

Pathways
through
participation

Understanding participation: A literature review

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December 2009



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01 Participation in focus: An introduction

This literature review forms part of a major national research project called 'Pathways through Participation: What creates and sustains active citizenship?' led by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in partnership with the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) and Involve. All three organisations have a history of researching the different forms of participation that will be explored in the project.

This review is designed to explore the literature around the key issues for the project and provide a sound basis for further research. It has six main sections:

Section 1 Participation in focus: An introduction

This section summarises the aims of the Pathways through Participation project, and the approach to the research. It also summarises the aims of this literature review and clarifies some of the terms used within the project.

Section 2 Participation in context: Historical and current drivers

This section explores the current and historical context and the drivers for participation in the UK today.

Section 3 Participation in practice: The activities

This section describes participation in practice, defining participation in relation to the state, associational life and beyond, and explores various classifications and typologies of participatory activities.

Section 4 Participation in practice: The actors

This section focuses on the actors in participation, particularly who does and does not participate, people's motivations and the barriers and enablers to getting and staying involved.

Section 5 Participation in theory: The concepts

This section draws on a number of different theoretical approaches to help develop a better understanding of the multi-faceted nature of participation.

Section 6 Participation in the round: Conclusions and next steps

The last section summarises the overall findings of the literature review, and identifies some gaps in the current literature. The review closes with an initial sketch of a framework for understanding a 'round-earth' view of participation that covers all aspects of this complex field. The framework will be further developed and will then guide and be tested by the research in the remainder of the project.

1.1 The Pathways through Participation project

The Pathways through Participation project seeks to explore how and why individuals get involved and stay involved in different forms of participation. It aims to increase knowledge of people's pathways into and through participation, and of the factors that shape their participation over time. In this project, participation is understood in a very broad sense as the act of taking part in a wide range of social and civic activities, such as volunteering to run a self-help phone-line, being a member of a local community group, purchasing fair-trade goods, attending a Parent Teacher Association meeting, responding to a local authority consultation, and voting.

The project is a qualitative research project that focuses on the following four questions:

- How and why does participation begin and continue?
- Can trends and patterns of participation be identified over time?
- What connections, if any, are there between different forms of participation and what triggers movement between them?
- How can policy-makers and practitioners enable and encourage different individuals and communities to participate?

1.2 Our approach to exploring participation

The project is interested in the perspectives and experiences of individuals and seeks to explore both past and present activities of participation in people's lives. It will examine the connections between different forms and episodes of participation and explore how these are shaped by context and relationships. We therefore understand participation as 'situated practice' (Cornwall, 2002).

By this we mean that the project will focus on:

'how [participation] actually work[s] in practice, and on *who* takes part, on what basis, and with what resources, whether in terms of knowledge, material assets or social and political connections.' (Cornwall, 2002: 51; emphasis in original)

Examining participation within the context of people's lives has additional implications for research and how participation is conceptualised. As Cornwall notes:

'Treating participation as situated practice calls for approaches that locate *spaces* for participation in the *places* in which they occur, framing their possibilities with reference to actual political, social, cultural and historical particularities rather than idealised notions of democratic practice.' (Cornwall, 2002: 51; emphasis in original)

In addition, the project takes a broad view of what it means 'to be political' or to act in 'political' ways. We suggest that individual and personal actions can be understood as having political implications and effects, and are also influenced by social, cultural and political contexts. This is perhaps best expressed by the phrase 'the personal is political' (Ryan, 2007).

1.3 A review of literature on participation

The review focuses predominantly, but not exclusively, on literature from community development, volunteering and public participation. We also refer to other bodies of literature, including literature on social movements, everyday politics, and ethical consumption. We believe that these diverse bodies of literature have much in common and much to learn from each other. To date, they have tended to view different forms of participation in isolation.

The overall aim of the literature review is twofold. Firstly, it seeks to bring together different bodies of literature around the thinking and doing of 'participation' to clarify the broad understanding of participation that the project adopts. Secondly, it aims to support the development of a 'framework of participation' that can help to inform and shape (and be shaped by) our subsequent fieldwork. In addressing these aims we hope to develop a 'round-earth view', or a more complete picture of participation, moving away from what Smith (1997) has characterised, in other contexts, as a 'flat-earth map' in which only part of the whole is known, leaving much of the terrain uncharted.

1.4 Terms used in this review

Our particular approach to understanding and researching participation is also reflected in the terms we use throughout the review. The term participation is contested and used in different ways by different authors in the bodies of literature we examine. The term participation is frequently qualified with an array of prefixes, such as civic, civil, vertical, horizontal, individual, political, public, community, citizen and so on. To simplify the language used in this review, we use three broad categories of participation - public, social and individual participation:

- **Public participation.** By public participation we mean the engagement of individuals with the various structures and institutions of democracy. Other authors refer to this as political, civic, or vertical participation and/or participatory governance. Examples of public participation include: voting in local or national elections; being a councillor; and taking part in government (or associated) consultations.

Although 'political participation' is the term which is perhaps more commonly used, we settled on public participation as our reading and thinking made it clear that most, if not all, forms of participation are in fact 'political' (hence the phrase, 'the personal is political')

- **Social participation.** Social participation refers to collective activities that individuals may be involved in as part of their everyday lives. This might include: being a member of a community group, a tenants' association or a trade union; supporting the local hospice by volunteering; and running a study group on behalf of a faith organisation. Others have variously called this kind of social engagement 'associational life', collective action, or civil, horizontal or community participation.
- **Individual participation.** Individual participation, sometimes referred to as 'everyday politics', covers the choices and actions that individuals make as part of their daily life and that are statements of the kind of society they want to live in. This would include, for example: choosing fair-trade goods; boycotting specific products; using 'green energy'; donating money to charities; and signing petitions.

It is, however, important to stress the fluidity of these broad categories of participation and their dynamic interactions and overlaps (Ginsborg, 2005; Melucci 1989, 1996). For example, campaigning and protesting against nuclear weapons might involve an individual taking part in: demonstrations and protest camps; signing petitions and writing letters to government departments; attendance at local planning meetings; the use of 'green energy'; displaying posters in windows, and many more. All of these activities straddle public, social and individual participation, as we define them above (see also Section 3.1.2). The meanings individual research participants attach to their actions and participatory activities will help us to refine our understanding of participation in subsequent stages of the project.

02

Participation in context: Historical and current drivers

Participation does not happen in a vacuum. It is influenced and shaped by a range of societal and contextual factors. This section analyses the literature on the context for participation to ground the subsequent discussion on what participation looks like in practice. We explore some of the reasons why participation remains high on the political and policy agenda before moving to a brief overview of the social and historical context of participation. Finally, we look to the future and identify some of the key drivers, or trends, shaping participation now and in the coming years.

2.1 Why is everybody talking about participation?

Participation has captured the imagination and hopes of politicians, policy makers and practitioners alike (White, 1996; Jochum et al., 2005; Cornwall, 2008). Across the globe – from Brazil to India to the United States – we have witnessed ‘an explosion’ of interest in participation over the past decade; this is particularly true for public participation (Dunn et al., 2007).

2.1.1 Governance, politicians and policy makers

There are four primary, and interconnected, reasons why advocates of participation in national and local governance see it as a ‘good thing’. Firstly, by involving individuals more directly in decisions that affect their lives, participation is seen as a way of strengthening the legitimacy and accountability of democratic institutions (Creasy, 2007; see also Cornwall, 2008; Beetham et al., 2008). Secondly, there is a belief that involving people in local decision-making processes and bringing them together around a common cause or interest can empower communities and help build social cohesion (CLG, 2006a; Home Office, 2004b; Blake et al., 2008; Foot, 2009). Thirdly, participation is considered a tool for reforming public services and for providing services that are better suited to people’s needs and that are more efficient (Leadbeater, 2004;

Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, 2006; CLG, 2006a; Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, 2007; HM Government, 2007a and 2007b; Parker, 2007; Duffy, 2007). Finally, participation has been associated with personal benefits for individual participants ranging from increased political efficacy and satisfaction gained from influencing change to personal development and growth in self-esteem from learning new skills such as public speaking (CLG, 2008b; Barnes and Shardlow, 1997; Popay et al., 2007). Participation is thus associated with ‘greater social justice, more effective public services, and a society of self-confident citizens’ (Beetham et al., 2008: 11) as well as being an expression of active citizenship (Brannan et al., 2006).

