughout the process:

“Sometimes, it can go a bit clouded as you can try to get as many people in the room, discuss a subject for 8 hours, and you're still not coming up with any conclusions, sometimes you have to focus and learn to make decisions with the best information that you've got.” (Manager 2A)

It would seem that the number of stakeholders involved affects the ability to achieve an effective engagement, and a consensus in a decision-making exercise is

less likely to be reached. In this respect, it is important for the managers to appreciate differences and the uniqueness of individual groups involved to ensure a more effective management of stakeholders. This will enable the classification of stakeholders into meaningful groups, which in turn will allow for an effective prioritisation of demands.

5.3.5 Perceptions towards Engagement

While the previous sub-section dealt with the challenges faced by the LGAs in undertaking engagement, the current sub-section covers how stakeholder engagement is perceived by both managers and stakeholders of the LGAs, describing in particular how the interviewees perceived stakeholder engagement, the concept of engagement and the significance of engagement from the perspective of the LGAs.

5.3.5.1 Concept of Engagement

An insight on the stakeholder concept came from the managers - for many; it is rarely separated from the concept of communication. One interviewee described an ideal engagement as “having an excellent communication strategy” (Manager 1A). From this, it can be implied that the purpose of engagement is only to convey information to stakeholders. This is confirmed by another interviewee, who responded:

“In engaging, information was put on the website, information was put on the press where stakeholders can get the details on it. Information was also sent to a very wide variety of stakeholders, PCTs, interest groups and many more.” (Manager 3B)

From the above statement, it appears that the concept of engagement has been greatly simplified and associated mainly with the varied provision of as much information as possible *to* stakeholders. The following excerpt from the Environmental Policy further specifies the intended purpose of engagement is to provide information provision in engaging:

“Provide information and support to both the public and to staff at all levels *to raise environmental awareness and encourage*

responsible attitude.” (Council B’s Environmental Policy, p.1, emphasis added)

Whilst information provision is an important element of engagement, it is considered that more is required from an organisation in enabling their stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process. The quotation below also reflects how engagement and consultation is simplified to an activity which merely provides information:

“And we called giving information sometimes as consulting.”
(Councillor 3A)

By viewing engagement in the context of communication strategy, it would appear that engagement activities are closely linked to public relations exercises. As stated by the following respondent, who is also a councillor, engagement is linked to an image-building exercise:

“We deliberately spend more on communication and it has made an impact because people’s perception of the Council is getting much better.” (Councillor 2A)

Another respondent seems to have the same conceptualisation of engagement when stating his intentions while engaging:

“There is a direct correlation between the more informed [the] community feels with how good they think their Council is.”
(Councillor 1A)

It may be concluded that, to these respondents, reputation building is an implicit aim in undertaking engagement. Interestingly, both respondents were councillors, who may imply that this particular group of stakeholders is very concerned with popularity, and so use engagement as a platform to win votes. It is therefore unsurprising to discover that stakeholders perceive engagement as a formal act rather than as a genuine act to encourage involvement (previously discussed in Section 5.3.2). This perception of engagement by the stakeholders may have an adverse impact on their receptiveness of engagement and its associated benefits.

Another interviewee went further, singling out that only those views that are in line with those of the council are considered.

“We are looking at views that won’t concede our points and objectives. The stakeholders’ voices have been listened to but it has to be weighed against the other interest, such as the other conditions that are in the agreements with the private waste contractor.” (Manager 3B)

With this intention in mind, it seems that the possibility of promoting engagement as a means of involving stakeholders in the decision-making process is somewhat limited. Such a stance may also result in engagement practices being restricted to the dissemination of information from LGAs to their stakeholders, as any views obtained will only be considered if they are in congruence with the resolution made by the decision-makers.

“I think there is a certain amount of soliticism. There are a lot of issues where we do have to consult, where the end won’t change.” (Councillor 3A)

This compilation of views on the concept of stakeholder engagement indicates that both managers and stakeholders alike misconstrue the notion of engagement.

5.3.5.2 Significance of Engagement

The significance of engagement from the perspective of the LGAs is evident from the interviewees’ acknowledgements on the subject. The importance of engagement is also apparent in several of the LGA documents reviewed. For instance, one of the Environmental Policy reviews indicated the following:

“We will enable the full involvement of Councillor and employee... we will work with our contractors and suppliers to help them to improve their environmental performance and ensure that when working for the Council, they adopt equivalent environmental standards. We will encourage the public and partners to take action too, through *environmental information*, advice and services.” (Council C’s Environmental Policy, p.5, emphasis added).

Indirectly, this Environmental Policy has specified the need to ensure involvement of several identified groups of LGA stakeholders. However, there is no further specification on how Council C intends to implement this apart from providing

information. Of the many stakeholder groups, the public was identified as a discrete group, and it is clear from the following excerpt from Council B's Waste Strategy document, that their greater involvement is to be sought:

"Ensure that the public are involved in the development of the Zero Waste to Landfill Strategy." (Council B's Waste Strategy, p.12, emphasis added)

This positive attitude recognises that engagement plays a vital role in promoting the sustainable development agenda. Further, the interviewees were aware of the importance of engagement with regard to the delivery of public services. For instance, the Waste Manager for Council C recognised that engagement is essential to ensure that waste management services are delivered to the users:

"I think most people are quite aware of what the Council supply to them and obviously the engagement, the promotion and the communication that we do are all reinforcing the services that we offer." (Manager 6C, emphasis added)

Moreover, engagement has enabled the LGAs to determine the needs and expectations of their stakeholders:

"It is important to get the views of the communities and work our priorities together." (Manager 1A)

"We need to understand what the issues are from the outset and understand how and what service the public require from us." (Manager 6C)

"The only way that you can make services good for people to use is if you asked them what they need." (Officer 7C)

If managers are aware of stakeholders' expectations of LGA services, they can facilitate user involvement in the development and design of waste management services. Not only do the above views recommend engagement as a pre-requisite for an efficient service, the process can also provide a means for LGA managers to obtain feedback from service users:

"I couldn't deliver a service without engaging with the public. Certainly, I couldn't deliver waste management without asking people – are we doing it properly?" (Manager 2A)

Empowerment helps people to achieve their own purpose by increasing their confidence and capacity (Petts, 1995b, p. 533). Another significant aspect of engagement mentioned by the interviewees is the way in which it empowers those involved in the process:

“Engagement is the process whereby public bodies reach out to communities to create empowerment opportunities.” (Council A’s Engagement Framework, p.1)

Another interviewee concurs with this view:

“Engagement is important as this will allow them to be part of the decision-making process about services, policies, and practices that affect their lives because it is obviously impinge on their lives.” (Officer 2B)

It is evident that engagement allows stakeholders to feel that they are in control of things that matter to them. This should be recognised, since perceived feeling of powerlessness may adversely affect the inclination to engage (Petts, 1995b). A sense of empowerment also enables stakeholders to question their local service provider, an important aspect of engagement:

“By bringing issues to them and show them how they (the stakeholders) can challenge them in many different ways. This is perhaps one way of empowering our stakeholders.” (Councillor 4B)

Engagement therefore can be viewed as a means of enhancing effective decision-making by making it available to challenge from stakeholders. The respondents interviewed for this study also recognised the significance for the LGAs of engaging with the stakeholders; through engagement, stakeholders are empowered to participate in determining the delivery of services provided by the LGA. As discussed in the literature, promoting stakeholder empowerment is a way of enhancing their perceived authority as stakeholders (Bebbington, 1997).

Another significant aspect of engagement as stated by managers and officers of the LGAs is that engagements are undertaken mainly to ensure that their council’s aims and targets are achieved:

“We wouldn’t do our campaign here in Area A because they’re already doing fine and have achieved 57% recycling rate. Area B, with only 20% recycling rate maybe an area that we want to do some campaigning work.” (Manager 4B)

“We can reach (the Central Government’s) target (of achieving certain percentage of recycling and waste to landfill) through engaging in various different ways.” (Officer 5C)

A stakeholder management approach associated with official targets indicates that it is a strategic tool to be used to the LGAs’ advantage, with stakeholders, in this case, viewed as a mechanism for facilitating the achievement of targets:

“We want to make sure that they stay in their comfort zone because if they do, we are going to get good quality co-operation from them. Once you get co-operation from them, we can achieve our objectives bit by bit.” (Manager 4B)

5.3.6 Evaluating Engagement Practices

The engagements performed by the LGAs involved in this study are evaluated from four aspects, i.e. representativeness, responsiveness, stakeholder satisfaction and the extent of mismatch of stakeholder expectations, as stated in Chapter Three.

5.3.6.1 Representativeness

The literature has emphasised the significance of ensuring that stakeholders are adequately represented in engagement activities (Petts and Leach, 2000; SustainAbility, 1999). This is therefore intended to evaluate how representative the selected stakeholders are in the engagement process and how they are verified in representing the interest of other stakeholders. Equally, this implicitly addresses the principle of inclusiveness in engagement undertakings. Given their number, engaging stakeholders individually is unrealistic. Some interviewees felt that the nature of council stakeholders renders the pursuit of an open and critically focused dialogue impossible:

“A big organisation like the Council has to serve a big population so it cannot build a relationship with each inhabitant.” (Manager 1A)

While acknowledging that consulting a wider group of stakeholders is beneficial, such practice among LGAs is limited due to practical reasons, highlighted by the following respondent:

“It would be nice to be consulting with a wide groups of people on a regular basis but you may have as many views as you have with the many people who you are talking to. Practicality wise, once you have made a decision, you have to be particularly focused on that, rightly or wrongly, you can’t afford to be hanging around or changing your aims on too regular a basis.” (Manager 4B)

The large number of stakeholders, made up of several distinct groups, could therefore be blamed for the LGAs’ inability to engage with each individual within their locality. However, it may be argued that stakeholders still wish to see their needs and expectations to be considered and eventually fulfilled (Resident 1A; Resident 2B). Even with the most effective methods of engagement, such as the public and residents’ meeting (Manager 2A), young people are an under-represented group of stakeholders:

“Majority of those attended our meetings are elderly and it is always the case. We don’t seem to be able to attract other groups. I have tried to get young people on board although I managed to get three of them but they never come back. Perhaps, I can understand from their point of view, attending a meeting that is two hours long when people are talking about heavy stuff and quite often they are portrayed in negative terms.” (Officer 3B)

It appears from these interviews that the current engagement process fail to include all of the relevant stakeholders. Omission of a particular group may affect inclusiveness, an important principle of stakeholder engagement. Further means of engagement may therefore need to be employed to facilitate inclusion and the involvement of diverse stakeholder groups.

Similar cases of exclusion have been noted in other LGAs. Although tailored programmes such as Waste in School Education (WISE - Council A), EcoSchool (Council B) and Children Waste Education Projects (Council C) were arranged

for primary school children, there were few made available in secondary schools. One manager expressed the view that the primary schools were more approachable; this may be due to the need for greater commitment on the part of the school:

“Some schools embraced it very, very well. And some don’t. One of the challenges for that is you really need at least one or possibly two committed members of staff in that school [for it] to happen.”
(Manager 4B)

It was observed that stakeholders in all three LGAs are invited to sit in various committees and task groups, although there is no explicit criterion used by the council in assessing the representativeness of the selected stakeholders, nor is there a process to verify that they actually represent those on whose behalf they claim to speak (Manager 2A; Manager 4B). One NGO representative (NGO 4A) admitted that his organisation, when engaging with the LGAs, pursues its own agenda, which may not coincide with the expectations of the public. This statement was echoed by another NGO representative, who questioned how their agenda is determined:

“...from our point of view, it looks as though the senior people within [our] organisation who were calling the shots in terms of what is going to be important.” (NGO3A)

A similar question was raised by another respondent:

“I’m not trying to be disrespectful to them but how representative is his views to the views of the community, I’m not sure. I’m not sure who he actually represents in terms of the wider community, I’m not sure.” (Officer 2B)

The true extent to which NGOs represent the views of a particular section of the community, and how far this role is dominated by their own agenda, is therefore questionable. Moreover, it may be argued that the effectiveness of the NGO as a surrogate for the public voice is influenced by their limited degree of direct involvement in LGA committee meetings.

5.3.6.2 Responsiveness

To identify levels of responsiveness, an evaluation has been carried out on the ability of LGAs to give feedback on concerns raised by their stakeholders after completion of consultation and engagement projects. For instance, it was claimed by an interviewee that engagement tends to obtain only negative views:

“In explaining to the public, we don’t hear from the ones who are convinced, we only hear from those who don’t listen. It is a difficult situation, you don’t hear from the ones who agree with you, you only hear from the ones who object.” (Manager 3B)

A manager from Council A admitted that the LGA has not been fully responsive to feedback received from engagement:

“I don’t think we utilise the results of engagement in an honest way as we should, I don’t think any Council does.” (Manager 1A)

Another officer from Council C concurs with this:

“We’re quite strong in going out consulting people but often we don’t feedback to people very well about things.” (Officer 7C)

This lack of a constructive process of gathering feedback from the stakeholders therefore limits the extent to which LGAs can react to their concerns. It can be conjectured that the attitude of managers towards engagement, discussed in Section 5.3.4.2, may affect the extent of this responsiveness.

5.3.6.3 Stakeholder’s Satisfaction

According to Wilcox (1994), engagement will only be effective if stakeholders are satisfied with their level of participation. This section therefore evaluates the extent to which stakeholders are satisfied with the conduct and outcomes of their engagements. Satisfaction is the most subjective aspect of this evaluation as interpretation is given by respondents throughout their interviews. For instance, one respondent felt that the structure for engagement was better in the past:

“[Engaging] certainly has been effective in the past but I guess it would be more and more difficult to have an effect in the future.” (NGO 4A)

Such a pessimistic view reflects the dissatisfaction of stakeholders over their lack of influence in affecting decisions and change within the LGAs.

A manager further commented that it is a challenge for LGAs to satisfy their stakeholders:

“A lot of feedbacks that we currently get are of 2 types; one is negative – that policy doesn’t work and we need to do it differently. Basically, whatever we do, we are not going to make them happy really.” (Manager 6C)

Responses received from other managers also indicate the possibility of low levels of satisfaction amongst their stakeholders:

“There are quality issues in terms of service delivery that we have got to come to terms with. Things like missed collections which sometimes causes confusion amongst the residents as well.” (Manager 4B)

The environmental NGO (NGO3A) expressed dissatisfaction with the current structure of engagement. Although the council sought their opinions, their abilities to lobby for their agenda across the structure are somewhat limited. Further, there was a feeling among residents that engagement did not have a real effect on consultation or the outcome of decisions:

“It’s the expectation that I’ve been consulted before but nothing ever changes.” (Resident 2B)

Based on the data presented above, it would appear that feelings of dissatisfaction amongst the stakeholder respondent are prevalent.

