

# NEW ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIES, REGIONS THEIR STAKEHOLDERS AND CITIZENS.

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## The consultation imperative

Local and Regional Government has always faced challenges to its ability to exercise good governance in the face of rapid and uncompromising change. But rarely in its history has there been such a combination of requirements, obligations, mandates, exhortations, responsibilities, accountabilities, imperatives and transformations as in the present day, some of them contradictory and others bordering on the limits of possibility. The inexorable movement towards the creation of 'learning cities', 'learning regions' and 'learning communities' comprises both a part of the problem and major element of the solution, since it is only by inserting learning into every aspect of city and regional life that the capacity to cope with ever-increasing demand is engendered. Gone, or certainly going, is the centralised, big government decision-making on behalf of millions machine. In, or certainly imminent, is the sharing of problems and solutions through consultation, discussion, persuasion and social empowerment. This is expressed as an ascending staircase in 'Learning Cities, Learning Regions and Learning Communities', as follows

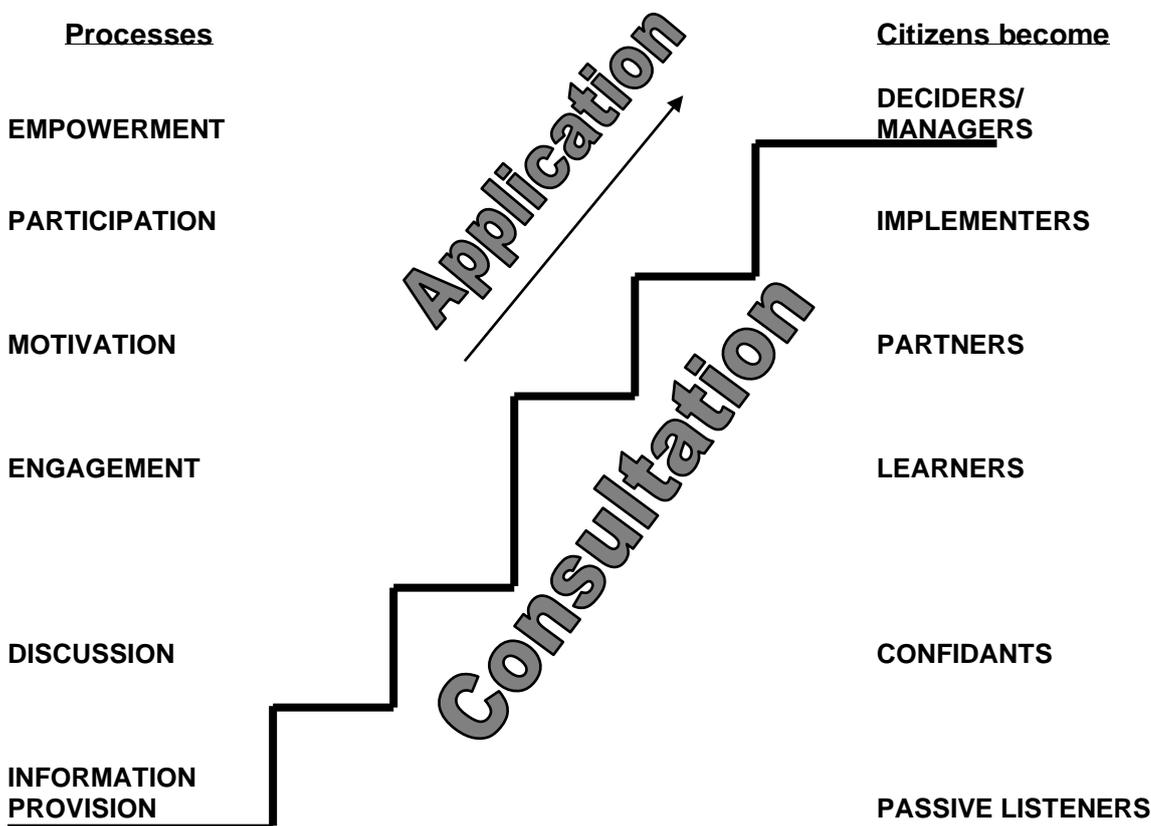


Figure 1 The Consultation Staircase

Here can be seen an ever more sophisticated process of engagement within the community from the simple passing on of information to the empowerment of both citizen and community, in which individuals eventually generate and own the information they are given. Equally citizens change roles from being, usually unwilling, subscribers into city life (perhaps through local taxes) through a series of transformations until eventually they not only own the way that the city operates but also play a large part in sharing its management. The double step in the makeover to motivated learners is a quite deliberate indication of added difficulty, and a message that the higher reaches are not sustainable without learning.