2.1.2 Beyond governance

In one of the Zambian languages, participation translates as ‘to be part of or to give oneself to what is going on’ (Gwaba, 2003: 88). ‘What is going on’ is not necessarily connected to the ‘public’ side of participation, driven by governments and policy makers. Participation has a social dimension and relates to an individual’s associational activities in both formal and informal contexts (Pattie et al., 2004; Jochum, 2003).

This social side of participation is generally understood as the participation that takes place through associations in civil society – ‘the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values’ (London School of Economics, 2004) or ‘the space for activity not undertaken by either the state or the market’ (CarnegieUK Trust, 2007: 9).

Participation in associational life is generally seen as being positive. A diverse, independent and vibrant civil society is considered an important counter-check to the operations of the state and the market (de Tocqueville, 2000). It fosters ties and shared norms between people, or ‘social capital’ (Putnam, 2000), which many claim has a range of positive outcomes on communities and individuals (Portes, 1998; Ockenden, 2007). It can develop people’s confidence and sense of self-determination (Bandura, 1997), and lastly but importantly, humans enjoy being connected – it is a major determinant of well-being (Parker, 2007).

The normative element of participation (i.e. participation as a ‘good thing’) comes out strongly in the literature (Field, 2003; Cornwall, 2008). However, there are a number of dangers or caveats to this (Field, 2003). Alongside fostering cohesion and social capital, participation can be exclusionary and divisive (Putnam, 2000; Field, 2003). Not all participation can be seen as contributing to what might broadly be viewed as the ‘social good’. As Carothers (2000: 20) observes, ‘recognising that people in any society associate and work together to advance nefarious as well as worthy ends is critical to demystifying the concept of civil society’. Examples might include violent direct action movements (Doherty et al., 2003) or extreme rightwing and neo-Nazi activism (Linden and Klandermans, 2007).

2.2 Social and historical contexts of participation

To understand the practice and policies of participation today it is important to explore the historical and social origins of the current interest in participation and the way in which it has developed over time.

2.2.1 A long and rich history

Whilst participation may be a policy buzzword of the moment, it has a long and rich history. The relationship between individual citizens and institutions of governance is a question that has concerned Western philosophers for millennia. From Aristotle to Marx to Habermas, all have had something to say about how citizens engage with the state and institutions of governance.

The UK has a long tradition of participation in a range of fields including: health (community health councils and other patient and public involvement in health services); economic development (through workplace co-ops, community enterprises); housing (through tenant participation, housing co-ops, squatting); architecture (the community architecture movement through which tenants helped design new public housing developments); land use planning (statutory participation in local plan-making since 1969), and environmental activities (from food growing to recycling) (Warburton, 1998; Davidson and MacEwen, 1983). A wide range of alternative participatory activities have ebbed and flowed alongside shifts in more formal governance arrangements at local, regional and national levels.

Gilchrist notes that ‘anthropological research shows that community-type organisation is a feature of all human societies and studies of humans and other higher primates suggest that we share an inherent sociability, a willingness to connect and cooperate’ (Gilchrist, 2004: 1). The interest in associational life has a rich history in

political philosophy. In *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville wrote that ‘civilisation itself would be endangered’ if people ‘never acquired the habit of forming associations in ordinary life’ (de Tocqueville, 2000: 107).

In the UK, what we have called social participation – the associations people form between and for themselves – has its roots in a number of broad traditions:

- Informal self-help and solidarity, such as the informal reciprocity and sharing of neighbourly help;
- Mutual aid, including more organised associations providing help to members such as craft guilds, trade unions, credit unions and friendly societies; and
- Philanthropy and voluntary service, to improve lives of people deemed ‘less fortunate’ (Gilchrist, 2004).

2.2.2 Shifting roles and focus

The 1960s saw the introduction of numerous government programmes to tackle poverty, disadvantage and racial tension, which included an increased emphasis on public participation (see Taylor, 1995 for a review of the evolving relationship between community work and the state). These developments included the Community Development Projects (CDPs), the review of which ‘challenged the assumption that local action alone could tackle problems which had their roots in much wider economic forces’ (Taylor, 1995: 100–101). The CDP approach was widely influential in the 1970s and early 1980s when community activism was ‘strongly influenced by a radical model that saw [it] as an extension of the class struggle’ (Gilchrist, 2004: 15).

The appearance of identity politics and separatist strategies for achieving social change ruptured this ‘golden age’ of community work (Popple, 1995) and in the 1980s communities of interest achieved significant political influence in some local authorities

(Gilchrist, 2004). As a result of the increasing focus on difference and diversity, by the 1990s 'equality had secured its position as a core value of community development' (ibid: 17). With the retreat of the state from providing public services in the 1980s and 1990s, the role of community development had a lower profile on the government's agenda (Humm et al., 2005) and some voluntary and community organisations were invited to become 'agents' of the state and provide public services (Taylor, 1995: 99).

A parallel movement was also developing in the 1990s as a result of global interest in the concept of sustainable development, following the adoption by the United Nations in 1992 of Agenda 21 – the agenda for the 21st century. The concept of sustainable development led to the fragile links between global issues of environmentalism, international development to tackle poverty, economic development, and social change through greater participation in governance being strengthened and institutionalised at local, national and international levels (della Porta and Diani, 2006). By 2000, every local authority in the UK had a Local Agenda 21 strategy, many of which provided the first local focus for campaign groups on environmental, poverty and governance issues to work together in new networks, and also the beginning of very practical links between local and global issues (Christie and Warburton, 2001; Warburton, 2004). These new relationships formed the basis for much local to global campaigning that created spaces for participating in various forms of action on issues from global poverty to climate change.

2.2.3 New Labour, communities and the 'third sector'

The election of a Labour government in 1997 put participation and community involvement back on the public policy agenda. The government has looked to

the voluntary and community sector – or what it refers to as the 'third sector' – to increase links between the state, communities and individual citizens. The legal, statutory and financial operating environment for the sector has been strengthened by a number of policy initiatives – from the 2000 budget outlining tax-efficient giving methods such as Gift Aid and payroll giving, to the introduction of the Compact (Robb, 2004) and the continued emphasis on the role of the voluntary and community organisations in partnership arrangements and public service provision (Taylor, 2007). Whilst the voluntary and community sector, some may argue, has 'never had it so good' (Commission on the Future of Volunteering, 2008: 3), concerns exist about co-option and overstretch as the voluntary and community sector is drawn into public sector provision and governance (Taylor, 2007). Beyond the focus on the voluntary and community sector, the government's aim to re-engage directly with individual citizens has led to the development of a range of initiatives around participation, in the form of citizenship education (in schools and beyond), volunteering, active citizenship, and a remarkable growth in government consultations at all levels (Kendall, 2005; Jochum et al., 2005; Millner, 2008). This overarching aim – to re-engage citizens – is encapsulated in the 2008 White Paper, *Communities in control: real people, real power* (CLG, 2008a), which looks at the range of existing and new tools that citizens can use to access and lever power at local and national levels.

2.3 Policy and practice drivers of participation

There are numerous drivers shaping participation now and, potentially, in the future. Drivers link, overlap and influence each other and include political, social, economic, environmental and technological forces. We focus on those which we understand to be the most relevant to the current 'operating environment' of

participation in the UK – underlying them all is the assumption that participation is a 'good thing': the normative view of participation we noted above.

2.3.1 Democratic deficit

Participation that takes place at the interface between individual citizens and the local and national state, from voting to political party membership to contacting elected representatives, has been in decline in Western democracies (Pattie et al., 2004; Power Inquiry, 2006; House of Commons, 2008; Hansard Society, 2009). In response to mounting concerns that the continued drop in public participation is leading to a crisis of legitimacy, 'enhancing citizen participation has become an official priority in many countries' (Smith, 2005: 13), and there have been numerous government initiatives to encourage participation in formal politics. These have included the introduction of all-postal voting and the development of deliberative innovations such as citizens' juries. However, participation in formal political channels remains at an all time low (Lodge and Gough, 2009).