5.3.6.4 Mismatch of Stakeholders’ Objectives and Expectations

The final aspect of this evaluation is whether there is a mismatch of stakeholders’ objectives and expectations during engagement. In meeting the expectations of their stakeholders, there was evidence that officers have managed to fulfil the expectations of the councillors:

“Obviously, we try our best to deal with any Councillors’ requests. Whenever they request for our presence during their ward meetings,

we will definitely be going along to those meetings to give information, to speak to the residents, or to have questions and answer sessions with the residents as well.” (Manager 6C)

However, this is not the case with the residents:

“It’s not always clear to a layman what waste management should be about. If you were to take a poll of 100 people and ask – what makes a good waste management service? – I pretty much guarantee that a lot of them would say – the council are to collect rubbish all the time whenever I throw it out – that is what good waste management services is to them.” (Manager 2A)

There was also evidence of mismatch between the expectations of the NGOs compared with those of the LGAs:

“We have NGO X and another green lobby group as part of the Scrutiny Process that has helped us to develop the target and aspirations. Their principle objective is to get 50% [recycling rate] and they’re not too interested in finding out how that’s afforded. Simplistically, they see it as the number one priority of the Council is to be sustainable in everything it does, and we should simply find the money to do that by diverting the money from other service areas.” (Manager 2A)

From the data gathered, it appears that stakeholders do not share similar objectives with the managers. Some officers and stakeholders expressed the opinion that the views of the public would remain unchanged as a result of the engagement process. The managers sought to raise awareness of waste management as an issue, to listen to stakeholders’ opinions and encourage their wider participation in the process.

5.4 Summary

The current chapter has presented background information for the three LGAs involved in this study. This information has provided a relevant context for the empirical findings discussed in this and the next chapter. The researcher has analysed stakeholder engagement practices delivered by these LGAs, commencing with an account of sustainable waste management practice, followed by analyses of how stakeholder engagements are operationalised. Avenues are established and many activities organised by the LGAs to ensure the involvement of their

stakeholders, but such activities mainly involve the issue of leaflets and monthly bulletins as a source of information. Additionally, Councils A and C deliver educational programmes to the large numbers of immigrants and to the student population within their areas.

A variety of mechanisms are used by the LGAs to engage with their stakeholders in an effort to encourage greater involvement, as they recognise that diverse groups of stakeholders require different types of information delivered in a variety of modes (Kluver, 2003). All three LGAs hold meetings in order to engage with their residents and other members of the public. Another common form of engagement is the dissemination of information via documents, but although information is widely available, it is limited to decisions already taken by the LGAs.

The researcher has also discovered that only limited mechanisms are provided by the LGAs to enable their stakeholders to voice their grievances about the services provided and the engagement process itself. Formal complaints can be lodged with the LGAs, but there appears to be insufficient formal mechanisms to the suitability of their means of engagement with the stakeholders. It was also argued by an environmental NGO representative that stakeholders consider the previous engagement structure to be superior to current procedures.

Council A provides leaflets/booklets bi-monthly, which describe sustainable waste management practices in the city; however, there is no similar systematic provision of information in the other two LGAs, who respond only when the need arises. The systematic planning of the engagement agenda in all three LGAs is limited, particularly in Council C, whose private waste contractor is significantly involved in both planning and implementing engagement. In an effort to promote greater involvement, Council C has recently opted for the use of faith groups as ‘connectors’ with the residents, particularly those groups that are hard-to-reach.

Officials from Council A have also planned the same approach, to be adopted by the council in the near future.

This study has found evidence of various intentions of engagement as suggested by the literature (Bebbington, 1997; Gray, 2001 and Owen *et al.*, 1997). These intentions include attempts to change the stakeholders' expectations, efforts to persuade and instill awareness regarding the services provided by the LGAs as well as to promote a certain image to the stakeholders. Another main intention of engagement is to disseminate information to the stakeholders and to offer education. There is further evidence indicating that LGAs are consulted for input from the stakeholder.

Among the challenges faced by the LGAs in undertaking engagement, two main factors are cited - institutional features and stakeholder behaviour. The findings of this study have established that infrastructure, time and resources are important for successful execution of engagement process, as supported by Tippet et al. (2005).

Generally, the respondents in this study recognise the importance of engagement, particularly in facilitating the LGAs to achieve their targets. They are particularly concerned with the delivery of waste management services to stakeholders. This supports findings by Gregory (2003), who emphasises the importance of engagement in the delivery of public services. Another significant finding from the interviews is the way in which the notion of engagement is seen as equivalent to the concept of communication. To the elected members, i.e. the councillors, engagement is undertaken partly for the purposes of projecting a certain image of their LGA to the stakeholders.

Regarding levels of engagement, this study has identified that engagement activities carried out by the LGAs lie within the middle and the lower levels of Friedman and Miles' ladder of engagement (2006). Interviews indicate that the LGAs merely inform stakeholders about decisions that they have previously

reached instead of encouraging genuine participation. Engagements are performed in response to stakeholder concerns with little evidence of further two-way communication. This is reflected in terms such as ‘persuading’, the respondents when discussing engagement frequently made ‘teaching’ and ‘educating’, reference to which. Based on the observation of meetings, there is limited evidence of dialogue taking place. At best, such meetings only enable the LGAs to obtain feedback of projects and activities they have implemented. It is therefore suggested that further consideration should be given to the provision of more significant means of engagement.

It has been noted that Council B has a higher level of engagement compared with the other LGAs; officials of this council, however, engage in a considerable amount of explanation and persuasion. On the other hand, because of the nature of the population in the city areas of Councils A and C, engagement is undertaken by both these councils with the basic aim of instilling awareness among residents of the importance of practising sustainable waste management.

The community is a primary stakeholder group whose needs should be recognised by the LGAs (Broadbent and Guthrie, 2008). This chapter has cited examples of the frustration expressed by many respondents over the level of participation by this group of stakeholders. For instance, in discussing the lack of interest from the general public in being involved in engagement projects, one respondent speculated that such reluctance could be due to their feeling that the LGAs are unresponsive to feedback received from consultations. Change in behaviour can only be achieved by adopting the willingness to change (Bull et al., 2008). The reluctance of stakeholders to engage is therefore a significant problem to be addressed by LGAs in order to encourage behavioural change.

The low level of participation, particularly among residents, could also be explained by the way engagement is conducted. It is suggested that simply releasing information without eliciting opinion may cause stakeholders to feel

powerless. This has resulted in a view of engagement as unproductive and has further discouraged future participation, particularly by the residents. This observation of a lack of enthusiasm within the community to engage is supported by previous similar studies (Petts, 1995b; Selman, 1998). The impact of perceived feeling of powerlessness on engaging is also observed by Eesley and Lenox (2006), and will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

This chapter has discussed the way stakeholder engagement is operationalised in the three LGAs. The following chapter will further analyse engagement practices in these LGAs by focusing on the role of stakeholder attribute and the impact of engagement on accountability.

CHAPTER 6

POWER IN STAKEHOLDER PRIORITISATION AND LINKING ENGAGEMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five has presented the way in which stakeholder engagement is operationalised within the three LGAs; it is the aim of the present chapter to conduct a thorough analysis of two important aspects of the practice of stakeholder engagement. Firstly, with respect to the stakeholder engagement practices discussed in the previous chapter, it is pertinent to assess how power plays a role in stakeholder salience as well as to evaluate the types of power that are given the most attention by the managers. Secondly, it has been recognised that LGAs are accountable to many stakeholder groups; this chapter therefore intends to assess the impact of stakeholder engagement on accountability.

This chapter begins with a discussion in Section 6.2 of the role of power and the extent of stakeholders' involvement. In this section, the significance of the concept of power as perceived by the interviewees is first explored. More importantly, power as a stakeholder attribute is analysed in determining its role within the stakeholder engagement process, as well as in the way it affects the level of salience as perceived by the managers and officers of the LGAs. The same section seeks to determine the most important type of power possessed by the dominant stakeholder group. The level of involvement of each stakeholder group, based on a consolidated assessment of their perceived power, is then mapped onto Friedman and Miles' ladder of engagement (2006). Section 6.3 offers an analysis of the accountability aspects that are affected by the stakeholder engagement process. Within this section, the elements of accountability cited in the literature as established in the engagement activities are then assessed before exploring their impact on several dimensions of accountability. This section concludes with an evaluation of engagement as an alternative mechanism of accountability. Finally, Section 6.4 presents a summary of this chapter.

6.2 Power in Stakeholder Engagement and the Extent of Stakeholders' Involvement

This section will evaluate the role of power and its importance as perceived by both stakeholders and managers when interviewed. Specifically, this section seeks to illustrate how perceived power affects the way managers prioritise the demands and claims by their stakeholders. In addition, the influence of power in the engagement and decision-making processes are also discussed.

When asked what power means to them, residents viewed it as the ability to be empowered in holding others accountable for their actions and any decisions made:

“The forum can be a process where people become empowered but that would need a lot of work done to bring it up to that level where people really have some kind of power to and holding someone accountable and have some kind of influence.” (Resident 1A)

Councillors, on the other hand, saw power as the ability to channel resources to their desired projects or programmes. It can therefore be summarised that, to this group, resources represent a function of power for stakeholders. Thus the councillors' ability to control the resources in the LGAs affects the extent of their perceived power:

“When there is a great idea, everybody agrees that it is a great idea but when you get to Council and they say – No, we haven't got the money. That was when you feel powerless.” (Councillor 4B)

For the NGOs, power refers to the ability to influence decision-making procedures:

“I would say that at the end of the day, whether we are able to influence the actual decision really matters a lot [to us].”
(NGO4B)

It is therefore interesting to learn that power was conceptualised differently by the various stakeholder groups.

6.2.1 Significance of Power

While discussing the process of prioritisation in LGAs, several respondents drew attention to the difficulties they encountered in prioritising the stakeholders' claims. One interviewee cited several factors that managers need to consider in engaging and prioritising:

“It’s hard to take everything into account, you know, you’re balancing the views of everybody whilst also balancing the political, the technical and the practical issues of things; it’s difficult to get that side across.” (Officer 4B)

In addition to these factors, the LGAs’ limited resources, combined with the number of stakeholders that LGAs have to manage, necessitates prioritisation of claims and demands:

“We can’t give everyone everything that they want because what they want is different. That’s where prioritisation comes in and it is inevitable.” (Manager 7C)

Acknowledging the difficulties in managing conflicting demands and claims, a councillor felt that they have a role to play in assisting the LGAs’ managers in prioritising the demands from various groups of stakeholders:

“It’s difficult to please everybody, I mean you can have pressure groups that want a particular issue, you’ve got residents that want their things and you might have a total three-way split really. That’s where the diplomatic skills come in from the Councillors, really. You have to have people who would give in a little bit of what they want in order for somebody else to win a little bit.” (Councillor 7C)

According to Mitchell et al., (1997), due to certain perceptual factors or in order to achieve specific ends, managers might pay more attention to those stakeholders with power. It has become apparent from the interviewees’ responses that power is a significant attribute. As illustrated by the following interviewee, this aspect is considered by the managers in assessing stakeholder salience. Indeed it appears that the ability of stakeholders to affect and influence prioritisation is prevalent within the engagement process:

“Some stakeholders are obviously more important than others in terms of their ability to do anything” (Manager 1A)

It can therefore be inferred from this that managers would engage more with those stakeholders who were able to affect or press for change. The ‘ability to do anything’ mentioned by the manager above implies the ability to act according to the wishes of the LGA.

In determining the underlying prioritisation of stakeholders in the three LGAs, all respondents were asked to elaborate on their perceptions regarding salience and to state which stakeholder group, in their opinion, is the most important. The immediate response from all interviewees was that the general public, particularly the residents, is the most important stakeholder. This is predictable, as the value of members of the public to LGAs cannot be further accentuated; they are one of the primary reasons for the establishment of public sector organisations (Broadbent and Guthrie, 1992). The general public is one particular stakeholder whose claims deserve to receive high priority from the LGAs, as acknowledged by the following interviewee:

“It is the people that live in that Ward, it is the people who pays the Council Taxes in that Ward has the right to know what is happening in that Ward. I think it is very important to keep everybody involved and get everybody’s views in it because they are the people who live day to day in that area.” (Councillor 7C)

As asserted above, the residents, as a stakeholder group with explicit claims towards the LGAs, are the most deserving group to have these claims addressed by the managers. It can be argued that their stake as taxpayer is greater than their stake as consumers, an assertion that is supported by Parker and Gould (1999) and also by Selman (1998) who states that their claims and demands should be paramount (Selman, 1998).

However, further probing into their responses has revealed several types of power that might affect how the demands and expectations of other stakeholders are

receiving priority over those raised by the residents. The following respondent specified other issues, which are of ‘greater good’, and therefore considered to be higher priority, which dominated the concerns raised by the residents:

“Obviously, the residents are the most important stakeholders, without a doubt. But sometimes, there are issues that are of greater good that is bigger than the residents’ issue” (Councillor 4B)

It is conjectured that this ‘greater good’ could relate to targets set by the central government or to the aspirations of the council’s leaders. This can be inferred from a councillor’s statement:

“We are the Executives in-charge with making Executive decisions and sometimes those decisions don’t necessarily find favour with the general public and you have to take those hard decisions on the basis of the greater good for the greater number. Not always easy.” (Councillor 5B)

As further indicated by the following interviewee, meeting the public needs is deemed as being achieved concurrently with attempts by the LGAs to comply with central government targets:

“Although we have to meet the needs of our residents which I think is the most important, the way we’re going to meet those on how the Central Government recognise that they are the needs of the public.” (Manager 4B)

It would appear that, by complying with the central government’s requirements, the LGAs are assuming that the public’s needs are being served accordingly, which might not always be the case. Government targets tend to supersede the expectations and claims of residents, implying that the central government exerts more power, despite the residents being cited by the LGAs as the most important stakeholder group. This suggests the dominance of political power over other power types.

Economic power also appears to play an important role in that managers tend to give more attention to commercial organisations. The following manager reasoned that economic power does influence the engagement process:

“One of the actions we have decided is working with big business; they are very influential, have a lot of staff working for them so they can push the messages out.” (Manager 1A)

The priority to focus on commercial organisations is also evident from the Council A’s Environmental Policy:

EP4 Waste Management: Work *with* businesses and suppliers to reduce waste. In our own operations we will progressively reduce-reuse-recycle our waste and prevent landfill in the future (emphasis added).

According to a manager from the same council, the ability of commercial organisations to allocate a greater amount of resources, both in terms of manpower and funding, enables them to call for better waste management practices in city A, which makes them a valuable partner to the LGA (Manager 1A). The impact of influence and power on stakeholder saliency as perceived by the LGA managers is evident.

