

Interviews TOPIC GUIDE

Introduction

My name is Marta Wojciechowska (marta.1.wojciechowska@kcl.ac.uk) and I am undertaking a research project on the future of governance in London. The project is funded by Research Council UK (ref ES/V009346/1) and hosted at the Department of Political Economy, King's College London.

The project focuses on two issues:

- public involvement in key decisions in local governance
- reducing inequalities in life, work and political opportunities available to Londoners

The project engages representatives of local government, business, and civil society to analyse their current role in facilitating public involvement and addressing inequalities in London. The project aims to highlight current activities of these organisations, as well as propose concrete solutions for increasing public involvement and reducing inequalities in London.

I have arranged the meeting today to gain insights on the organisation and aims of the [name of the organisation] but also to learn about your experience of challenges to public involvement and inequalities in London.

Before that, following Ethics Policy at King's College London, I would like to ask for consent for the participation in the research, the recording of this conversation and the use of the recording for this research. Just to remind you, I have sent the consent form in advance and you have the right to withdraw at any time. It will not be possible to identify your name in any outputs (unless you request otherwise), and you can choose whether the name or just a type of your organisation will be included (example). At any point, if you would like to make comments off-the-record, I will stop the recording.

If no written consent: I now need to ask you for a verbal consent:

- Can I ask you if you consent for the participating in the research,
- its recording, the use of the recording for research purposes,
- for sharing the data with the commissioned transcribing assistant,
- and archiving (anonymised and safe-guarded) in the UK Data Reshare Service?

Aims and Action of Your Organisation

- Could you tell me can you tell me a bit about how and why you decided to work for [name]?
- Based on your experience, how would you define the current aims of [name]?
- How the [name] usually achieve its aims? By what means? For example, what type of action is it usually engaged in? (follow up: Could you give me some examples?)
- What are the main obstacles within London's institutional and political arrangements achieving organisation aims? What about opportunities?
- Does [name] have any direct influence on London politics? (Example if unclear: the scope of Mayor's work, or the influence of central government on local politics) How? What about indirect influence? Would you say you can influence central or local authorities?

Representation and Decision-making

- Each organisation I am talking to, aim to represent and enhance interests of some group of Londoners. As you have mentioned/According to the information published on the website, the aim of [name] is to represent X. Could you tell me who that is more precisely? Follow up: How would you define who belongs to this group?
- What are, in your experience, the main concerns of this the group [name] aim to represent?
- How is your organisation connected to this group? How do you gain information on what this group wants? How do you share information on your activities with X?
- Can you tell me a bit about how you aim to represent the interests of other Londoners/inhabitants of neighbouring boroughs.
- Could you tell me how the [name] makes decisions on how to choose its goals? Is there any way for individual businesses/residents to influence this?
- (If participatory: how do you do it? Does somebody who has been engaged in the [name] longer has more to say in its decision-making?) (Prop: citizenship, income).
- What are the priorities when making a decision? (prop. funding, feasibility, preferences of those who you are representing)

Equality

- In your opinion, how good is the access of the group you represent to all the services in London they need? If not so good – what is missing? Why the group cannot access this service/good (prop: what about income? Citizenship status, formal proof of address?)
- What about Londoners as a whole?

Thinking of the Future: Citizen involvement

- One part of the research project I am working is to consult stakeholders on the proposal of increasing direct involvement of inhabitants in local public policy. What do you think are the risks or opportunities for delegating these decisions?
- How about the perspective of the interest or well-being of the group the [name] is representing.

- How do you think the risks could or should be mitigated?
 - How London should be governed?
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- (a – for non-gov) Rather than delegated to residents, imagine that policy decisions will be delegated instead to, your organisation will be asked to direct public policy in a given area, for example (based on what the organisation already do). What would your organisation think about that? What are consequences for the group you intend to represent? Would it be more or less beneficial for them?
 - (b – for city-level institutions) Rather than delegated to residents, imagine that policy decisions will be delegated instead to local non-governmental and private-public intuitions. The role of the City Hall would be to negotiate potential tensions between them and to ensure some scope of equality in London. How might your organisation interact with this process? How feasible would this be for your organisation? What risks would it bring for all Londoners? What opportunities?

Cool-down

Thank you! This was my final question. Is there anything else what you would like to add? Is there anything that we haven't touched on that you'd like to discuss? Do you have any questions for me? Is there anyone else who I should contact?

If you would think of anything else to add or if you would have any questions please feel free to contact me anytime at marta.1.wojciechowska@kcl.ac.uk.

Finally, as I have indicated before, I am currently organising meetings with other organisations in London. However, in Spring 2021 I would like to invite all of the organisations to take part in an online consultation forum on the topics discussed today. The forum aims to consult different stakeholders on the concrete institutional design which will be then reported directly to the participants and wider to urban stakeholders in London governance. Would your organisation be interested in participating in the forum? It will be an opportunity to ensure the organisations' voice and interests.