Whilst people are turning away from participation in 'traditional' or 'formal' politics, via the ballot box and through membership of political parties, data from the Power Inquiry's research found that over a third of people who do not vote are members of, or active in, a charity, community group, public body or campaigning organisation (Power Inquiry 2006: 42). MORI's research has found little evidence of declining public participation in Britain besides voting and activities closely associated to party membership (Marshall et al., 2008). NCVO's Civil Society Almanac also suggests that 'people are willing to engage in issues that concern them, but see voluntary action as a more effective way of making a difference than engaging in politics' (Kane et al, 2009: 123).

2.3.2 Participatory democracy and localism

Across a range of policies, 'devolution, democratic decentralisation and community engagement have emerged as strategic themes' (Blake et al., 2008: xi). By involving citizens more directly in decisions at the local level that affect their lives, the government aims to enhance democratic accountability, improve public services and contribute to social justice (CLG, 2008a and 2008b; Foot, 2009). The increased momentum for involving citizens at grassroots level is sometimes called the 'localism agenda' and associated with community empowerment (CLG, 2007a). The Conservative Party vision, set out by David Cameron, sees devolving power to local communities and individuals as generating social responsibility, civic pride and innovation (Cameron, 2009).

Changes in the statutory and legal framework for local government underpin the push to increase local level public participation. In 2001, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was born, bringing together key public sector agencies, community and voluntary organisations and private companies, to develop joint strategies and drive forward change (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). Partnership governance involves government working to 'put in place reforms to rebalance the central-local relationship; better enable local partners to work together; and give communities a bigger say in the things that matter to them' (CLG, 2006a: 13).

Since 2006, local authorities have been required to inform, consult and involve local residents and communities in their activities (CLG, 2006a). In April 2009, a 'Duty to Involve' came into force which requires all local authorities to embed a culture of engagement and empowerment through their delivery of local services and decision-making. The Government has also set out its ambition to have participatory budgeting on all major budget decisions in all local authorities by 2012 (CLG, 2008a).

2.3.3 Voice and choice in service delivery

As already touched upon, the participation of people in shaping service delivery and holding service providers to account has been connected with public sector reform and improvement (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2006; CLG, 2006a; Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2007; HM Government, 2007; Foot, 2009). This policy driver can be summarised as 'voice and choice' and operates at both the individual and community levels (Blake et al., 2008). The 'choice' component of this driver illustrates the growing influence of market values and how 'the government-citizen relationship is increasingly being remodelled along consumerist lines' (Needham, 2003:1). A key aim of the 'voice' component of this approach, according to government, is to improve the design and responsiveness of services and thereby improve outcomes such as social inclusion, equality, and service satisfaction (Foot, 2009: 4). It views both the community and the individual as 'key to the vision of more responsive services and increased citizen satisfaction in their locality' (Blake et al., 2008: 10).

At the community level, 'voice and choice' can be seen in initiatives where community groups 'prioritise the mix of services in their neighbourhoods through a local user forum' (Blake et al., 2008:10). At an individual level, a central tenet of 'voice and choice' is 'personalisation', where users of services 'co-produce' the service they receive. The term personalisation has developed from several different influences and ideas, including social work values about putting the individual first (Carr and Dittrich, 2008). The practice of personalisation has been heavily influenced by the work of In Control, a social enterprise which has pioneered the use of self-directed support and personal budgets for people with learning disabilities as a way to reform the current social care system (ibid). The development of service user

involvement in service provision has largely stemmed from user movements such as the disability movement advocating for rights of their members (Beresford, 2005; Ellis, 2005).

2.3.4 Individualism, consumerism and self-expression

Carnegie UK Trust identify 'rising individualism' as a key driver shaping the future of civil society in the UK and Ireland, noting that the majority of people in the UK now believe that the best route to raising standards for everyone is to 'look after ourselves' rather than 'look after the community's interests' (CarnegieUK Trust, 2007: 17). This apparent shift in culture away from norms of solidarity and associational life towards individualism has not so much affected rates of participation as the ways in which people approach participation (Rochester, 2006). In an increasingly consumerist society, people's expectations of agency, choice and flexibility appear to also apply to participation. Leisure-based activities, such as sport and shopping are 'important indicators of who we are and our place in society, including how we understand civic and political participation' (Riley, 2008: 2) and evidence suggests that affluence is associated with a greater desire for self-fulfilment and self-expression (Evans et al., 2005).

In a study on young people's participation, Brooks notes that it is the self-actualising individual who 'better represents many young people today: he or she is motivated by a sense of individual purpose rather than obligation to government, perceives voting as less meaningful than other political acts, and favours loose networks of community action (often facilitated by new technologies)' (Brooks, 2009: 2.3). This notion of self-actualisation can be associated with neo-liberalism and its individualistic discourse – that individuals are autonomous, rational and free to choose their own destinies (Riley, 2008; Gill, 2006). With technological

advances in communications, the self-actualising individual can create multiple and fluid identities and engage in different behaviours and activities more easily. This can be both liberating (see, for example, the work of Harris (2001) on young women using internet magazines to create their own space from which to negotiate and redefine politics, citizenship and gender) and stressful (in a 24 hour culture, young people particularly feeling the need to constantly move through multiple identities) (Riley, 2008).

2.3.5 Global consciousness and world views

Although many people take an interest in their local issues and participate at local community level, recent years have seen an unprecedented rise in individual and collective mobilisation around global concerns (NCVO, 2007). Alongside the rise in global capitalism has been the emergence of a 'common global consciousness' (Kaldor, 2003: 112). We can relate this 'common consciousness' to the increased awareness of the winners and losers, or the 'have nots and the have-yachts' (CarnegieUK Trust, 2007: 24) of global neo-liberalism, and also to the more positive messages of global policies around sustainable development to tackle poverty and environmental threats.

Direct action against the varied and manifold shortcomings of globalisation – from rising inequality to climate change – have become a feature of the last decade, as the Makepovertyhistory campaign, protests at the G8 summits from Geneva to Edinburgh, and the burgeoning grassroots 'Climate Camp' movement all demonstrate (<http://www.climatecamp.org.uk/>). The rise in ethical consumerism illustrates that, alongside these collective actions, people are taking individual acts of conscience. Tallontire et al (2001: 3) assert that the 'globalization of food sourcing and foreign travel have resulted in more adventurous

consumers, and also consumers who ask more questions about the source of their food'.

2.3.6 Changing technologies

Technological developments have enabled changes in the spaces in which participation takes place. People are expressing their values and political identities in new ways (www.3s4.org.uk), facilitated by increasing interconnectedness and perceptions about how 'people's lives are influenced by events taking place far away' (Kaldor, 2003: 111). Air travel, satellite television, instant messaging and new technologies such as Web 2.0 are helping people to organise and take action. Shirky notes that, '[e]verywhere you look, people are coming together to share with one another, work together, or take some kind of public action. For the first time in history, we have tools that truly allow for this' (Shirky, 2008: cover page). A recent survey carried out in the United States found that people's use of the internet and mobile phones is associated with larger and more varied discussion networks and that social networking services, in particular Facebook, are associated with more diverse social networks (Hampton et al., 2009).

Individuals can increasingly bypass existing organisations using social media and create their own alternatives for participation. This is likely to lead to the emergence of a greater number of less formal and looser groups and networks (NCVO, 2009). However, there is evidence that governments are also increasingly aware of the opportunities presented by the internet both for them to advance their own case and to challenge their opponents (Morozov, 2009).