As briefly discussed in Section 5.3.4.1 in Chapter 5 earlier, economic power held by the central government through the allocation of funding and limitation in the budgetary amount provided to councils are evident in this study. For example, as much as councils want to engage as widely as possible, they can only undertake a certain number of engagement programmes and engage with a limited number of stakeholders due to constraint in monetary resources. The effect of affordability on engagement as pointed out by several council managers interviewed in this study are named as one of the challenges faced by councils in engaging. Thus, it appeared that engagement programmes and activities undertaken by councils are dependent upon this economic power signifying the important element power held by the central government.

This sub-section has demonstrated the significance of power, both for the engagement process and for stakeholder salience. It has also established how residents’ claims receive less attention from LGA managers because of the

pressure to achieve government targets. Having identified the significance of power, the following sub-section aims to analyse the stakeholders' perception of their own level of power and the way this affects the extent of their involvement.

6.2.2 Perceived Power Held by Stakeholders

The way power is perceived by stakeholders is important in influencing their level of involvement in activities organised by LGAs and their decision-making processes. The aim of this subsection, therefore, is to evaluate how stakeholders view their own level of influence and how managers and other stakeholders perceive them. Evaluation of these perceptions is important; according to Daake and Anthony (2000), these normally affect the level of confidence and extent of involvement of the stakeholder group.

In making this evaluation, two aspects are analysed: firstly, the role of power in the nature of engagement and, secondly, the influence of power in the decision-making process of the LGAs. For this reason, this section will present how stakeholders perceive their own level of influence and how they are perceived by other stakeholder groups. The section also assesses the way in which the LGAs manage their stakeholder groups.

6.2.2.1 Residents

Despite the claims made by LGAs that residents' opinions were valuable, the residents did not feel empowered at the time the present research was conducted. This was inferred from the word *should* used by the following residents' representative:

“The public *should* be the most important and powerful.” (Resident 1A, emphasis added)

A ward officer who deals with the residents within his area concurred with this view, associating the perceived lack of power felt by the residents with their lack of involvement:

“Maybe they feel that they haven’t got any power, so other people just won’t listen to them” (Officer 3B)

The same officer felt that some element of power should be granted to the residents, particularly in relation to decision-making, to enhance the quality of service provision.

“It would be really important for local residents to have some power over the quality, effectiveness and efficiency for services in their area. For this reason, they also should have some power to make decision at policy level.” (Officer 3B)

Another interviewee recommended that residents should make use of their elected councillor’s influence as a voice for their objections or suggestions:

“They can be (powerful). It is difficult really but we have to listen. If we say (to the Council) that the residents want this and residents complain this, the Council are more likely to sit up and listened and put those issues right at the top of their head.” (Councillor 1A)

However, a few councillors would contest this suggestion. One admitted that their role as a voice for the public might not be especially strong. For instance, there are times when councillors are bound to follow other principles, which may not coincide with the views of the people:

“You have got to think of the greater good even though you know the residents don’t want to or they don’t like it. So even if the residents are the most important person to consider, you do have to consider other principles, higher principles really, sometimes.” (Councillor 3A)

Such may be the case when the councillor is also a portfolio holder who represents the views of the council, and ‘higher principles’ could refer to the aspirations of central government (Manager 1A) or to budgetary constraints (Manager 2A). Other respondents were also concerned that the views of the public are not sufficiently represented, as demonstrated by the attendance at public meetings, which was biased slightly towards middle-class mature adults. There are a limited

number of claims where engagement is broadly representative of those stakeholders interested in waste management issues:

“The public don’t understand that we’re no longer powerful as we’re used to be. And that we’re hamstrung by regulations, by-laws, issues like planning, modern procurement initiatives and so on.” (Councillor 5B)

One manager suggests that the Housing, Tenants and Residents Association (HETRA) could be used as a possible avenue for residents to become more involved in the council’s decision-making process:

“Perhaps if the people are using something like HETRA, they would have more of a say and that is a way of empowering people really.” (Manager 1A)

However, HETRA was criticised by another interviewee who was less convinced of its suitability as a platform for encouraging greater participation from the residents:

“I think in theory, the framework is there for them to do that by becoming members of the neighbourhood boards. But I think we have a long way to go before the residents sitting on the board are able to take on board that fact that they can actually say something and for it to be taken into account.” (Officer 2B)

The same interviewee opined that the current structure does not encourage stakeholders to feel that they have the power to execute their wishes. This interviewee, who has a significant connection with the residents, felt that a perceived feeling of powerlessness has affected the extent of the residents’ involvement and their share in the decision-making process. Although they are involved in the engagement structure provided by the LGA, they do not use their voices sufficiently to take charge and affect change:

“I think people kind of go there and sit but don’t quite believe in the power that is given to them. So they tend to hang back and not express their views.” (Officer 2B)

This implies that there is a lack of confidence among the residents in the engagement structure, which has adversely affected their perceived level of

influence. A similar issue has been discussed by Selman (1998) who draws attention to how lack of residents' confidence in the engagement structure provided by LGAs affects the extent of their involvement.

It is clear from many of the statements provided during the interviews by managers and officers of the LGAs that the response from the residents is very passive towards activities that should empower them to become more involved in decision-making. Moreover, the way the residents are managed within the three LGAs seems to differ. This could be explained by the nature of engagement that was taking place during the time of observations and interviews. In Councils A and C, for instance, there were no vital issues to discuss, unlike Council B. For the residents in Council A and C, the current method of engagement is very much limited to the dissemination of information, as reflected in the following quotation:

“Whenever anybody phones up with a problem, we arrange to make an appointment and go out to see them face to face and try to *talk them through* some of the problems.” (Manager 2A, emphasis added)

As discussed in Chapter 5, at the time that data was collected for Council B, strong opposition from the residents was observed by the researcher regarding the newly proposed waste treatment system, leading the nature of engagement to be concerned with providing an explanation for actions taken by the LGA:

“We have been very open, we have given them all the information they asked for, we’ve had extensive seminars in the Market Hall here and many other places where all the technical people from the Company were available to explain to them what is happening and its impact on the residents.” (Councillor 4B)

In Council B, the low number of residents who attended meetings observed by the researcher was very discouraging, even though the main agenda for both meetings related to the proposed waste treatment plant, which had received strong opposition from pressure groups as well as from a group of residents. Similar observations were noted in the two other LGAs. There seems to be no sense of urgency for greater involvement among the public, so engagement is simply a

means of enabling the LGAs to respond to concerns raised, rather than discussing them further with the residents:

“If the community are worried about certain subjects, only then they will engage, they will come to us and engage, they are telling us what they want.” (Councillor 1A)

“We spend a lot of time explaining why we have made a decision, why policy came about and why we have to stick with our policy.” (Manager 6C)

Although there could be many reasons for low public involvement, an interviewee blamed it on the perception that it is a frustrating process:

“Sometimes I think there can be too many consultations and it is one way of delaying actions. I have come to a stage where if I hear about consultation anymore, my head will all burst because I just cannot take any more consultation.” (Resident 1A)

This implies consultation fatigue by the residents - it would seem that the residents are frustrated with the way in which opinions are sought and do not feel that their feedback would affect future decisions.

“I think people probably perceived it (i.e. public meeting) as not being a forum where much gets achieved. For people who came regularly, that is only something that they do, rather than a meaningful process.” (Resident 2B)

It was the view of one manager that this perception therefore results in apathy within the community in contributing to stakeholder engagement programmes (Manager 2A). Another respondent blamed the delay in organising engagement with the residents, which resulted in them merely being informed on decisions made as opposed to being consulted before any decision was confirmed:

“I think it is important to get people involved as early as possible, what tend to happen normally is the general public only find out at the very last minute in the newspaper” (Councillor 7C)

It is therefore unsurprising to find that the residents view engagement simply as a procedure rather than as a genuine act of encouraging their involvement, since they are unable to influence decisions made. This has resulted in engagement

being used only as an avenue to vent their feelings and channel their frustrations over issues:

“Over the years, it really strange because there’s not always that many people that I would like to meet and see personally. Particular groups of parents don’t tend to come and the ones that do tend to come are normally there because they have some grievances and normally negative issues surrounding whatever and what’s happening at the time.” (Resident 1A)

“I think Forums are really for people who got burning issues that they need to shout about. They are not necessarily anymore than that because there are lots of residents in the area who will just hang onto their issues and *not able to vocalise and express* themselves.” (Resident 2B; emphasis added)

The above comment provides an interesting insight into current methods of executing engagement, in that they do not offer residents a real opportunity to voice their opinions and dissatisfaction.

From the perspective of LGA staff, reaching the residents has been a difficult undertaking, about which the managers themselves were unclear:

“You have to talk to them all in a way just relevant to them and that is extremely difficult for a council to know how to do.” (Manager 1A)

The exasperating nature of this endeavour was also mentioned by a Ward Officer who is in-charge of promoting activities to the residents within her area:

“Sometimes I think it is a bit if waste of time and sometimes I think how else do you give people their voice and you can’t achieve it because not all people want to get involved.” (Officer 2B)

This could be explained by the complex nature of the resident group, which comprises diverse individuals with different priorities. It is possible that fulfilling the rights and claims of an individual resident may infringe upon claims of other individuals, although each individual’s involvement is paramount in claiming their right and ensuring their voices are heard. It would seem advantageous to

them to participate in activities of their resident association and become more involved in the engagement process:

“Usually, [engagement] is only with the community representative, or with people who are bothered to turn up at meetings at various times.” (Manager 1A)

The relationship with this particular group of stakeholders relies mainly on leafleting and public meetings. The words ‘speaking to’ rather than ‘speaking with’ below further demonstrated their lack of influence in changing things:

“We have to adapt and change our collection arrangement and also the way we engage and talk *to* people as well. And I think that includes speaking *to* as many people as possible that are involved in the field.” (Manager 2A, emphasis added)

While Tritter and McCallum (2006) emphasise the need for a dynamic structure and process legitimised by both participants and non-participants, there is no indication of this in any of the LGAs. The residents’ meetings observed were poorly attended; questionnaires and surveys were left unanswered (Councillor 1A). Despite many avenues provided by the LGAs to encourage residents to be more involved in their programmes and in the decision-making process, it would appear that the residents do not adequately exercise their rights as, supposedly, the most important stakeholder. They seem to disregard the opportunities provided to become more involved and as a result remain a less influential stakeholder, indeed it is likely that they are the least influential compared with other stakeholder groups.

With regard to the extent of participation, vocal input, rather than partaking by making choices, is evident; residents are informed of the decisions made with few options provided for their objections since options are constrained to a given set of alternatives. It is rather surprising to find that both managers and residents were frustrated by public meetings. The residents did not perceive it as a fruitful exercise due to their perception that they could gain little from participating in engagement activities. In their responses during interview, the managers blamed lack of interest on the part of the residents even in participating in the

programmes, let alone contributing their input into the process whenever possible. It also appears that current ideas of engagement identify the residents as the 'weaker ones' (Mulgan, 2000a), who are neither adequately represented nor empowered.

Residents do not therefore seem to have significant influence in determining the nature and extent of their engagement with the LGAs. Rather, the means of engagement are prescribed by the LGAs. It would not be misleading to suggest that residents also have less influence in the decision-making process, as reflected in the way engagement is performed with this group of stakeholders, relying mainly on a one-way rather than a reciprocal approach, i.e. they are only informed of the decisions rather than consulted about them.

6.2.3.2 NGOs

Section 6.2 presents the NGOs' conception of power as the ability to influence decision-making. In this regard, they do not in fact perceive themselves as possessing the level of power required to be able to influence the decision-making process due to their limited involvement in the established structure. One of those interviewed, NGO3A, who sits on the Regeneration and Sustainability Committee in Council A, stated:

"Their consultation procedures are around what they are interested in. So, it's like a compromise, I suppose, in terms of we try to get our agenda across within the structure they wish to engage with us on. So, a lot of what we do is more important in terms of lobbying around particular things that are our priorities." (NGO3A)

The above response indicates a second face of power felt by the NGOs interviewed. The same interviewee, who is also involved in revising the Climate Change Strategy and the Waste Strategy for Council A, is less convinced with his organisation's influence in its representation and involvement with Council A. He appears to be hoping for a more meaningful role than his present level of involvement in the council's activities:

“I would have to say that probably we don’t have a massive influence in what they’re doing directly as the local organisations but simply by having a watching brief and by commenting on what they doing, then the effects might not be so obvious. It’s quite difficult to point to something and say as a result of us being there, such and such happened.” (NGO3A)

It is also apparent that there are differences in the levels of influence and power among non-governmental organisations; for instance, a nationally- based NGO is more influential than a local body:

“I think the Council take us seriously as we’re reflecting what is coming from a national organisation” (NGO2A)

When asked about their involvement in the decision-making structure of their LGA, an NGO representative felt that they do not have much influence to affect change. A similar feeling of ‘powerlessness’ as that felt by the residents was expressed:

“The fact that we sort of have that influence on the local politicians didn’t really have very much effect in terms of the actual outcome.” (NGO3A)

On the other hand, the councillors viewed NGOs as quite influential. It is suggested that, with a greater level of engagement, their level of influence with the LGAs in affecting change could be enhanced:

“Although they can be influential, they are very disengaged with the engagement process (Councillor 5B)

Another manager concurred with this view that NGOs did not carry a significant role in the stakeholder engagement process and programmes of the LGAs:

“The problems with NGOs here are they don’t tend to support Councils very well. They tend to only create conflicts and issues. They don’t really react and deal with people. On a day-to-day basis, they don’t really have much impact.” (Manager 6C)

Similar reluctance by NGOs to engage is documented by Burchell and Cook (2006). Their reluctance could be due to the fact the NGOs have their own agenda that they wish to pursue further:

“I think they have their own agenda and it is not always focused on what is the most environmentally friendly measures.” (Councillor 5B)

This was acknowledged by an NGO representative who stated:

“As far as we’re concerned, as NGO X, we’ve got our own agenda that we want to impress on the local authority.” (NGO3A)

The roles of the NGOs in the engagement process are quite significant in assisting the LGAs to undertake programmes and activities with the public. This can be explained by the lack of bureaucracy within their own organisations, which facilitates the engagement of NGOs with the other LGA stakeholders (Manager 1A). However, insufficient donations and financial contributions due to the current economic climate have severely affected their role in supporting the LGAs, particularly in supporting the agenda for promoting sustainable waste management:

“There is a campaign on waste management, but it is not well resourced as we would like. We are undergoing quite a significant cut. At the moment, we can do less rather than more.” (NGO3A)

The extent of their involvement in the LGAs’ decision-making structure can be reflected in their various representations on council committees.