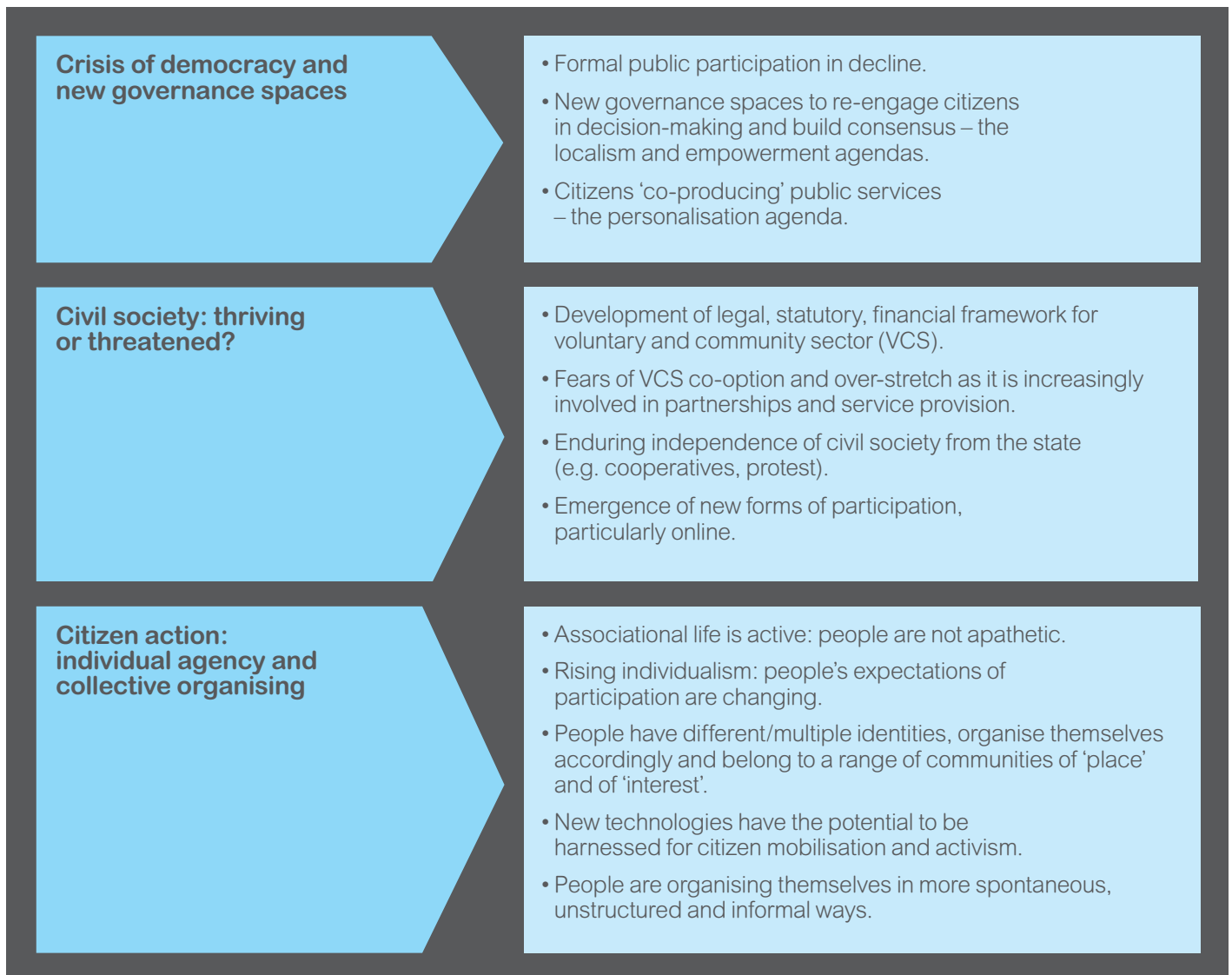
New technologies may provide new opportunities for individual and collective action but are also a source of exclusion, fragmentation and atomisation (CarnegieUK, 2007; Riley, 2008). On a global scale, Virilio notes that 'haves and the have-nots are then

sorted out between those who live in the hyper-real shrunken world of instant communication, cyber-dynamics and electric money transactions – and those, more disadvantaged than ever, who live in the real space of local villages, cut off from temporal forces that drive politics and economics' (cited in Kaldor, 2003: 111).

2.4 Conclusion

We can see that participation has a rich history in political and social thought, and continues to be a preoccupation of governments, policy makers, practitioners, academics and interested individuals across the world. In Figure 1, below, we summarise some of the key developments and drivers affecting participation. These trends may continue to influence the future of participation. Understanding these trends helps to ground our empirical and theoretical discussions in the 'real world', and draw our attention to the wider forces shaping the different contexts of participation. In the next two sections we move on to discuss the 'practice' of participation.

Figure 1:
*Key developments and
drivers affecting participation*



03 Participation in practice: The activities

As Section 2 has illustrated, participation has become one of the mainstays of policy and practice across the globe (Mohan, 2007). However, different bodies of literature around the thinking and doing of participation highlight that participation means different things to different people (Arnstein, 1969; White, 1996; Jochum et al., 2005; Mohan, 2007; Cornwall, 2008). Some of these meanings are examined in this section, after an initial exploration of the range of participatory activities people are involved in.

3.1 Exploring the breadth of participatory activities

A wealth of participatory activities and diverse forms of participation can be identified in the different bodies of literature about participation. Examining the wide range of participatory activities that individuals engage in helps to unpick some of the overlapping meanings and expressions of participation. Figure 2 gives a flavour of a few of the many and diverse participation activities people get involved in.

*Figure 2:
The diversity of
participatory activities*

Contacting an elected representative/public official	Attending NHS public consultations on health issues
Signing a petition	Giving blood
Voting	Donating to a charity or campaigning organisation
Participating in a demonstration	Going on a sponsored walk
Participating in a strike	Being a trustee
Being a member of a trade union	Being a school governor
Being a member of a political party	Being a voluntary member of a Youth Offender Panel
Attending a planning meeting	Being a voluntary member of prison visiting scheme
Being a representative on a Local Strategic Partnership	Belonging to a befriending and mentoring scheme
Completing a questionnaire about local issues	Volunteering in a charity shop
	Being a conservation volunteer
	Purchasing fair-trade products
	Purchasing energy efficient products
	Carbon off-setting
	Boycotting a product
	Organising a book club
	Helping a neighbour/someone in need with shopping
	Making sandwiches for a village fete
	Helping out in a faith group

The literature often focuses on one single form of participatory activity, such as voting or membership of leisure clubs (for exceptions, see for example Davis-Smith, 2000; Pattie et al., 2004) and tends to neglect the fluid and dynamic relationships between the different activities and their overlapping boundaries. This lack of attention to the links between different participatory activities is reinforced by the lack of cross-over between the various bodies of literature that examine participation. A focus on individual acts of participation also tends to neglect people's pathways in and through participation – how individuals engage in different ways within the context of their lives and throughout their life times. This is the focus of the wider research project that will follow this literature review.

3.1.1 Classifying participatory activities

A number of classifications have, however, been put forward to categorise different participatory activities. The different classifications, as outlined below, aim to make sense of the breadth of participatory activities that can be identified in the empirical literature. Reflecting the different subject areas within which participation is often analysed, these classifications tend to focus on a particular form of participation. They do, however, provide a useful starting point.

Citizen Audit for Britain

The Citizen Audit for Britain in 2000 (Pattie et al., 2003) provide a two-fold classification of participation, making a distinction between 'political participation' (or what we are calling public participation) and 'associational activities' (our social participation):

- **Political participation** is used to refer to acts that seek to influence rules, laws or policies. Included here is: donating money to or raising funds for an organisation; voting in a local

government election; signing a petition; boycotting certain products or buying products for ethical, political or environmental reasons; contacting a public official or politician; contacting an organisation or the media; attending a political meeting, rally or protest; and taking part in a strike or participating in illegal protests.

- **Associational activities** are grouped according to:
 - types of organisations and distinct interests (e.g. motoring, trade unions or professions);
 - organisations or activities bringing people together in sports and leisure;
 - causes (such as environmental and social welfare);
 - culture (such as the arts, music and hobbies); and,
 - social, women's, ethnic and residents' organisations.