In general, council staff regards the NGOs as ‘the Council’s partners’ (Manager 2A) or even ‘more than partners’ (Manager 1A). It would seem that this NGO enjoys a good working relationship with the LGAs, the following comment illustrating the nature of this ‘partnership’:

“We do not receive direct funding from the city council, but its more about working with their staff and working together to try and improve open space, improve services in the city. So we work with them in achieving the results really. I think we have got a mutually respectful relationship. We work well (together) and respect each others contribution to different projects.” (NGO2A)

However, a representative of an environmental NGO rebuts the categorisation of ‘partners’ to the council.

“We are certainly not partners. The jargon is stakeholders, as like other people. (Our relationship) really depends on the issue; on some things we are against what the Council is doing. On other things, we are trying to persuade them to do things that we want them to do.” (NGO3A).

As stated above, their relationship with the LGAs is dependent on the current issues and the agenda they are pursuing.

With regard to the nature of engagement with the LGAs, an NGO worker gave a succinct opinion:

“I am satisfied with what they do basically. Our reputation is very good with the Council. They know who we are and what we do.” (NGO1aA)

Such a positive description indicates a superficial relationship between the LGAs and this particular social NGO. During the interview with representatives of the first two NGOs, one of the respondents described his relationship as generally good; however, he was quite reluctant to elaborate further until the interview had ended and the recording had stopped. Only then did he explain how bureaucratic procedures in the LGAs affect their ability to access their wider range of stakeholders. NGO1aA, a voluntary worker from the same NGO, who handles projects in empowering children, commented that she has not been approached by any LGA staff regarding her projects, even though the LGA’s WISE project for school children can be embedded in other similar programmes that empower children to make decisions. As a result, little collaboration is pursued by the LGA to make the most of the NGO’s rapport with other stakeholders. Although NGOs have the potential to support the LGA in promoting improved waste management performance, for various reasons their potential has not been fully utilised in this LGA.

Overall, the relationship between NGOs and the LGAs is difficult to characterise. The extent of their involvement with the council appears to differ depending on the type of NGO. The LGAs have a very limited engagement with the social

NGOs included in this study, and there seem to be no instances of their involvement with the council's decision-making process; on the other hand, the environmental NGOs do participate quite considerably. The only aim that the social NGOs share with the council is to ensure that projects and activities designed for the residents are implemented successfully. Owing to their small organisational structure in comparison with the LGAs, and their closer relationship with the residents, social NGOs act as an executing agent and a mediator between the residents and the council in fostering a closer relationship between the two. In contrast, the environmental NGOs are more involved and their views are sought by the LGAs. The NGOs' involvement in the decision-making structure through representations has been evident during this study. Even so, their involvement is still limited and their ability to exercise influence remains uncertain.

This also proved that NGOs involved in this study are deemed legitimate as they are socially acceptable by the LGAs. In particular their important role in promoting engagement with other groups of stakeholders are acknowledged by the LGA managers. It can therefore be said that in the case of the NGOs, legitimacy as a stakeholder attribute does, to a certain extent, have an impact on the prioritisation practiced by the LGAs interviewed.

6.2.3.3 Councillors

During this study, it has been discovered that the councillors are perceived as a powerful group. According to the managers, the influence of the councillors is rather significant particularly regarding the general sustainable waste management agenda. Their influence, one way or another, affects the implications of sustainable waste management practices:

I have certainly noticed in the last 12 months, with economic recession, it isn't perhaps receiving the same political support it did 2 years ago." (Manager 2A)

The LGA managers often regard the councillors as being influential in overturning their proposals and decisions. At times, the councillors' decisions, although

intended to protect the public, nevertheless contradict the general objective of waste management as specified by the council:

“I have been here for a number of years and every year, I try to push through – would we consider charging (for bulky waste collection) this year? And every year, it’s a no. They (the Councillors) were very proud of the fact that it is free because they feel politically that it’s what the electorates want. So, you have to go along with that although our waste minimisation objective in general will not succeed.” (Manager 2A)

This view reflects the degree of influence in decision-making power afforded to the councillors in matters of waste management. It was also highlighted by the same manager that the councillors’ political power is an important impetus in promoting the LGAs’ sustainable waste management agenda:

“Not everything can be a priority and where recycling and waste management was the flavour of the month 2-3 years ago, I have certainly noticed in the last 12 months, with economic recession, it isn’t perhaps receiving the same political support it did 2 years ago.” (Manager 2A)

These accounts suggest that councillors are very much involved in the delivery of waste management services, and imply they can exert influence on the day-to-day operations of the LGAs. For instance, a manager in Council A stated:

“In City A, Members (i.e. Councillors) are involved in every single aspects of service provision. And I encourage that because if we keep them happy, it means that the residents are certainly happier.” (Manager 2A)

Despite this observation, the councillors still perceived themselves as having less power to influence changes:

“I don’t feel like I’m carrying any power at all.” (Councillor 4B)

This perception may be explained by the fact that demands from the public are at times given priority over the councillors’ own concerns. The same councillor comments:

“Sometimes I think certain things are a very good idea but my people don’t think so. So, I have to move away” (Councillor 4B)

In terms of their influence in the engagement process, councillors have an important role to play in promoting better engagement due to their significant connection with the public. It appears that the responsibility of councillors for their electorate dominates their other accountabilities. It can therefore be argued that the residents could become a powerful stakeholder group if they were to exercise their influence through their elected Member:

“As an elected Member, you’re there to do the will of the people. You have to be mindful of that; sometimes you have your own personal views. Sometimes that has to be grounded that your views and the views of the people you have been spoken to is a different one.” (Councillor 4B)

However, one interviewee raised an important point about how councillors sometimes had to deal with conflicts, which may jeopardise their role as a voice for the residents:

“They’re still doing what they feel is right for the service when they should be serving the needs of the population.” (Officer 2B)

The effectiveness of councillors in this role may also be affected by their own weakness in addressing issues raised by residents, an observation made by the following officer:

“The problem is, how do you become a Councillor? They don’t necessarily have the skill, qualification and experience. Obviously, they need to have the skill to involve people, not only to negotiate but also be able to support people’s courses of action.” (Officer 3B)

While many other respondents blamed a lack of training, one interviewee hoped for a change in the way councillors carried out their duties:

“I think, a lot of time, Councillors think they can just go and shout to the services and get something done whereas that’s not what it is about. It’s about working in partnership with the services and mediating what is happening with the residents. It’s more of looking at how we come to a position of compromise.” (Officer 2B)

It is nevertheless evident that the councillor is an influential stakeholder of the LGAs. For instance, they are able to override previously agreed decisions

(Observation Notes – Meeting 2, Council A) as well as impose pressure on LGA staff to deliver results (Observation Notes – Meeting 1, Council A; Meeting 1, Council C) and provide directions for day-to-day staff operation within the LGA (Officer 4B). Not only are councillors involved in the decision-making processes and structures within the LGAs, they are also able to shape the waste management policies.

6.2.3.4 Private Waste Contractors

Findings suggest that private waste contractors are the most powerful and influential among LGAs stakeholder groups. They are the only group that have a contractual agreement with the LGAs, aspects of which dictate the way sustainable waste management is practiced in this area as well as helping to determine policy development:

“In terms of development of service, we have to engage with our contractors because we need to deliver the stuff somewhere. And if they can’t handle it, there’s no point in collecting it in the first place. So they certainly have an important role for policy development in terms of material and in terms of the way we present the material to them. They’re very, very conscious on what we’re collecting.” (Manager 2A)

The same respondent admitted that the objectives of both the private waste contractors and the LGAs were incorporated into their contractual agreement. Both parties have dissimilar concerns: the LGAs have to meet targets set by the central government, while the contractors aim to make a profit for services delivered. However, they ensured that all these objectives were reflected in their contractual agreements, indicating an inherent partnership :

“Obviously, with the contract that we have, we are all working towards, common goals and common elements within that. At the end of the day, our core concerns are very similar but looking at it from a different angle.” (Manager 6C)

The influence of private waste contractors in stakeholder engagement practices is also evident from the way in which the LGAs reacted to the private contractors' demands.

“There has been a time when it is excessive over what our expectations are. It could be due to a new kind of stream they have just got into, and we would expect them to get it right again and again.” (Contractor 1A)

It would therefore be appropriate to assert that the claims of the private waste contractors receive the highest salience from the managers compared with those from other stakeholder groups, especially in times of conflict, a view that is supported by the following interviewee:

“If there is conflict, we don't work using a blank sheets of paper which we develop the services, instead we have the infrastructure of disposal contract that can only accept waste presented in certain formats. So, we've already reduced the blank piece of paper to a small circle.” (Manager 2A)

Messages were sent out to residents highlighting the importance of minimising the contamination level in an attempt to address a clause in the agreement, which stipulates that the contamination level should not be exceeded:

“The bad news is that there has been recently a rise in contamination – that is the wrong items being put in the bin or presented the wrong way. Here are some useful reminders to help you get it right!” (Council A Leaflet 4, p.3)

Generally, respondents representing the private waste contractor companies appear to be satisfied with the way in which the LGAs have met their expectations. This may be explained by the steps taken by the LGAs to ensure that this is achieved:

“I would say that we have a good working relationship that we would be able to balance the company's (i.e. the private waste contractor) concerns and drivers as such and obviously making sure that the company is satisfied within that.” (Manager 6C)

The needs of the private waste contractors, as stipulated in their contractual agreement with the LGAs, have thus resulted in the LGAs meeting their expectations:

“I think when we have issues, we are working in partnership and very closely with the Council, we have been able to inform them with the area where we faced problems of contamination and they have responded to that, sent their Inspectors out and check the bins and again went back to say – you need to do better.” (Contractor 1A)

The claims of the private waste companies are quite dominant in comparison with claims by other stakeholder groups, even those from the public, who are, supposedly, important stakeholders:

“The residents’ voices has been listened to but it is weighed against the other interest, such as conditions stated in the agreement [with the waste contractors]” (Manager 3B)

As mentioned by the respondent, the agreement signed by the LGA and the private waste contractor in relation to waste management services gives rise to legitimacy attribute result in greater salience received from the LGAs managers. In this study, the private waste contractors therefore appear to be one of the most influential groups in terms of determining the direction of engagement with the council.

As described in Chapter Five, a twenty-five-year PFI contract between Council C and their private waste contractor has resulted in the nature of the relationship between the two being advanced to a higher level. For example, although the waste management department in Council C formulated the basic engagement strategies, the contractor’s engagement team was invited to give input and contribute to the final plans for implementing the engagement strategy. During the execution of engagement projects and activities, a partnership was formed between the staff of waste management and the private contractors. An appropriate division of duties between the staff was made in implementing the engagement plans, in terms of the stakeholder groups for each team.

For all three LGAs involved in this study, the influence of this particular stakeholder group in the formulation of strategies for advancing a sustainable waste management agenda is relatively significant compared with that of other stakeholder groups. It appears that the LGAs have always ensured that they act in the best interests of the private contractors. As the only stakeholder group with economic power, the nature of its relationship with the Council is dissimilar to other stakeholder groups. Its needs and demands are given high priority in ensuring that collected recyclables are of a certain quality, as stipulated in the contractual agreement.

The definition provided by Savage et al., (1991, p.61) is appropriate for the purpose of the present evaluation of the extent of stakeholders' power, i.e. a powerful stakeholder is a party that has an 'interest in the actions of the organisation with the ability to influence it'. Co-existence of these two components is therefore essential: a stakeholder must have the interest and be capable of exerting influence. Less powerful stakeholders are therefore those who are unable to affect the outcome in any way. In determining the powerful stakeholders of the LGAs, it is less complicated to establish the first component, i.e. those who have an interest, than the second. It has become evident throughout the study that all stakeholders have an interest in the actions of the LGAs, although the extent of their interests might differ. For instance, the residents appeared to be less motivated than other groups of stakeholders to become involved in the programmes and activities held by the LGAs.

The second component of the definition provided by Savage et al., (1991) in determining the powerful stakeholders is that only those who have the ability to influence are indeed powerful. In making this evaluation, the extent of influence from each stakeholder group has been considered. It has earlier been demonstrated that the residents' expectations were deemed as being met on achieving the targets set by central government. The ability to get their voices heard was not fully utilised, thus it is speculated that they were the least powerful;

not only were they perceived to be least powerful by other stakeholders, they themselves felt the same way, i.e. both perceived powerlessness and relative powerlessness were high.

Furthermore, the NGOs representatives suggest that they have little influence in affecting changes within the LGAs. The only indication of influence by the NGOs is in their involvement in various committees set up by the LGAs. Because of this, the extent of their influence is considered greater than those of the residents.

As for the councillors, although the managers and officers perceive them as having an influence on the waste operations of the LGAs, they themselves feel that they have less influence in exercising their power within the LGAs. Thus, political power receives greater attention from the managers.

In the case of the private waste contractors, their demands and claims are highly prioritised by the managers, indicating the extent of their influence both in the engagement process as well as in developing and implementing the engagement. This is particularly the case for Council C due to the 'close' relationship with the private waste contractors. This study finds that both the council's perceived powerlessness and its relative powerlessness are low as the contractors realised the extent of their influence. This has also been acknowledged by the other stakeholders and the managers. The stakeholders with economic power tended to be the one of the powerful stakeholders in this study.