Associational activities are further distinguished as being:

- (passive) membership in organisations; and,
- (active) participation in the running of an organisation and volunteering.

Also included under associational activities are the following:

- participation in informal networks (e.g. book reading groups; pub quiz teams; child care groups); and,
- personal support networks beyond the family (e.g. shopping for neighbours; volunteering with meals on wheels; visiting old people; and involvement in self-help groups).

Pattie et al (2003) suggest that this classification of activities allows the identification of different types of actors; these are explored in more detail in Section 4.

NCVO's spectrum of active citizenship

The classification proposed by NCVO (Jochum et al., 2005) draws on a spectrum of active citizenship. Active citizenship here is understood to comprise both public and social engagement, based on individual and/or collective action of a formal or informal nature.

- **Civic participation** (or vertical participation) relates to participation in state affairs, including participation in political processes and in governance (most of which we are classifying as public participation).
- **Civil participation** (or horizontal participation) includes participation in community activities and other less formal types of associational activities (such as residents' associations, sports clubs and faith groups, most of which we are classifying as social participation).

The Citizenship Survey

In the annual Citizenship Survey, the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) distinguishes three strands of public participation under the overall term 'citizen engagement' (CLG, 2009: 2):

- **Civic activism** refers to involvement in direct decision-making about local services or issues or in the actual provision of these services by taking on a role such as local councillor, school governor or magistrate.
- **Civic consultation** refers to active engagement in consultation about local services or issues through activities such as attending a consultation group or completing a questionnaire about these services.
- **Civic participation** refers to activities such as contacting a local councillor, attending a public meeting, signing a petition or engaging in consultations about local services and issues through completing a questionnaire or attending consultation group.

Underlying the distinction between these different strands is the intensity of involvement and the active contribution individuals make through their activities. This also resonates with the distinctions underpinning the classification of associational activities in the Citizen Audit (above).

The Citizenship Survey also includes data on volunteering, which is divided into two categories:

- Informal volunteering: giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives.
- Formal volunteering: giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment.

The United Nations classification of volunteering

A further classification of activities that span public, social and/or individual participation has been developed in relation to volunteering. This classification of volunteering was developed for the UN International Year of Volunteers 2001 (Davis-Smith, 2000; Dingle, 2001) and covers both formal and informal volunteering. It cuts across the above classifications of public-social participation and of political-associational activities that emerge from the Citizen Audit (Pattie et al., 2004).

The UN classification identifies four distinct strands of volunteering activities:

- **Mutual aid and self-help:** voluntary action in which people with shared problems, challenges and conditions work together; voluntary action 'by us, for us'.
- **Philanthropy and service to others:** typically involving an organisation which recruits volunteers to provide some kind of service to one or more third parties.

• **Campaigning or advocacy:** collective action aimed at securing or preventing change; this includes campaigning against developments seen as damaging to the environment and campaigning for better services.

• **Participation:** the involvement on a voluntary basis in political, governance or decision-making processes at any level (our public participation).

We might argue that all four of these strands of volunteering are forms of participation, and as such that the last category might be better labelled, for our purposes at least, as 'governance', so as to avoid confusion.

3.1.2 Bringing it all together

Emerging from this exploration of the different classifications of participatory activities is a broad concern with the breadth of activities individuals are engaged in. These classifications reflect different perspectives from the different bodies of literature, ranging from the institutional to the individual. For the Pathways through Participation project we are keen to bring these different perspectives together. We see from these classifications that participation can include different forms of public participation which link individuals and the state, as well as social participation and individual acts of engagement, and this has led to our three-fold classification of public, social and individual participation.

Public participation

By public participation we mean the engagement of individuals with the various structures and institutions of democracy. This form of participation is often referred to as 'political participation', but we have explicitly avoided using that term (see above and below for our rationale for this). It can be understood as, for example: the act of engaging people to voice their opinions; giving them the right to influence the decisions that affect them and improve representation;

enhancing the efficiency of delivering services; or enabling people to take control of their lives (Involve 2005; Dominelli 2006; Creasy 2007; Mohan 2007; Cornwall 2008). These meanings of public participation often privilege an institutional perspective and focus on the engagement of individuals in decision-making processes within existing political structures.

Others understand participation to go beyond the engagement of individuals in decision-making processes, to include the involvement of communities (Burns et al., 2004; CLG, 2006; CDF, 2009). Burns et al for instance suggest that '[p]articipation concerns the engagement of individuals and communities in decisions about things that affect their lives' (2004: 2, emphasis added).

These understandings of participation resonate with a particular model of community development that emphasises the engagement of individuals and/or communities with local institutions and political structures (CLG, 2006; CDF, 2009). This emphasis in turn leads to a focus on building the capacity of individuals, organisations and communities to enable their effective public involvement (ibid). Engagement with people is seen, from an institutional perspective, as crucial to successful policy delivery (CLG, 2006). The underlying idea is that the 'government can't solve everything by itself, and nor can the community: it's better when we work together' (CLG, 2006: 12). Community development that focuses on efficiency and service delivery, rather than on empowerment of individuals and/or communities, can highlight the instrumental nature of many participatory initiatives (Cleave, 2004) which are 'often conducive to those in power retaining their privileges and control over resources' (Dominelli, 2006: 13; see also Wilcox, 1994; Cornwall and Goetz, 2005; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2006).

In this model, the status quo of social, economic and political conditions may remain unchallenged (ibid).

By contrast, a shift to a model of community development that is based on community organising 'involves the 'craft' of building an enduring network of people, who identify with common ideals and who can act on the basis of those ideals' (Stall and Stoecker, 1998: 730). While community organising tends to be local and is often 'pre-political', it may also provide the foundation for multi-local and explicitly political social movements (Stall and Stoecker, 1998; Dominelli, 2006; Beetham et al., 2008) which may collectively challenge elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes (Klandermans, 2004). In these rather fluid contexts of community action, participation can be understood as 'the visible exercise of a latent capacity in collaboration with others, which is only effective through its public manifestation' (Beetham et al., 2008: 17).

Social participation

Social participation refers to collective activities that individuals may be involved in as part of their everyday lives. It is generally associated with an individual's associational activities in both formal and informal contexts (Jochum, 2003; Pattie et al., 2004), and may include engagement in cultural, leisure and social groups and involvement in voluntary and community organisations (Jochum, 2003; Pattie et al., 2004; Jochum et al., 2005).

People choose to participate in associational life for a range of reasons that may have little to do with the state or the institutions and processes of governance. As Jochum et al (2005: 33) note, '[they] are motivated by their faith or values; their sense of community, whether of interest or place; or simply a desire for friendship and conviviality'. The associations that people form between and for themselves are at the heart of social participation.

In understanding social participation in this way, it may overlap in some instances with notions of community development, especially a notion of community development that focuses on service delivery, but also on community organising (e.g. campaigns by residents associations). Different forms and activities of social participation may hold the potential for more radical social, economic and political transformations (Stall and Stoecker, 1998; Dominelli, 2006) or harbour resistance to societal change (della Porta and Diani, 2006).

Individual participation

People also engage on an individual basis. For instance, they may choose to buy fair-trade products, donate money to charity or informally help their neighbours. Here, participation is based on an individual's personal values and worldviews as much as on personal experiences or identity/ies – such as 'being' an environmentalist, a feminist or an anti-racism activist; or living according to/acting on one's religious beliefs. As such, individual participation covers the choices and acts that individuals make as part of their everyday lives, and that reflect the kind of society they may wish to create and live in (Melucci, 1989, 1996; Ginsborg, 2005). Ginsborg (2005) calls such individual participation the 'politics of everyday life' where individuals draw inspiration from personal convictions and experiences as well as local actions, and are often pushed to make connections between their own lives and the larger and more distant forces that shape them in an increasingly globalised world.

Overview and overlaps

Within each of these three broad forms of participation there are of course a plethora of individual participation activities and many overlaps exist between what we call public, social and individual participation.

Writing a letter to one's MP about the pro-posed closure of a community centre is one example that could be seen to fit into all three of the above categories of participation.

At first glance, public participation appears to be more prominent in the literature than social and individual participation, especially in the literature produced by policy-makers. However, when looking across diverse bodies of literature, particularly the literature on volunteering and community development, we note multiple overlaps between the different forms of participation, and that the activities and issues addressed in these bodies of literature resonate with what we call public, social and individual participation. It can therefore be suggested on the basis of this review that there may be a less coherent body of literature about social and individual participation, or that the concept of participation is simply rarely used to describe some of these participatory activities.

The exploration of the different ways in which participation can be understood highlights four key points:

- Firstly, participation is a multi-dimensional and fluid concept, with multiple overlaps and blurred boundaries between different forms of participation. This indicates the importance of examining the diverse forms of participation within the wider contexts in which they are practised.
- Secondly, many of the meanings and classifications explored above imply an egalitarian idea of politics (Haus and Sweeting, 2006); that participation is a 'normative term [that] evokes and embodies ideals of how society and the polity ought to be, and of the role that people can play in government. [...] Qualified with 'citizen', participation has a definitely democratic ring to it; coupled with 'community', it evokes a warm and inclusive feeling of people working together for the common good' (Cornwall, 2008: 19).

- Thirdly, the different meanings of participation are closely connected with different perspectives. The institutional and policy perspective often focuses on the engagement of individuals and communities in service delivery and decision-making processes within existing political structures. This, however, is not to suggest that individuals and/or communities are not also actively involved outside of those structures, and indeed may challenge them from within (or outside).
- Lastly, the varied forms of participation outlined here are influenced by the unequal distribution of power, resources and structural inequalities that persist in contemporary British society. To understand participation more fully it is therefore necessary to look at individuals and their participatory activities not in isolation but in the wider context of their lives and communities – or indeed explore why some choose not to engage or are prevented from participating.

3.2 The techniques of participation

Complementing the classifications of participatory activities are typologies that examine and group different techniques of participation – the different mechanisms put in place to create space for, or to facilitate, participation. A broad range of techniques of participation can be identified, from user panels through to developing and advertising opportunities for volunteering with voluntary and community organisations. However, the literature discussing these techniques is predominantly focused on public participation. Figure 3 provides an indicative list of the techniques of public participation.

Figure 3:
Illustrative examples of the techniques of public participation

01 Appreciative Inquiry
02 Citizens' Juries
03 Citizens' Panels
04 Community Empowerment Networks
05 Consensus Building/Dialogue
06 Consensus Conference
07 Deliberative Mapping
08 Deliberative Polling
09 Democs (Deliberative Meeting of Citizens)
10 Electronic processes
11 Focus Groups
12 Future Search Conference
13 Participatory Appraisal
14 Participatory Strategic Planning (ICA)
15 Planning for Real
16 Open Space Technology
17 User Panels
18 Youth Empowerment Initiatives

Source: Involve, 2005

3.3 The depth of participation

A number of authors have developed typologies that explore these different techniques of participation, and the implications they have for the quality, or 'depth' of participation that they enable. Again, these tend to focus on public participation, but they explore slightly different yet complementary questions and issues, and some overlaps in the understanding of public participation can be noted. Central to these typologies is the endeavour to conceptualise different depths of participation across a diversity of participatory techniques, especially in the public arena and the engagement of individuals with the state and government.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) proposes a spectrum based on increasing levels of public participation (see Table 1) which provides a framework for analysing the scope and depth of public participation. At one end of the IAP2 spectrum, participation techniques may involve the provision of information through, for example, websites and factsheets and lead to a shallow form of participation which is little more than information sharing. At the other end, individuals' contributions towards decision-making are facilitated through techniques such as ballots or citizen juries, leading to much deeper levels of participation and to empowerment.

Table 1:
*IAP2 spectrum of
public participation*

Increasing level of participation					
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extend possible. We will implement what you decided.	We will implement what you decided.
Example techniques	Fact sheets Web sites Open houses	Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings	Workshops Deliberative polling	Citizen advisory committees Consensus building Participatory decision-making	Citizen juries Ballots Delegated decision

Implicit in IAP2's spectrum of participation is the view that, in most instances, public participation involves only some people some of the time which highlights that the public participation of individuals and communities in the UK reflects the broader (unequal) distribution of power and resources (see Cornwall and Goetz, 2005; Beetham et al., 2008; Cornwall, 2008).

IAP2's spectrum is influenced heavily by Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, which is now both widely referred to (Cornwall, 2008; Collins and Raymond, 2006; Choguill, 1996; Tritter and McCallum, 2006) and widely critiqued (Sharp and Connelly, 2002; Burns et al., 1994; Wilcox, 1999). Arnstein (1969) posed the question: What is citizen participation and what is its relationship to the social imperatives of our time? To examine this question she developed a ladder of participation (see Figure 4) that succinctly captures different depths of participation, moving from non-participation to citizen control. Her work is as pertinent today as it was then since, it is argued, much of what claims to be public participation continues to be situated towards the lower rungs of the ladder (Cornwall, 2008).

Figure 4:
Arnstein's ladder of participation

Citizen Control	Degrees of Citizen Power
Delegated Power	
Partnership	
Placation	Degrees of Tokenism
Consultation	
Informing	
Therapy	Non-Participation
Manipulation	

By implication, Arnstein's ladder is often used in a normative way, with the 'best' form of participation seen to be at the top of the ladder (ibid). Cornwall (2008: 44) points out that Arnstein's ladder of participation raises several questions. These include: Control of what? Which citizens? What kind of power? What is in it for the citizens to seek this power and what is in it for the state to cede it?

White (1996) begins to address these questions by highlighting that underlying the 'politics of participation' are tensions around who is involved, how and on whose terms. She proposes another typology of participation (see Table 2) which offers a useful framework to explore the multiple dimensions of and interests in participation by both individuals and communities (of place, interest and/or identity).

Table 2:
*White's typology
of participation*

Form What is the level of participation?	Top-Down: What's in it for the government or associated agencies?	Bottom-Up: What's in it for individuals and communities?	Function: What is the participation for?
Nominal	Legitimation	Inclusion	Display
Instrumental	Efficiency	Cost	Means
Representative	Sustainability	Leverage	Voice
Transformative	Empowerment	Empowerment	Means/End

This typology helps to identify where and under which circumstances different forms of participation can create either opportunities for participation or entrench and reproduce existing power relations. It is important to stress that White (ibid) conceptualises participation as a dynamic process which changes over time but also as a site of contestation and conflict. Which interests are favoured over others reflect the power relations that underpin participation, since '[s]haring through participation does not necessarily mean sharing in power' (White, 1996: 6). At times the discourse of participation can obscure as well as challenge inequalities of resources and power (Arnstein, 1969; White, 1996; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2006).

Underlying these different ways of considering the depths of participation and the techniques used to facilitate this is a zero sum view of power. Either the state or the individual/group holds power, with the 'best' form of participation and power being in the hands of individuals/groups rather than the state (Cornwall, 2008). This view of power, however, does not encourage partnership working. Building on Arnstein's model of participation, Wilcox (1994: 2) proposes a five-rung ladder of participation that stresses collaboration and partnership working:

- Information: tells people what is planned.
- Consultation: offers some options and listens to feedback, but does not allow new ideas.
- Deciding together: encourages additional options and ideas and provides opportunities for joint decision-making.
- Acting together: different interests groups decide together on what is best and for a partnership to carry it out.
- Supporting independent community interests: local groups or organisations are offered funds, advice and other support to develop their own agendas within specific guidelines.

This model is grounded in the aspiration of collaboration and partnership working between a range of stakeholders and informed by the understanding that 'working together allows everyone to achieve more than they could on their own' (ibid) (see also Section 3.1.2 above and CLG, 2006). This model also highlights that different degrees of control (such as over information, the allocation of funding and the setting of agendas) are the result of power and depends on who has information and money. As Wilcox (1994: 2) notes: 'the initiator is in a strong position to decide how much or how little control to allow to others'.