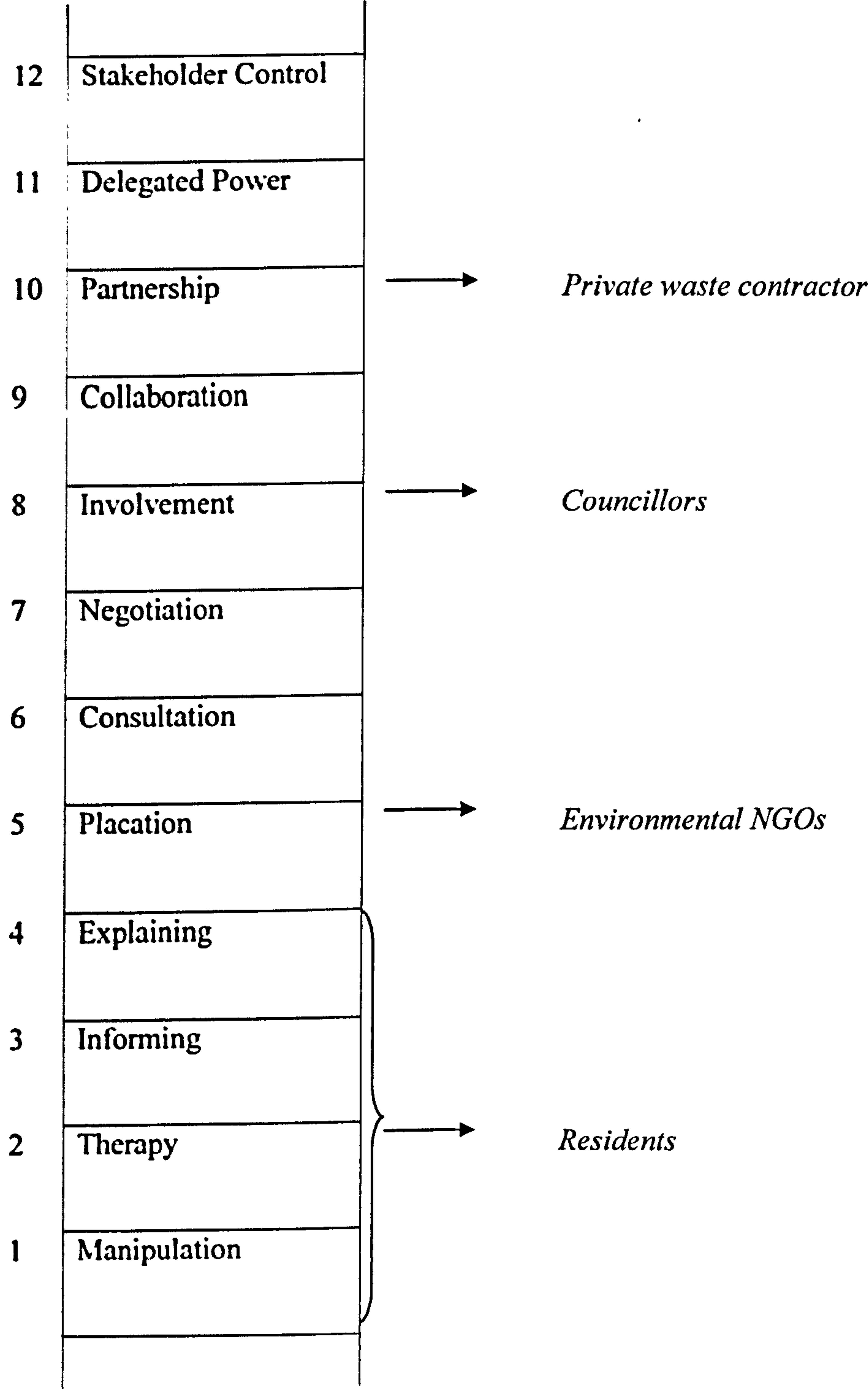
6.2.3 Stepping on the Participation Ladder

By consolidating the evaluation of each stakeholder's level of influence in the LGAs, analysed in the preceding section, this section assesses the way in which the LGAs manage their relationship with each member of the stakeholder group. It is important, firstly, to evaluate the extent of each stakeholder's involvement from two aspects: their involvement in the engagement process as well as in the

decision-making process. The extent of their involvement is then mapped onto Friedman and Miles' ladder of engagement (2006).

This section will discuss in greater detail how the engagement of various groups of stakeholders included in this study is mapped onto the Ladder of Participation developed by Arnstein (1969). More importantly, it will attempt to obtain understanding of issues at different levels of stakeholders' participation as well as the underlying prioritisation of respective stakeholders. By consolidating all evidence obtained in Chapter Five, as well as the findings on the level of power held by each stakeholder group presented in the preceding section, the extent of stakeholder involvement can then be mapped onto the ladder as follows:

Figure 6.1: Ladder of Stakeholder Management and Engagement



(Adapted from: Friedman and Miles, 2006)

There was some degree of evidence of the intention to control or manipulate the stakeholders’ opinion within the selected LGAs, although generally it appeared

that there was a genuine attempt to allow for stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process. However, it was also clear that LGAs have little intention of relinquishing decision-making powers as none of the stakeholders managed to ascend to the top of the ladder.

Engagement with the residents tended to be between rung 1 – Manipulation and rung 4 – Explaining, although not many instances indicated the nature of engagement at the bottom two rungs of the ladder. At rungs 1 and 2, engagements were undertaken, though not for the purpose of enabling people to participate in planning or conducting programmes, but only to enable the power holders to educate or change the attitude of the participants. It can be observed that engagements with the residents mainly occurred between rungs 3 and 4. In day-to-day engagement with residents within Council A and C, for example, the nature of engagement involved the one-way flow of related information regarding their rights and responsibilities towards waste management practices. Information was disseminated at the later stage of planning with little opportunity for residents to influence the programme designed for them. Although channels were provided for feedback, the residents did not have the power to negotiate. The most regular engagement tools for this group of stakeholders were leaflets, pamphlets, newsletters, posters and responses to inquiries. The information conveyed was restricted to reporting relevant news, such as the consequences of unsustainable waste management practices on global weather patterns, as well as presenting normalised data such as the cost of waste collection per resident. Although some comprehensive reports were released, they formed a one-way communication with the residents. For residents in Council B, the extent of engagement was mapped higher than for those in Councils A and C. The participation of residents in Council B was classed as the 'Explaining' nature, i.e. rung 4, based on avenues provided by the LGA to enable the residents to query decisions regarding the newly proposed waste treatment plant.

The environmental NGOs are placed at rung 5 – Placation, as they did exert some influence over the process, although an element of tokenism was still apparent. There was strong evidence of a placation strategy on the part of the LGAs in placing the NGOs on such committees as the Regeneration and Sustainability Committee and the Climate Change Committee, thus allowing these stakeholders to plan and provide advice. However, the continued right to judge the legitimacy and the feasibility of the advice remained with the power holders. The engagement with the environmental NGOs still came under the broad category of tokenism since there was no evidence that their advice and comments were heeded; similarly engagement was limited to their representation on various committees, with no engagement approach specifically tailored for this group of stakeholder.

The councillors are placed on Rung 8 – Involvement. They had a certain level of power in influencing decisions in the case of waste management services. Since councillors represented the voice of the residents, it could be argued that the residents should be placed on the same rung; however, this particular role of the councillors was unconvincing within the selected LGAs. As illustrated in the earlier sub-section, the councillors pursued a political agenda. They were afforded some decision-making power; further, their advice and recommendations were sought before decisions were made.

The private waste contractor is placed at rung 10 – Partnership, the highest ranked stakeholder group for these LGAs. Partnership, according to Friedman and Miles (2006) involves “substantial joint activities and joint process leading up to joint outcome” (p.176). At this rung of the ladder, power was redistributed through negotiation between the council and this stakeholder group, with rules established in the contractual agreement between the two parties. The decision-making responsibilities were shared between the LGAs and the private waste contractor whereby terms agreed in the agreement provided the direction of sustainable waste management practices in the LGAs. At this level, joint activities resulted in some decision-making power being transferred to the stakeholder (Friedman and Miles,

2006). It appears, therefore, that in this case, the private waste contractors form the most powerful stakeholder group of the LGAs. Contractual rights held by the private contractor appear to result in higher salience and to influence the engagement agenda as well as the process itself.

6.3 Linking Engagement to Accountability

This section presents the data gathered for the purpose of addressing the final research objective of this thesis, i.e. to evaluate how aspects of accountability are affected by engagement activities undertaken by the LGAs. Following prior studies that promote ‘deliberation’ as a way of depicting accountability (Erkkila, 2007) and establish the possibility of engagement as a way of demonstrating accountability (Burchell and Cook, 2006; Neligan, 2003), this section explores the way in which engagement as practised by the LGAs has, to a certain extent, affected accountability.

Data from interviews has revealed a mixed perspective on this issue. A few respondents directly associated engagement to accountability:

“Engagement has everything to do with accountability, for example, a dialogue is about people feeling that they are involved in things on a day to day basis.” (Officer 7C)

“I think it (engagement) does promote accountability, without that where do we start from.” (Councillor 1A)

Another respondent has directly associated engagement as a way of promoting accountability by becoming *more* accountable to the stakeholders:

“By engaging, that’s the way to be *more* accountable.... You can’t achieve accountability if you’re not letting people know what you want to achieve and why you want to achieve it.” (Officer 5C, emphasis added)

Thus, being accountable involves giving clarification to relevant stakeholders on targets that LGAs need to achieve as well as explaining the need for this.

However, there were also interviewees who felt that engagement is not at all related to the accountability of LGAs:

“I don’t think that engagement has anything to do with accountability because what happen was [engagement was performed] just to tick that box.” (Officer 2B)

Another respondent revealed a similar opinion, emphasising that the pursuit of engagement activities is mainly to elicit information and feedback from the public.

“I don’t think engagement has anything to do with accountability. Engagement exercise is just confirming what we already know because we always encourage our residents to give us feedback. It is done to let people know that we are still keen to get their views and to receive information from them.” (Manager 4B)

It can be summarised that there is some misunderstanding of what accountability implies. It was rather surprising to note that the above statement was made by an officer of Council B who is responsible for several engagement projects for a particular ward. This reflects how the officers themselves have little faith in stakeholder engagement programmes delivered, and view the activities as a mere ‘box-ticking exercise’. This could be due to the way accountability is perceived by the LGAs officials in relation to sustainable waste management practices, which focuses only on the management of information expected by the residents:

“Accountability for public service is about management of information system. The residents are not interested in sharing the information, they just want to know their ward information and how they compare with the rest of the city.” (Manager 4B)

Accountability in relation to an organisation is ‘the readiness or preparedness of an organisation to give an explanation and a justification to relevant stakeholders for its judgment, intentions, acts and omissions when appropriately called upon to do so’ (Crane and Matten, 2004, p.55). However, the above statement indicates that the manager felt accountability is closely associated with the provision of information to the residents and does not involve aspects of explanation and justification.

6.3.1 Elements of Accountability within Engagement

Within this sub-section, elements of accountability present within engagement activities are assessed. Literature suggests that in depicting accountability, there are several aspects to be considered. To evaluate the extent to which engagement may have an impact on accountability, the researcher has therefore first assessed the presence of elements of accountability from the way engagement is performed by the LGAs. For stakeholder engagement to have an impact on accountability, there must be elements of giving an account and holding to account, which include the right to hold a debate.

At its simplest, giving an account should involve the provision of information since information is the 'raw material for the account' (Stewart, 1984, p.26). Delivering information is important to ensure that stakeholders are made fully aware (Phillips, 2003). In this regard, there appears to be sufficient means used for dissemination of information to the stakeholders:

"In engaging with our stakeholders, information was put on the website and the press where everyone can get more details. Information was also sent to our wide range of stakeholders; PCTs and interest groups. Furthermore, we have road shows throughout the City." (Manager 3B)

Furthermore, as illustrated in this study, all engagement programmes and activities held by the LGAs involve some provision of information to their stakeholders, via, for example, leaflets sent out to residents and briefings on new recycling programme in every area. Stakeholders are also asked through surveys, questionnaires and focus groups to state their level of satisfaction with services provided by LGAs. The study found there are various means of stakeholder engagement practices, which offer different kinds of information to the stakeholders according to their perceived needs, with no important groups omitted. These practices can be formal and informal, routine and ad-hoc, and make use of written, spoken, electronic and other media.

A further evaluation of accountability is provided by Stewart (1984), who suggests three aspects to consider: the forms of information, their method of publication and the right to access them. The forms of information provided to the majority of the stakeholders are clearly intended to educate and promote awareness of sustainable waste management practices. It can be argued that this would not necessarily result in greater responsiveness, as the provision of information is not the same as an exchange of information. Stewart emphasises the particular importance of the right to access, arguing that the stakeholder must be given access to information provided by the focal organisation. Accessibility is not an issue in the present study in relation to the general provision of information of sustainable waste management practices and programmes. However, it is conjectured that the public, in particular, might not be able to access specific information, especially in relation to policies and decisions made on, for instance, the delivery of recycling programmes in their area, due to the lack of feedback mechanisms for this purpose. The extent to which this aspect fulfils accountability between the LGAs and their stakeholders is yet undetermined since these engagement mechanisms do not allow stakeholders to impose sanctions on the LGAs, apart from casting their votes in the local elections - in this respect, it can be argued that the lapse of time between local elections prevents stakeholders from channelling sanctions and their dissatisfaction through the local election process.

Gray and Jenkins (1986) also caution that provision of information does not constitute the whole aspect of accountability, as stakeholders need to assess 'the extent to which responsibilities has been properly discharged' (p. 139). This therefore introduces another element of accountability, namely, holding to account. As described by a respondent, engagement allows councillors and LGAs to be held to account for their actions:

"I think the public meeting is good. They certainly call us to account; we have to say what we're doing, why we are doing it, why we haven't done (things) and we answers questions."
(Councillor 1A)

Similarly, engagement enables NGOs to be informed about and question activities within the LGA's structure:

“There's a sort of accountability in practice of doing things in a transparent way, which is where we come in, I suppose.” (NGO3A)

In holding a person or organisation to account, Stewart and Walsh (1994) argue that there must be an avenue for stakeholders to debate purposes, practice and performance. That avenue should allow the process of argument with an exchange of opinions and viewpoints. In particular, it should focus on ensuring that relevant information obtained from the stakeholders is included during the analysis of feedback. However, the ability of engagements observed in this study to facilitate such a process is doubtful. Many respondents also admitted that the current structure does not sufficiently reflect on feedback from the stakeholders. Moreover, it is unclear how this feedback feeds into the planning and implementation of future programmes and activities:

“I don't always think that we utilise the result from engagement in an honest way as we should. I don't think any Council does. We certainly don't do enough of going back to people and face up to the decisions we have made.” (Manager 1A)

According to several managers and other officers of the LGAs, there is very limited evidence of how information obtained from stakeholder engagement exercises may bring about change (Manager 1A; Officer 4B). An important element of accountability that should therefore be present within engagement is the ability to provide feedback to stakeholders regarding the decisions taken and the impact of those decisions, as well as how information obtained via engaging has been fed into the decision-making process. Recognising the importance of feeding back to the stakeholders, an interviewee felt that inability to do this had defeated the whole purpose of engaging:

“What is the point of doing it (engaging) if you don't do anything with the findings; you know if the result that you get doesn't really feed into the process. What is the point, really? And I think that bit was missing currently.” (Officer 2B)

In summary, this sub-section has presented elements of accountability as fulfilled by engagement. With regard to the first element, i.e. giving an account, stakeholder engagement fulfilled this sufficiently. However, in terms of holding to account, stakeholder engagements practised so far do not adequately allow for stakeholders to engage and debate over matters. An assessment now follows of the impact of stakeholder engagement practices on the accountability of LGAs.

6.3.2 Impact of Engagement on Dimensions of Accountability

An important issue raised by this thesis is whether stakeholder engagement practices have affected the accountability of the LGAs. In this respect, many respondents provided a link between the two. For example, obtaining stakeholders' opinions about their needs and meeting their expectations through engaging were viewed as a way of demonstrating public accountability:

“Because we’re all officers working for the Council, we want to feel that we’re doing what people want. We don’t want to be doing things that people don’t want.” (Manager 2A)

According to one interviewee, the conduct of residents' meetings provides the platform for the LGAs to be held accountable to the public for their doings, thus allowing for their accountability to be transparent:

“By having Neighbourhood Charters and through neighbourhood forums, effectively it is about being able to hold service provider (the Council) accountable for the services that they are delivering in the local neighbourhood.” (Officer 3B)

A councillor concurred with this, stating in particular that engagement permits them to provide justification and explanation to the stakeholders for their actions and decisions:

“I think public meeting is good. They certainly call us to account; we have to say what we’re doing, why we’re doing it, why we haven’t done certain things and we are able to answer questions (Councillor 1A)

The responses gathered from the interviewees demonstrate that several dimensions of accountability are more important than others while undertaking engagement. Most respondents highlighted prevailing public and political accountability. Pendelbury et al. (1994) argue that public sector organisations owe greater accountability to the public, who are their customers, rather than to Parliament. However, the responses indicate otherwise since accountability to the central government seems to be a very dominant factor, influential in steering engagement practices:

“The Government seems to think that people will change their lifestyle for £40 or less a year. Unfortunately, that is what the Government is saying now and that it is possible to change people’s attitude for that amount. I’m not convinced in that but we still have to shift our campaigns to that area to make people want to change.”
(Manager 4B)

The fact that LGAs are accountable to many other stakeholder groups has resulted in public accountability being compromised, which in turn has led to conflicts between the different dimensions of accountability. For instance, a councillor reflected how at times public accountability might have to be compromised in favour of accountability to Parliament:

“We are the Executive in-charge with making executive decisions and sometimes those decisions don’t necessarily find favour with the general public but we still have to take those hard decisions on the basis of greater good. Not always easy (Councillor 5B)

This councillor from Council B was referring to how they had to proceed with the decision of building the proposed waste treatment plant despite significant local opposition from the public and the relevant NGOs. Other LGA managers cited several similar occasions when public demands and expectations obtained from engagement exercises had to be ignored due to targets and other constraints from the central government.

Budget constraints are also imposed on the LGA by central government, affecting public accountability:

“Well, we have to be accountable to the electorate but then we can’t always achieve what they want sometimes, you know. Their demands, expectations aren’t almost realistic for budgetary reasons.” (Councillor 2A)

Further, there are comments about how personal accountability might conflict with public accountability, particularly in the case of those councillors who functioned as the voice of the people:

“There are things that I sometimes disagreed with my political party and voted no against it because my people thought that against it. So, yeah, it is a balancing act but you have to remember that you’re elected to do the job by the people and it is them that you are accountable to.” (Councillor 4)

It also appears that in managing the stakeholder relationship within LGAs, the personal accountability of managers and officers is the least important:

“Generally, it is not about a person being personally responsible. All people want to know is there’s someone that I can talk and say – I’ve got a problem with this and I can have the confidence that someone is going to take my complaint and enquiry or if they can’t deal with it themselves, they can get someone else to deal with it.” (Manager 4B)

6.3.3 Engagement as a Mechanism of Accountability

As discussed in Chapter Three, this thesis proposes engagement as a mechanism of accountability, so it is important to evaluate the way in which engagement fits the criteria for this. Additionally, the way engagement is able to demonstrate accountability in comparison with other established means should be considered. In particular, this section explores those aspects of accountability provided by stakeholder engagement practices, which are not achieved by other established means, for example, by annual report disclosure.

Hodge and Coghill (2007) strongly advocate an element of openness in a mechanism for accountability. In the context of the present study, this implies the

need to ensure that LGAs are transparent over their delivery of procedures and programmes. It is argued that stakeholder engagement activities can provide the opportunity for this. An NGO representative commented:

“There’s a sort of accountability in practice of doing things in a transparent way, which is where we come in, I suppose.” (NGO3A)

Accountability within stakeholder engagement practices is also valuable in that it allows for a timely and interactive interface between the LGAs and stakeholders, as well as interactions between the stakeholders themselves:

“Obviously, we got various forms of engaging with the people, you know through emails and phone. I thought weekly surgery is quite good as somebody who has any issue can always meet us. They can also ring us and resolve the issue over the phone shortly afterwards.” (Councillor 1A)

As indicated by another interviewee, current means of stakeholder engagement has enabled stakeholders to scrutinise the operationalisation of the LGAs as well as the decisions made by them:

“I feel that the current structure of engagement was able to scrutinise the council and what they do. If they don’t respond, we’ve got quite a strong authority in order to scrutinise what they do. The Council also have a duty to consult with the Commission should they decide to do anything major within the organisation.” (Councillor 7C)

However, the criticism could be made that the privilege of monitoring the LGAs’ operation and decision-making is granted to only several ‘powerful’ stakeholders who sit on the Scrutiny Commission. Less influential stakeholders such as the public and pressure groups are unable to sway decisions. Engagement also enables an ‘audit’ to be performed by an external party whenever the need arises:

“Whatever complaints we received from [the] stakeholders are taken to the [Scrutiny] Commission, who can actually invite specialist people from the outside to do a review on it and gather evidence. So I think the Scrutiny Commission works very well in getting to the bottom of things and they can even scrutinise what the Cabinet and Councillors are doing and I think they are doing quite a good work really.” (Councillor 1A)

In this respect, engagement could be as valuable as other mechanisms such as annual report disclosure. Nonetheless, there are aspects of engagement, which are inferior to other mechanisms. Coy et al., (2001) give a reminder that the value of annual report disclosure rests on the provision of a wide range of summarised relevant information in a single document which allows for comprehensive understanding, and which is available to stakeholders. However, this study has found no evidence that information is provided to enlighten stakeholders on the efficient and effective use of resources, an important feature in depicting accountability of an organisation (ibid.). Despite the fact that the dissemination of information through stakeholder engagement is comprehensive, it has to be sought through various means, and unless it was all available to stakeholders, it was likely they would obtain incomplete information.

One interviewee recommended that more aspects should be situated in stakeholder engagement practices as potential mechanisms of accountability:

“Engagement could be used as a mechanism of accountability but the bar needs to be raised. You would have to say at the outset- this is how we are going to feedback to you and this is how we are going to show you how that is influencing our strategy. And this is how we are going to monitor the feedback, because if we don’t have that two-way process, then it is all meaningless.” (Officer 2B)

This section has illustrated the extent to which stakeholder engagement procedures and practices act as mechanisms for depicting accountability. As proposed by the above interviewee, several aspects need to be considered by organisations in order to enhance their stakeholder engagement process.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has discussed how engagement differs between various groups of stakeholders of the three selected LGAs. In evaluating this, the role of power as a stakeholder attribute has been explored. Many respondents view power as an important element for stakeholder engagement practices, since a generally perceived feeling of powerlessness affects the tendency for stakeholders to participate. Power is also significant in prioritising stakeholders' demands and claims, as those with power to control resources or economic power like the LGAs managers granted the private waste contractors greater salience. This supports the observation made by Mitchell et al. (1997) that managers give greater attention to stakeholders who demonstrate more power and influence.

An analysis has been carried out on the influence of several groups of stakeholders in the LGAs engagement process. It has been discovered that private waste contractors are deemed the most influential group while the residents exert the least influence. Councillors form another group of stakeholders who are viewed by others as having some authority in determining sustainable waste management policies and practices, although many criticised their lack of influence as a voice of the residents. With regard to the NGOs as stakeholders, the nature of their relationship with the LGAs has been difficult to characterise. Although they are invited to sit on various committees within the LGAs, there seems to be no guarantee that their advice will be followed, since they are viewed as pursuing their own agenda. Several other respondents also questioned whether the NGOs are truly representative of the communities for whom they claim to act. There was also a feeling of 'perceived powerlessness' (Daake and Anthony, 2000) amongst the other stakeholders, the reasons for this tending to differ among the various groups.

The data from interviews has revealed a mixed perspective on the way in which engagement may affect accountability. A few respondents directly associated engagement with accountability while others perceived it differently. Engagement

has the capability to be a mechanism of accountability, and the performance of engagement in the LGAs meets the criteria for this. Further, the overall responses from the interviewees indicate that the ultimate aim of engagement is to be accountable to the stakeholders in respect of giving an account and holding to account. Engagement processes currently practiced by the LGAs seem to fulfil the first of these elements. They enable the LGAs to give an account to the stakeholders by providing information, which, although this does not constitute accountability as a whole, does represent giving an account in its entirety (Stewart, 1984). In this regard, Stewart further argues that a direct contribution of public accountability lies more in the element of giving an account than in the holding to account.

In investigating the criteria of accountability, the analysis has identified an additional feature of accountability, which is unrecognised in other established measures of accountability. The interactive nature of stakeholder engagement mechanisms made available to the residents by the councillors is one example of this. Similarly, the coalition between the stakeholders, such as that between the councillors and the residents, enables an effective face-to-face interaction and allows a timely response on issues arising.

This exploration of using stakeholder engagement as a mechanism for accountability has led to the recognition of a deficiency underlying the many processes of engagement. For instance, public meetings currently appear to be useful only for issues that are not controversial, nor has it been possible to obtain a full portrayal of the local population, as engagement does not appear to attract a complete cross-section of the public. It must also be acknowledged that engagement, as a whole does not yield complete information.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has provided a discussion on key themes emerging from the case study analysed. It has shown how the descriptive stakeholder theory approach

adopted in the analysis of the study helps to enhance understanding of attitudes towards stakeholder engagement and its practices in public sector organisations.

In this study, it can be seen that maintaining a wide number of stakeholder relationships through engaging is necessary for the organisations to achieve their objectives and targets. The benefits accruing from engagement can be valuable to both the stakeholders and to the LGAs. The involvement of stakeholders in programmes and activities organised by the LGAs would empower them to develop greater understanding, to participate in the decision-making process and to contribute to the achievement of targets set by the LGAs. More importantly, it is recommended that greater efforts can be directed by the LGAs towards groups that are difficult to reach and harder to convince.

The analysis discussed in this chapter has shown that the demonstration of power held by stakeholders results in them being granted greater salience by managers. It has been proved that managers' perceptions of the levels of power held by stakeholders play a significant role in establishing their priorities and deciding between competing interests. This observation counters the criticism that stakeholder theory does not assist managers in balancing the diverging interests of stakeholders (Kaler, 2006).

This chapter has discussed the role of power in stakeholder salience practised by the LGAs and has presented findings regarding the way in which engagement affects accountability. The following chapter will conclude this thesis and provide discussion of key findings of this study, i.e. how empirical results support, complement or contradict the existing literature in the area under study, as well as their implications for LGA practices. More importantly, it will specify the contributions made by this study, from both theoretical and managerial aspects.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Overview

This chapter brings together the conclusions of the findings and the implications of the whole study for both research and practice. In particular, it provides a brief summary of the empirical evidence in light of stakeholder theory and in relation to public sector accountability.

As described in Chapter Three, both ‘engagement’ and ‘consultation’ have been used interchangeably in order to refer to the stakeholder engagement practices performed by organisations. While there have been numerous studies into stakeholder engagement practices undertaken, most research relates to the context of commercial organisations (Amaeshi and Crane, 2006; Cumming, 2001; Freeman et al., 2007; Frooman, 1999; McVea and Freeman, 2005; Owen et al., 2001; Rasche and Esser, 2006; Unerman and Bennett, 2004). Studies have been widely conducted in the sustainable aviation and health sectors, but there has been less investigation into practices within other public sector organisations (Friedman and Miles, 2006), particularly in the area of sustainable waste management. By exploring waste management in the LGAs, a fuller understanding of stakeholder engagement practices in this context has been obtained.

In this study, stakeholder theory has provided a valuable theoretical framework in that it recognises the role of power in the management of stakeholder claims within the LGAs. The managers are more attentive to stakeholders who are perceived to be powerful and whose claims are prioritised over the demands of others. This study has contributed theoretically significant insights into under-researched stakeholder theory (Stoney & Winstanley, 2001). In an attempt to obtain further understanding of the complex and difficult concept of accountability (Parker and Gould, 1999; Sinclair, 1995), this thesis has to a certain extent established the link between stakeholder engagement and accountability. It

proposes stakeholder engagement as a mechanism of accountability. Several aspects of engagement have been analysed with the intention of using stakeholder engagement as an alternative mechanism. Other aspects, including the effect of engagement on the elements and dimensions of accountability, have been included. This study therefore provides greater understanding of stakeholder engagement and its impact on accountability.

The following section discusses the empirical evidence presented in the earlier chapters. In Section 7.3, the contributions of this study, from both theoretical and managerial perspectives, are presented. Section 7.4 identifies some limitations of the study and how they are addressed. Suggestions for future research are also included.

7.2 Discussion of Findings

A general review of sustainable waste management practices presented in Section 5.2 introduced the three LGAs involved in this study. Council B has recorded the highest recycling rate of the three authorities, which may be explained by the ball mill and anaerobic food recycling processes unavailable in the other two LGAs. Furthermore, the LGAs can be differentiated by the nature of their relationship with the stakeholders, especially the NGOs and private waste contractors. Council C's relationship with their waste contractor company through a PFI arrangement has, to a certain extent, affected several aspects of their engagement. In particular, the direction by the waste contractor in devising engagement signifies its greater level of influence in Council C's engagement process. On the other hand, Council B's relationship with the environmental NGOs in particular, has been very hostile.

In all three LGAs, rich patterns of interaction between stakeholders and the LGAs are noted. Most of the engagement activities performed by the LGAs focus on raising awareness as well as on educating and involving the stakeholders in projects and programmes. Another significant aspect of engagement to managers that has been observed in this study is that engagements are viewed as a

mechanism to facilitate the realisation of LGAs' targets and objectives. The stakeholder management approach is associated with the achievement of official targets, indicating stakeholder management as a strategic tool to be used to the LGAs' advantage. It is apparent that in all three LGAs there is no comprehensive approach to engagement founded on the principles of participation, empowerment and inclusion. There is also limited evidence of formalised engagement programmes for sustainable waste management in the LGAs. Instead, most of the engagement programmes and activities are integrated with other activities such as Fun Days.

In terms of the engagement strategies, the three LGAs do not appear to have a very systematic approach to stakeholder management in sustainable waste management; some managers feel unclear regarding which approach to adopt. In particular, for the residents, to whom the LGAs are most accountable, the emphasis is more on disseminating information. Engagement also involves providing educating exercises on the practice of basic sustainable waste management, such as ensuring that waste material is properly binned. This is particularly true for Councils A and C, who deal with immigrants and student groups. While avenues are provided for residents to initiate engagement, the support is required of other groups of stakeholders such as the NGOs or the councillors. A new insight into stakeholder engagement practice evidenced in this study is the reliance on faith groups as a connector between the LGAs and the stakeholders. According to the managers, the use of these groups has been very effective in encouraging better waste management practices. To date, there has been no previous mention of this association with faith groups in the literature, in either studies on stakeholder engagement or in the public sector. By working together with these groups, LGAs would be able to reach to a wider section of residents and involve their stakeholders more effectively.