In conclusion, it can be suggested that new systems of participation often reflect existing wider systems of power and control of resources (Wilcox, 1994; White, 1996; Cornwall and Goetz, 2005; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2006; Cornwall, 2008; Beetham, et al., 2008). As Beetham et al (2008:37) argue: 'The extent to which departments consult varies enormously; and just because a body or individual has participated, [...], that it does not guarantee their views will be accorded the same importance as others who are more favoured'. They do, however, go on to remind us that other 'handles on power' (ibid) can be exerted through recourse to the 1988 Human Rights Act and also through civil society, with its diversity of trade unions, independent pressure groups, self-help groups, charitable and philanthropic societies, advocacy and campaigning groups, churches and 'faith communities' (ibid).

3.4 Dimensions within participation

Taking a view of public participation beyond the examination of the relationship between the individual and structures of governance, Beetham et al (2008) offer a typology that distinguishes between four modes, or dimensions, of participation. These different dimensions help to examine diverse forms of participation and

reflect both institutional and individual perspectives of participation. In doing so, this typology highlights tensions between institutional power and individual/collective empowerment, and how distinct forms of participation can challenge institutional power. The dimensions are:

- Individual vs collective action or initiative.
- Unstructured vs structured through existing organisations and channels.
- Time-bound or one-off vs ongoing through time.
- Reactive vs proactive.

In contrast to the previous typologies, here the issue of depth of public involvement is less prominent. In some respects this links to the discussions on breadth of participation (see Section 3.1.1, particularly the Citizen Audit for Britain and NCVO's spectrum of active citizenship), although now the focus is not on the range of individual public, social and/or individual activities encompassed within 'participation' but on the various additional dimensions which those activities might take. Participation can be seen to encompass multiple forms of both a formal and informal nature, including individual and collective actions at local, national and global levels and across a range of different contexts (Cornwall, 2002, 2004, 2005; Gaventa, 2006; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2006).

Between the vast variety of individual and collective actions and campaigns is often, according to Beetham et al (2008), a shared sense of anger, injustice or grievance that individuals and/or communities (of interest, place and/or identity) experience. This, it is argued, leads to reactive or proactive, as well as to individual and/or collective protest activities. Such 'popular participation' (Cornwall, 2008) or 'social movement activities' (della Porta and Diani, 2006) may draw on existing organisations or on unstructured networks and alternative channels of organisation. These forms of participation generally thrive outside

governance structures and may pose powerful challenges to institutional values and ways of functioning, demonstrate innovative alternatives and promote the changing of established practices and norms (Melucci, 1989, 1996; Castells, 1997; della Porta and Diani, 2006). Examples range from campaigns against wind farms to individual and collective actions against global warming.

Underpinning Beetham et al's (2008) typology is an understanding that any form and activity of participation in the UK is as unequal as the distribution of power and resources throughout society. This also, they suggest, leads to unequal access to participation in governance as well as to other social and individual forms of participation. However, the authors conclude that widening and deepening participation can lead to greater social justice and more effective public services. Accordingly, they recommend to individuals, organisations and communities (of interest, identity and/or place) that '[t]he government's commitment to participation should be grasped but without illusions' (Beetham et al., 2008: 60).

3.5 Conclusion

This examination of the practice of participation across diverse bodies of literature reveals a number of different approaches to and overlaps between understandings of public, social and individual participation and related activities. The review of classifications of participatory activities highlights the breadth of activities that individuals engage in as well as an underlying tension in understanding public, social and individual activities of participation in relation to what is 'political'. By contrast, the typologies of forms of participation reviewed here reveal a concern with variable depths of involvement.

Various authors draw attention to the need to consider different dimensions that characterise and structure of both participatory activities and forms of

participation. These dimensions can be seen as a range of factors which highlight institutional and/or individual perspectives. Each of these dimensions forms a spectrum or a continuum, rather than static, binary opposites. This may help to approach different activities and forms of participation in a more nuanced and fluid way. The following are some of the dimensions suggested in the different bodies of literature that we examined:

- unstructured ↔ structured
- informal ↔ formal
- passive ↔ active
- individual ↔ collective
- one-off ↔ ongoing
- unpaid ↔ paid
- reactive ↔ proactive
- self-interested ↔ altruistic
- resisting social change ↔ driving change.

This overview highlights how critical it is to take into account the multiple contexts in which participatory activities and diverse forms of participation take place, as well as the purpose, forms and impacts of participation: the practice of participation. Overall, a privileging of the institutional perspective can be noted in much of the literature reviewed. Some authors, however, complement the predominant focus on the public arena with explorations of personal and individual participation (for example Cornwall and Goetz, 2005; Ginsborg, 2005; ESRC, 2007), as well as those forms of participation that take place outside of the governance framework (for example Cornwall, 2002; Gaventa, 2006; Beetham et al., 2008). Also missing is a sense of 'who' is populating these participatory activities: who the participants actually are. It is to this subject that we now turn.

04

Participation in practice: The actors

The literature on participation activities and techniques, and the classifications and typologies proposed, tend to focus on specific types of participation – whether public, social or individual (as shown in the previous section). It tends to neglect the overlapping boundaries between different types of participation and little evidence exists about how these different activities may or may not be connected, or how much movement occurs between them. It is by looking at participation from people's personal experiences that some of these connections might be uncovered. In addition, while the above discussion of the activities of participation raises the questions of who is and is not getting involved, and why this might be, none of the models or classifications reviewed gave answers to these central questions. This section therefore considers the actors in participation: who participates in what and why.

4.1 Who participates, in what?

Overall, the literature suggests that different people are active to varying degrees across a wide spectrum of participatory activities. There are a number of assumptions around the 'types' of people who participate in certain activities, and for some activities there is no shortage of literature exploring participant demographics and characteristics (voting, for example).

4.1.1 The typical participant?

The boxes that follow summarise the literature on who is most likely to participate within specific activities.

The voter/traditional public participant

- Research exploring 'traditional' public participation shows that the most active participants are those in mid to later life. At the last election, older voters far outnumbered the youngest, with 70 per cent of those over 65 turning out to vote compared to 39 per cent of people aged between 18 and 25 (Keaney and Rogers, 2006). People in older age groups are also more likely to contact an elected representative (ibid), and although recent comprehensive data is scarce, it appears older people are more likely to subscribe to party membership (Whiteley et al., 1994; Whiteley, 2009).
- Men and women tend to participate via traditional political channels relatively equally (Keaney and Rogers, 2006, Hansard Society, 2009), and many political commentators now acknowledge that gender differences in public participation, once significant, have largely disappeared (Coxall et al., 2003). However, although 'men and women were almost equally likely to vote in 2005' (Electoral Commission, 2005: 24) the proportion of women holding elected decision-making posts is still unrepresentative of the adult population at large. Only 29 per cent of councillors are female, for example (Haberis and Prendergrast, 2007), and it has been argued that men are still

generally more politically interested and engaged (Hansard Society, 2009).

- People from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups tend to participate less than white people in formal political channels (OBV, 2008; The Electoral Commission, 2005; Hansard Society, 2009) particularly voting in general elections, where BME voter non-registration is around 18 per cent, compared to 6 per cent for white people (The Electoral Commission, 2002). This is despite other research that shows that people from all BME groups are more likely than those from white groups to feel they can influence decisions both nationally and locally (CLG, 2009).
- Those in higher income and socio-economic brackets are more likely to vote and engage in other traditional public participation mechanisms than lower earners and socio-economic groups (The Electoral Commission, 2005; Keaney and Rogers, 2006; Hansard Society, 2009).

In summary: The typical voter/traditional public participant is white, aged 65 and above, middle class, professional higher earners, both men and women.

Local-level public participant (for example, attending consultation groups/meetings, completing questionnaire about issues such as town planning, health, transport or the environment)

- There is a perceived 'usual suspect' group that dominates participation in local decision-making (Taylor, 2003; Gaventa, 2004; Smith, 2005; Skidmore et al., 2006; John, 2007; Rai, 2008).
- The typical participant is cited as older. In 2008, for example, 24 per cent of 50-74 year olds participated in civic consultation, whereas only 12 per cent of 16 to 24 year olds did so (CLG, 2009).
- BME groups are often cited as under-represented in governance (Skidmore et al., 2006; CLG, 2009;).
- As well as being predominantly white and older, Harrison and Singer (2007) also found the most actively involved to be the more affluent, and male.
- Those living in rural areas have also been identified as more likely to engage in civic consultation exercises, with 27 per cent taking part compared to 19 per cent of those living in urban areas.