Regarding the mechanisms used by the LGAs in engaging with their stakeholders, these include public/residents meetings, leaflets and promotional stands, as well as

monthly and bi-monthly newsletters. The LGAs rely heavily on leaflets and pamphlets as well as public meetings in engaging with its stakeholders. Such a one-way release of information denotes lack of stakeholder power, since that information normally relates to prior decisions. Two-way engagement is limited since the LGAs have been observed to respond merely to queries and feedback received from the public. It is concluded, therefore, that there should be a greater responsiveness in dealing with the stakeholders' wishes and needs. The researcher has also noted an apparent lack of willingness by stakeholders, particularly the residents, to engage in open and cooperative discourse, a reluctance which would seem to severely limit the potential of mechanisms of engagement such as public meetings as platforms in promoting mutual understanding and greater co-operation. When stakeholders are generally passive and react only on receipt of information, the responsibility lies with the LGAs to initiate and promote greater stakeholder involvement, particularly from the public. It is recommended that activities such as inculcating basic awareness on the importance of engagement and its associated benefits are as necessary as any other engagement projects. Owing to the reluctance of their stakeholders to engage with programmes and activities, the LGAs should strive to engage with certain segments of residents, such as those in the lower class group, as well as the immigrants.

The managers and officers of the LGAs have identified face-to-face means as the most effective mode of engagement, so it is suggested that LGAs should pool more resources into this. According to the respondents, the use of many different mechanisms would overcome difficulties in reaching a diverse range of stakeholder groups. This confirms findings by Petts and Leach (2000) and Richards et al., (2004) that diverse groups of stakeholders should be engaged differently, to avoid reliance on a particular means of engagement. Having a tailored approach of engagement to suit the needs of different stakeholders should be considered by the LGAs in an acknowledgement that diverse groups of stakeholders should be differentiated in terms of the dynamics of engagement: the

methods, the range of interactions and the variety of mechanisms to be provided to encourage greater participation.

The challenges faced by the LGAs appear to be grounded in two different streams of reasoning. The first of these relates to prevalent institutional factors including affordability and manpower. Issues such as constraints on budgets and inadequate staff allocation for stakeholder engagement activities have adversely affected the frequency of engagement activities implemented by the LGAs. Respondents have also commented that institutional barriers to engagement are a significant factor contributing to the effectiveness of engagements. The way the engagement structure itself is set up in the LGAs presents a further barrier discouraging feedback to their stakeholders. It is therefore important for the LGAs to revolutionise this process. This includes the establishment of a proper structure that enables them to listen and feedback and, most importantly, to reduce the bureaucracy involved in enabling the stakeholders' voices to be heard.

The second challenge is the need to address the stakeholders' attitude towards engaging with the LGAs. In Section 5.3.4.2, dealing with the attitudes of the stakeholders is cited as a primary challenge to effective stakeholder engagement practices. According to the data compiled, the lack of response from the residents could be due to apathy and consultation overload. Apathy stems primarily from feeling helpless in affecting change or an outcome in which the residents expect, or at least hope, to be part of the solution. Typically, they seek responsibility, yet if they are not granted control or their input is not invited, they may either decide they are not in fact responsible, or worse, they may feel responsible but unable to take action. This is clearly an important issue to be addressed by the LGAs, as a reluctance by stakeholders to engage would undoubtedly affect progress by the LGAs in achieving the targets of sustainable waste management as set by the central government. As changing public attitude and perception requires major educational programmes (Collins et al. 2006, p.138), effort could also be directed towards programmes designed specifically for problematic groups. Similarly, the

promotion of behavioural change, particularly to encourage stakeholders to recognise the importance of sustainable waste management practices, as well as in shifting the practice towards the top section of the waste management hierarchy, should be identified as an agenda to be taken up by all three LGAs. This should also include clear direction, open communication and assurance to residents that they have responsibilities and rights, which include an entitlement to input into decisions and their outcome.

As described in Section 5.3.5.1, stakeholder relationships are seen as important to both managers and stakeholders alike. The importance of engagement to managers is based on rationales such as the realisation that engagement facilitates the development and design of management of waste services in the LGAs, although one may argue the extent to which feedback is obtained through the decision-making process. Not only does engagement allow the waste management department to assess the extent of satisfaction towards services provided, it also permits the stakeholders to signify their expectations of services to be delivered. A further rationale is a feeling that engagement would enable stakeholder empowerment if stakeholders were involved in the decision-making process of the LGAs. This observation also confirms an assertion by Rawlins et al., (2005) that communication is critical within the LGAs' engagement strategy.

However, maintaining an image is for some respondents the main purpose of engagement, particularly from the perspective of the councillors. An interesting finding from this study is the way many perceive engagement as closely linked to the concept of communication. Moreover, some respondents even relate engagement to the need to portray a certain kind of image to the stakeholders, with reputation building as an implicit aim of engagement. This view has associated engagement with public relations exercises, thus confirming findings from related studies of stakeholder engagement practices in commercial organisations (Cumming, 2001), and partly explains the tendency for the LGAs to focus only on

the information-giving aspect of engagement rather than making a genuine gesture of ensuring stakeholders' involvement.

This research also provides empirical evidence regarding the role of perception in relation to relative stakeholder influence in LGAs. Not only are the managers' perceptions towards stakeholders important, but also the way stakeholders perceive their own influence and level of power is worthy of consideration. For example, despite the significant role of the residents' involvement as perceived by managers and officers, their perceived feeling of their own powerlessness has resulted in the tendency by residents not to participate in engagement projects and programmes. This confirms claims by Daake and Anthony (2002) that stakeholders' perception of their own power affects the tendency to be involved in the LGAs' decision making.

In Section 5.3.6, this study has argued a mismatch between stakeholders' objectives and expectations with those of the LGAs. More often than not, stakeholders do not have the same objectives as the managers, while outcomes that differ from those they expected would affect their perceived feeling of power. It is therefore important for LGAs to address this by reassuring residents of their rights and the power that they can exercise in affecting the desired change. Specific programmes that address this aspect could be devised and delivered to the residents as well as to other stakeholders. The LGAs could address passive stakeholder behaviour towards their initiatives by introducing procedures to ensure that the stakeholders view engagements positively.

Empirical evidence is also provided by this study of claims by Whysall (2004) and Friedman and Miles (2006) that there are many motivations underlying the conduct of stakeholder engagement practices. As discussed in Section 5.3.3, intentions for engagement performed by the LGAs have been grouped into rungs developed by Friedman and Miles' ladder of engagement (2006). More specifically, there are several occurrences of manipulating the perceived belief of

stakeholders in order to amend their expectations towards certain issues and persuade them to change their practices or submit themselves to the agenda of the LGAs. It is apparent that stakeholder engagement practices are generally performed with the intention of educating the stakeholders about sustainable waste management principles and process. This particular aim is vital, especially when LGAs are engaging groups of stakeholders such as immigrants. However, in the case of Council C, the LGAs work with the private waste contractors to achieve a desired outcome that benefits both parties.

This study also provides evidence that there have been efforts by the LGAs to empower their stakeholders, although the extent of empowerment granted could be further improved. Because research so far into the process of engagement is limited, the present study has posed a research question aiming to evaluate the process of engagement performed by LGAs. In doing this, criteria developed by Neligan (2003) has been used. For instance, the question of whether all sections of stakeholders are adequately represented is raised, as there is insufficient evidence of such occurrence in all three LGAs studied. Further, the LGAs have been criticised by the interviewees for not being responsive enough towards the stakeholders' needs and claims. In promoting empowerment, the LGAs should focus on activities that promote social cohesion amongst diverse communities in their areas. As well as the use of faith groups (mentioned in earlier paragraphs), LGAs should also consider working with other departments within the LGA itself to encourage greater participation from organisations such youth groups.

By extending the previous work on stakeholder engagement practices in the context of sustainable waste management (Bull et al., 2008); Petts, 1995a; 1995b; Petts and Leach, 2000) and compiling perspectives from both primary and secondary groups of stakeholders, this study also provides empirical support to the view that managers give more attention to those stakeholders with power, i.e. they engage more with stakeholders who are able to exercise greater influence in affecting change. In terms of influence, this study finds that private waste

contractors are the most powerful group of stakeholders, followed by the councillors. The next most influential group are the environmental NGOs. Residents are ranked the lowest in terms of their influence - although the residents engage the most, the level of engagement between the LGAs and the residents is situated on the lower rungs of Friedman and Miles' ladder of engagement (2006). It also appears that the residents' claims are only partially fulfilled by the LGAs, an observation inferred from their dissatisfaction over their perceived ability to influence the LGAs' decision-making process. By comparison, the high level of influence of the private waste contractor is evident in the way policies relating to sustainable waste management practices comply with the contractual agreement between the waste contractor and the LGAs. Similarly, their influence can also be implied from the way LGAs engage with other groups of stakeholders, whereby the residents are expected to comply with the waste contractors' demands for reduction in the level of contamination.

As discussed in the findings chapter, an important stakeholder with quite an impressive level of influence and power identified in this study is the central government. Although there was no direct input obtained from their perspectives, their influences were implied from feedbacks obtained from other respondents included in this study, namely the LGAs managers. The recycling target set for the LGAs to achieve has, in one way or another, affected the way engagement being practiced by the LGAs, in particular, the stakeholder groups commonly engaged in promoting sustainable waste management practices, as evident in Council A. Likewise, the economic power held by the central government, derived from allocation of funding to the LGAs, makes them an important stakeholder in the engagement practices undertaken by the LGAs.

By examining the role of power in the prioritisation process, it is evident that managers pay more attention to the expectations of stakeholder groups that are perceived to exhibit some element of power. This study regards stakeholders with economic power, i.e. the private waste contractors, as the most influential,

followed by the councillors, who hold political power. Similarly, the economic power held by the central government has somewhat dictated the engagement practices in LGAs. The resident groups and the general public are considered to be legitimate stakeholders and, indirectly, to exert some influence on councillors' actions; however, they are also often seen as having a passive attitude towards empowerment exercises and activities. They are viewed as being generally not very interested in becoming involved in engagement activities organised by the LGAs. Thus, in the case of the residents group, although they appear to have the legitimacy attribute, their lack of urgency as demonstrated from the apathy have resulted in lesser salience received in relation to stakeholder engagement practices.

Although the initial intention of this study is focus mainly on the effect of stakeholder power on the prioritisation process with regards to stakeholder engagement undertakings, several evidences of urgency and legitimacy were noted in the data obtained as presented in Chapter Six. However, with limited observations of urgency and legitimacy present in this study, the researcher is unable to form a solid conclusion in relation to these two attributes and their impacts on stakeholder engagement process. In the case of urgency, for instance, the only evidence available was that lack of urgency demonstrated by the residents have resulted in lesser engaging by the LGAs. This study did not find evidence to support whether greater urgency would result in greater engagement practiced by the LGAs with the residents. With all the available evidence on the role of power in the prioritisation process, the researcher is of the opinion that stakeholder power is a dominant attribute in determining salience with regards to stakeholder engagement process.

The study also provides empirical evidence that supports the findings of a previous study by Parent and Deephouse (2007) on the effect of stakeholder power on perceived salience. Furthermore, attention is drawn in Chapter Six to the effect of power on the stakeholder engagement process within the LGAs. Similar findings in previous studies, such those by Eesley and Lenox (2006) and

Welcomer (2002), indicate that stakeholders exert more influence over the LGAs when they are perceived to have a greater extent of power, thus suggesting the importance of managerial assessment of power.

The final aim of this research is to evaluate the way in which stakeholder engagement practices and processes affect accountability. To many respondents in this study, engagement is linked to the accountability of the LGAs. To others, the engagement performed merely seeks to manage disseminating information to the stakeholders. In evaluating the elements of accountability present in stakeholder engagement, the study views evidence from two elements, i.e. giving an account and holding to account (Parker and Gould, 1999). It has been observed that only the first element is satisfied through stakeholder engagement. Despite the various means of engagement used by the LGAs to satisfy the first element, this study has found that a lack of feedback mechanisms has an effect on this accountability element. This has therefore affected the evaluation of whether the second element, i.e. holding to account, is satisfied. The researcher argues that ineffective feedback mechanisms provided by the LGAs make it difficult for the stakeholders engage in proper debate with the LGAs. This in turn results in the unsuccessful promotion by the LGAs of 'relational responsiveness', as emphasised by Painter-Morland (2006). There should be more structure to accommodate stakeholder engagement activities as an accountability mechanism; aspects such as effective feedback and a two-way means of interaction between the LGAs and their stakeholders have to be considered.

While public and political accountability has been identified as important dimensions of accountability for the LGAs, findings also indicate that public accountability is somewhat compromised as the LGAs prioritise claims of other stakeholder groups, such as the waste contractors, over those of the general public and residents' groups. Similarly, budget constraints imposed by the central government on the LGAs has affected engagement practices, and affordability is a concern to the LGAs managers and officers. Conflicts amongst the accountability

dimensions are noted; the councillors perceive personal accountability as the least important.

With regard to the potential of stakeholder engagement as a process of accountability, engagement has enabled improved interaction between the LGAs and their stakeholders through more timely and interactive mechanisms of engagement. However, no single mechanism is sufficiently comprehensive to rely on as a base for decisions. Thus, in order to make informed decisions over issues, stakeholders need to explore all means possible in order to obtain a complete overview, and the process of engagement extended to ensure that it also represents accountability. In particular, the LGAs should focus on the provision of various avenues to encourage debate among the stakeholders. Additionally, several groups of stakeholders should receive more encouragement and assurance that their views are important and beneficial for the LGAs, by instilling their greater involvement.

In summary, the study concerns stakeholder engagement as practised by the LGAs and the way in which such engagement affects their accountability. Essentially, this study has shown that stakeholder engagements are undertaken with various intentions in mind on the part of the LGA officers and managers, and that power as a stakeholder attribute plays a significant role, affecting the prioritisation process of the LGAs.

7.3 Research Contribution

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the operationalisation of stakeholder engagement practices undertaken by public sector organisations, with perspectives obtained from several groups of stakeholder and LGA officials. It sheds light on the engagement process and practices in the organisational context, and is able to demonstrate a number of potential contributions, which are explained below.

7.3.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study extends previous work on stakeholder theory in the following ways:

Firstly, the present research extends the presumptions used in stakeholder theory with regard to the role of power as a stakeholder attribute. By focusing on the descriptive branch of the theory, this study evaluates the managers' actions and behaviour in engaging with various stakeholder groups, i.e. the way in which public sector managers behave in undertaking stakeholder engagement activities. Understanding of the role of power as an attribute in the stakeholder engagement process is therefore enhanced. The current study has shown that power and its significance in the engagement process hold different meanings among stakeholder groups. The findings suggest that power influences the way stakeholders' claims and demands are prioritised. By including representatives of stakeholder groups who possess one or more types of power as discussed in the literature, namely, formalistic, economic and political power (Freeman and Reed, 1983), this study has demonstrated that stakeholders with economic power are the most influential. The way in which their influence has affected other claims from the less influential groups has also been recognised. Evidence collected to support the theory indicates that it is not only important to identify the powerful stakeholder group, but also to consider the extent to which their claims are attended by the managers, as well as the degree to which it has affected LGA policy formulation. It is concluded that stakeholders are given greater managerial attention when they possess valued resources, in the case of this study these are economic resources, i.e. the way managers assess stakeholders' possession of power influences the LGAs' stakeholder management process.

Secondly, by evaluating the strategies adopted by the LGAs in managing stakeholder relationships, this study has addressed an important question in stakeholder literature regarding the assessment of the quality of stakeholder engagement in practice, and has provided empirical evidence of such engagement.

Applying several criteria for effective engagement, as established in the literature, this study has assessed the quality of stakeholder engagement performed.

Thirdly, an evaluation of the impact of engagement on accountability carried out by the researcher contributes to public sector literature and enhances understanding of accountability, particularly in relation to the way it can be demonstrated by organisations. Discussion focuses on the discharge of accountability by public sector organisations (Boyne et al., 2002; Coy and Pratt, 1998, Parker and Gould, 1999) and considers how the available mechanisms fail to match stakeholders' expectations (Boyne and Law, 1991; Carnaghan et al., 1996). The findings illustrate how elements of accountability could be partly depicted by engagement practices. In addition, the possibility of using engagement as an alternative mechanism of accountability, explored in this study, may be useful for managers.

7.3.1 Managerial Contribution

An important contribution arising from this study is the recommendation to managers to acknowledge the power of the stakeholders and their corresponding influence on the organisation. In particular, it is noted how the powerful stakeholders are able to exert influence by receiving greater salience from the managers. Stakeholders with the least power deserve to be given attention by the managers due to their legitimate status in the organisation. As evidenced in this study, powerful stakeholders can either help or threaten the LGAs. This reflection can assist managers in taking a more systematic and comprehensive approach to prioritising stakeholders.

It is also important to recognise that power can be implicitly present in stakeholders even though they are perceived by the managers as the least powerful. For instance, the residents' reluctance to engage and follow the sustainable waste management programme, discussed in Chapter Five, has adversely affected the LGAs' achievement of targets. The effect of this on the

focal organisation could be worse, if it goes unnoticed. This is an example of how negative actions that can instantiate actions power as what was mentioned by Lukes (2005). Similarly, the general findings indicate that the more influential a group perceives itself to be, the more likely it is to support the current mission of the organisation. The willingness to participate in decision-making and in the implementation of policy may be linked to their perception of their own influence and level of power. This study suggests that, at least to some stakeholder groups, perceived power is an important element that must be considered by LGAs and other organisations, or indeed in any empowerment programmes. As demonstrated in Chapter Six, perceived powerlessness might discourage the stakeholder from even participating, let alone initiating any empowerment programmes. A formal assessment process of stakeholder power may be useful. In addition, several findings of this study have illuminated some key design principles for managers introducing engagement programmes, in particular the reduction of the feeling of powerlessness among the stakeholders. These principles also include the practice of offering more opportunities for the stakeholders to discuss their concerns, as well as ensuring that people understand the decision-making processes, i.e. the extent to which they can affect the outcome of the process. By explicitly identifying this process, it is more likely that stakeholders will have better expectations of what it involves.

Another significant contribution of this study rests with its analysis of the operationalisation of stakeholder engagement. An exploration of stakeholder engagement initiatives undertaken by the LGAs is valuable to the managers, since perceptions, needs and expectations of various stakeholders groups are considered in ensuring more meaningful engagement. This study yields insights on best practices for implementing engagement initiatives that can be adopted by other public sector organisations in advancing their objectives for sustainable waste management. To a certain extent, the findings of this study, which incorporate insights from various stakeholders, will indirectly enlighten policymakers on effective strategies to promote sustainable waste management. It can also inform

managers of the present status of stakeholder groups on the ladder, by consulting the mapping of levels of stakeholders' involvement. Furthermore, it is hoped that managers in the LGAs recognise the need to work with other sections of society, such as community and faith groups, in promoting positive behavioural change towards sustainable waste management practices.

7.4 Limitation of Study

While the present study has provided theoretical and empirical contributions, in several respects, it is subject to some limitations. One of these is that the researcher has not observed and participated in many other stakeholder engagement activities performed by the LGAs. It may therefore be argued that some important engagement events may have been missed. Much of the data of this study is based on interviews conducted, in addition to a limited number of observations. The researcher has therefore had to rely to some extent on the memories and construction of the stakeholder engagement events provided by the organisational participants. Moreover, despite every effort to ensure that the views expressed are representative of the LGAs under study, some of these may be personal comments made by the individuals involved. In addressing this, several methods of data collection have been deployed to reduce problems of validity and reliability related to the time scale and other constraints. The researcher has also cross-referenced data obtained from interviews with information from other sources. Contact with several informants has been made over time via telephone calls and e-mail even after completion of the fieldwork, for the purpose of either clarifying issues or requesting for further information. Notwithstanding these efforts, it is acknowledged that the analysis of stakeholder engagement practices could be improved if the researcher has more time to spend in this field. Staying longer in the field would undoubtedly enable the researcher to observe a particular stakeholder engagement practice for a longer period and conduct a more detailed case analysis. It would also provide an opportunity for the researcher to examine the extent to which accountability of the LGAs could be further affected by engagement activities. Despite these limitations, the researcher believes that the

time spent on the field has been sufficient to observe, analyse and interpret various engagement events in order to produce rich descriptions and explanations of the issue, which provide insights into stakeholder engagement practices in public sector organisations.

Another limitation arises in the fact that had the researcher been able to compile views from every stakeholder group for all three LGAs in this study, would have provided a more comprehensive perspective of LGA stakeholders. As explained in Chapter Five, the researcher managed to obtain access to all intended stakeholder groups in Council A, but was unable obtain access to all representatives for both Councils B and C. For instance, there was no representative from residents' associations in Council B, and an NGO was not represented in Council C. If this had been possible, then better insights into the perceptions and attitudes towards stakeholder engagement process could have been expected. However, the data obtained provided a quite comprehensive portrayal of stakeholder engagement practices in LGAs in England. While many previous studies have documented significant problems in accessing data from the public sector, this study has, to a certain extent, succeeded in compiling a remarkable and sufficient amount of data taking into account the time limit of this doctoral study.

7.5 Avenues for Future Research

Based on the current study, several future research opportunities can be identified. Firstly, the analysis of this research focuses primarily on the level of LGAs; it would be interesting to extend the evaluation of how stakeholder engagements are operationalised and their relation to stakeholder saliency and the concept of accountability. A broader analysis could be adopted to include other types of public sector organisations, such as universities and health providers. In this way, the effect of stakeholder power on the prioritisation process could enable a theoretical generalisation to be made.

Secondly, as this study investigated only one stakeholder attribute, i.e. power, future study could also explore the impact of all the important stakeholder attributes, namely, legitimacy and urgency, as well as power, on the stakeholder engagement process and how the possession of these attributes influences the accountability of an organisation. By examining all three attributes together, the interdependence of one attribute with another (Harvey and Schaefer, 2001) could be further determined. Further research using the model proposed by Mitchell et al., (1997) would undoubtedly improve the understanding of saliency of this aspect.

Thirdly, future study could also conduct an in-depth analysis of the implementation of a particular stakeholder engagement project from inception to implementation. By focusing on a project, more could be learned regarding the extent of stakeholder involvement as well as the extent of stakeholder empowerment and its influence on the accountability of an organisation.

This study has also established the significant role of faith groups in promoting greater involvement from the residents as well as among those groups that are classified as difficult to reach. Further research, therefore, into the role of faith groups in promoting the sustainable waste management agenda, as well as encouraging their more effective involvement, will undoubtedly provide the unexplored link between sustainability and faith.

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Public accountability refers to an informal but direct accountability to the public, interested community groups and individuals (Sinclair, 1995, p.225) and is grounded on the 'right to know' by society (Coy and Pratt, 1998). According to many, this is the most important dimension of accountability (Law, 1999). Under this accountability, politicians give an account to the citizens, who may impose sanctions through the ballot box.

Managerial accountability, on the other hand, concerns with the accountability to politicians and line managers within the organisations and encompasses a wide range of activities and a number of different stakeholders. It is defined as 'the accountability of a subordinate to a superior in an organisation' (Stewart, 1984, p. 18) i.e. those at the lowest level account to their superior and so on through the ranks, and this continues up until to the politicians.

Political accountability embraces the notion of the public servant exercising authority on behalf of elected representatives who are accountable to the people. This is an important type of accountability within democracies whereby voters delegate their sovereignty to representatives who will delegate the majority of their authorities to a cabinet of ministers. The ministers then subsequently delegate their authorities to the civil servants.

Professional accountability refers to that owed by public servants to the professional association in which they belong. Professional bodies lay down codes with standards for acceptable practice that are binding for all members. These standards are monitored and enforced by professional and supervisory bodies on the basis of peer review. This dimension of accountability is particularly relevant for managers who offer their services in professional public organisation such as schools and hospitals.

Legal accountability is also a dimension of accountability as public sector organisations are also held to account for their actions through the legal system. Legal accountability is usually based on specific responsibility, formally or legally conferred upon authorities. This particular dimension of accountability is the most unambiguous type of accountability as the legal scrutiny will be based on detailed legal standards, prescribed by civil, penal or administrative statutes or precedent.

Market accountability involves accountability of public organisation to their consumers, which has been used in NHS and schools in the UK. According to Levagi (1995), accountability through the market has resulted in changes in the way things are done in the public sector such as the drawing up of contracts and the increased clarity over standards and targets that it involves. The structural changes within the public sector due to privatization and corporatisation of public entities as well as joint ventures and partnerships between private and public sector organisation result in the changing role of public sector organisation from a direct provider of services to a facilitator (Parker and Gould, 2000). This has brought about managers becoming more accountable due to greater delegated authority (ibid).

Appendix II

Themes	Questions	Keywords	Insights Expected
Stakeholder Definition and Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who would you classify as your stakeholder? Who is the most important stakeholder? Why? Who is the most influential? Why? Who is least influential / weakest? Why? Is there a situation when the weaker stakeholder becomes influential? What about the media? What about NGOs? Any particular ones are influential? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - central government - environment agency - public - consumer - NGO - private contractor - media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of what stakeholder means and who are their stakeholders Type/s of stakeholder/s being focused by respondent
Nature and Mechanism of Stakeholder Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is it important to engage with your stakeholders? Do you have any systematic approach of stakeholder management? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - legislation - moral thing to do - meeting the expectation - positive or negative effect resulting from engagement - stakeholder map <p>Freeman (1984) 4 step of ST mgmt. (i) identify all ST groups (ii) determine stake and importance (iii) how needs and expectations are met (iv) modification of policy taking into</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Importance and objective of stakeholder engagement Mechanism of Stakeholder Engagement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are challenges in encouraging stakeholder to participate? ▪ In your opinion, which is the best method to engage with stakeholders? Why? ▪ How does method of engagement differ between different stakeholders e.g. government, youth? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you engage with other minority groups e.g. women, youth, school children ▪ In your opinion, what is the extent of stakeholder involvement currently? Should they be encouraged to participate more? Why? Why not? 	<p>account ST interest that are not met</p> <p>Extent of empowerment granted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-participative - Informative (Right to veto) - Partnership - Delegated Power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perception on Level of stakeholder engagement
Prioritisation of Stakeholder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who are your stakeholder? ▪ Which one is important to you? Why ▪ Your wide range of stakeholders How do you prioritise your stakeholders? ▪ Any systematic way of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internal vs external stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice of prioritisation

	<p>prioritization?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How important is power to the stakeholders? Does it ensure that their needs and expectations are prioritized over other stakeholders? 		
Conceptions of Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you understand by the term accountability? What is the importance of accountability to public organization? To you? To whom do you think you are most accountable to? The least? Why? Which accountability aspect is most important to the organization? Why? Which accountability aspect is most important to you? Why? How do you think accountability is affected by engagement exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prominent aspect of accountability Giving account/Report information Accountability is often confused with responsibility Managerial (Govt and Elected Ministers) vs Public (Community) Engagement will enhance accountability? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of what accountability means Aspect of accountability improved and/or compromised Stakeholder/s being focused most by respondent Which aspect of accountability improved and/or compromised from stakeholder engagement

SAMPLE OF CODING OF INTERVIEW QOOUTATIONS

CHALLENGES TO ENGAGEMENT - what are factors cited as barriers to engagement?

Informant	Quotes	Theme	Sub-theme	Explanatory Notes
Manager 4B	“I sit on two neighbourhood boards. And I have another colleague who is on another two as well and I’m saying we’re not going to do it anymore until somebody decides how we are going to facilitate this because I haven’t got any staff to go around.”	Institutional factors	Manpower	
Councillor 4B	“It takes so much of the officer time, it is actually quite difficult.”	Institutional factors	Manpower	
Manager 6C	“We are very limited in manpower. I ran this service with only 11 people so you can imagine the pressure on those people when we provide the service to a city that is quite large.”	Institutional factors	Manpower	
Officer 3B	“I think what we need is more investment to capacity build in the area to encourage more participation from the residents. When we’re working on a limited budget, all you’re reduced to is to put up an event that is free, and there is not much you can do.”	Institutional factors	Affordability	

Manager 4B	“When you look at the cost of that (to meet the stakeholders’ expectations), we just haven’t got that extra million quid a year to double the collection service and follow their suggestion.”	Institutional factors	Affordability	
Manager 2A	“We are also aware that we don’t want to consult on a document that proves to be undeliverable because it is not affordable. There are a lot of internal discussions going on at the moment about how we bridge that aspirations and affordability problem.”	Institutional factors	Affordability	Effect of affordability on engagement
Manager 2A	“Government has tried to persuade LGAs to engage, and quite conveniently for the Government (to do that) I suppose. It is not the Government who are doing the work; it’s the local authority. And it is very easy to sit in the ivory tower and say – ‘before you do anything in any community, make sure they are on board with whatever you are trying to achieve.’”	Institutional factors	Affordability	Criticism was made of the government’s failure
Manager 1A	“I just don’t think the whole way we’re set up is geared to listening to stakeholders.”	Institutional factors	Current Structure	Inadequate support for engagement
NGO4B	“The current structure means that they (i.e. the Council) are listening to more people and it			

	also means that people have to spend more time talking to the Council in ways that are structured by the Council, you spend more time having less effect.”			
Officer 7C	“We are quite strong in going out consulting people but often we don’t feedback to people very well about things.”	Institutional factors	Current Structure	