- Participation in decision-making varies according to activity field however. The NHS National Centre for Involvement illustrates a rather different participant group in Patient and Public Involvement activities. BME groups were involved in over 80 per cent of trusts in 2008 and young people, faith-groups and (other) 'hard-to-reach' groups were involved in most trusts' participation exercises about the planning and delivery of healthcare services (Herron-Marx et al., 2008).

In summary: The typical participants in local decisions vary according to activity, but generally are more likely to be white, older, better educated, richer, middle-class males.

The online public participant

- Researchers have suggested that 'just as in offline politics, the well-off and well-educated are especially likely to participate in online activities that mirror offline forms of engagement' (Smith et al., 2009).
- The latest Survey of the Internet in Britain found that although they were less likely to use the internet than other groups, retired people were more likely to be civically engaged online (Dutton et al., 2009).
- Earlier research had found the younger age groups to be the most likely of all adults to engage politically online (Gibson et al., 2005). Although patterns of online public participation are similar to those of offline participation in terms of social grade and education, what stands out is that young people's rates of engagement in online politics far outstrip their engagement in traditional forms. While only 10 per cent have acted politically in an offline context, 30 per cent of those aged 15-24 years of age have engaged in a form of online political activity (Gibson et al., 2005).

In summary: The typical online public participant is well educated, and from a marginally higher social grade and both male or female.

The formal volunteer

(for example, the prison visitor, the conservation volunteer, the charity shop volunteer, the school governor, the local magistrate)

- Opportunities to volunteer formally are very wide-ranging, and the demographics of volunteers vary by activity. Generally speaking however, the most active formal volunteers are those in middle age, within the age bracket 35-64 (CLG, 2009; Low et al., 2007).
- Despite often being identified as one of the most active age groups (Rochester, 2006), those in the 18-24 age group actually register relatively low volunteering figures, and participation has been decreasing for some time (Low et al., 2007; Machin, 2005; Evans and Saxton, 2005; Davis-Smith, 1998).
- Gender disparities are also apparent. Women are 'significantly more likely to volunteer than men, either on a regular basis or at all' (Low et al., 2007: 20).
- BME groups have been identified as participating less in formal volunteering (Machin, 2005). However, levels of formal volunteering vary significantly between ethnic groups (CLG, 2009).
- There seems to be a positive relationship between religious practice and formal volunteering (Jochum et al., 2005; Low et al., 2007). However, social-class related factors such as educational attainment and housing tenure have an equal or bigger impact on levels of volunteering than religious practice (Greg, 2005).

- Educational attainment is a key predictor for formal volunteering. The higher qualification level achieved, the more likely the individual is to volunteer: For 60 per cent of degree holders formally volunteered, whilst only 24 per cent of those without any qualification were likely to do so (Home Office, 2004).
- Participation in formal volunteering also increases in line with level of employment and those in managerial positions volunteer more than those in intermediate and routine occupations (CLG, 2009).
- Socio-economic groups AB and C1 are considerably more likely to volunteer formally than C2 and DE (Evans and Saxton, 2005), and this has changed little over the past decade (Davis-Smith, 1998).

In summary: The typical formal volunteers are women, of higher social grades, in managerial positions, degree educated, and middle aged. There are, however, differences across different types of formal volunteering.

The charitable giver

- Overall, the literature suggests that people of all ages are equally likely to give to charitable causes. However, the youngest adults (age 16-24) are noticeably less likely to donate, and donate proportionately less when they do (Low et al., 2007; Hansard Society, 2009; CAF/NCVO, 2009).
- Women have been consistently more likely than men to donate to charitable causes (Low et al., 2007; Brennan and Saxton, 2007; Clegg et al., 2008; CAF/NCVO, 2009). Single, childless women are particularly likely to give, as are all child-free households (Brennan and Saxton, 2007).
- Although BME groups are far less likely to donate to a charity or campaigning organisation (Hansard Society, 2009; Low et al., 2007), when they do give they are on average likely to give the same or more per donor, and more likely to donate at a place of worship and to people begging. Asian people are most likely to give to overseas aid and disaster relief (Low et al, 2007).
- The higher the educational qualifications attained, the more likely the individual is to give (Clegg et al., 2008). Those in managerial and professional positions have a higher propensity to give too (Clegg et al., 2008). Although there is a positive correlation with earnings and propensity to give (ibid), research has found that when lower income households do give, they donate a larger proportion of their income (Brennan and Saxton, 2007; Taylor et al., 2007).

- There is often a positive correlation with religious practice and giving, 'those respondents actively practising any religion donate significantly higher amounts on average than those not actively practising or with no religion' (Low et al., 2007:85).

In summary: The typical charitable givers are likely to be professional, white, females more than males, above the age of 24, religiously affiliated and living in a childless household. Higher earners are more likely to give, but not proportionally.

The consumer activist

- The most committed ethical consumers tend to be in the 30-44 age range. However, the 18-29 age group are most likely to seek information on a company's behaviour when making a consumer decision (Co-operative Group, 2007).
- The UK Ethical Consumerism Report suggests that those in the 60+ age group 'tend to be less responsive to ethical messages as a whole, and are least likely to be committed ethical consumers' (Co-Operative Group, 2007: 7).
- Recent research however tentatively concludes that it is no longer the case that younger consumers are more ethical than older individuals (Doran, 2009). It appears that there is no longer a 'typical' age of ethical consumers, and the evidence suggests the age demographic of ethical consumers might be in transition.
- Research conducted by DEFRA found a positive female skew of 'concerned consumers' (Muckle, 2009), whilst Diamantopoulos et al (2003) found women more likely to 'undertake recycling activities more often and display 'greener shopping habits' than their male counterparts' (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003: 475). However according to the Co-operative Group's national ethical consumerism report, men and women are equally represented in the ethical consumer market, despite women being far more concerned than men about animal welfare when deciding on food purchasing (Co-Operative Group, 2007).

- The Co-operative Group identifies ethical consumers as 'slightly more upmarket', finding that the majority are in group ABC1 (ibid). Nicholson-Lord (1999) identified the typical organic customer to be an educated, affluent professional, in social group AB and shopping at upper-end supermarkets. More recent research however is questioning such findings.
- Educational attainment does not appear to be a factor in the way it once was (Doran, 2009). Stolle et al (2005) could not confirm a positive correlation between income and ethical consumerism, whilst Muckle (2009) found 'positive greens' to be overwhelmingly from social group BC1, and the social group BC1C2 more likely to be 'concerned consumers'.

In summary: Inconclusive: Research has found younger, female adults to be more likely to be ethical consumers in everyday spaces such as the supermarket, although recent studies contradict this. Traditional assumptions that 'more upmarket' people shop ethically are also being challenged.

4.1.2 The mythical 'typical' participant

The profiles above appear to confirm certain stereotypes. For example, the empirical literature exploring different participatory activities suggests that those involved in public participation are predominantly older, male, middle class and the more affluent in society. In many ways it should not be surprising that there are overlaps in terms of who is participating in the various activities focused on above as these activities are not themselves mutually exclusive – many of the people carrying out traditional, local and/or online public participation, for instance, will be doing so as volunteers.

However, this stereotype is certainly not the most predominant across all participatory activities. Typical participants are much harder to determine within individual activities in everyday spaces, for example in ethical consumption. White, younger, religiously affiliated females donate more of their disposable income to charitable causes, whilst an older (but otherwise similar) cohort is often found donating their time by formally volunteering.

Also, although groups often identified as marginalised such as BME communities are relatively inactive in formal participatory activities (in governance roles and traditional political activism, for example), this is not the case in other types of activities. Within BME groups there is 'a long tradition of more informal, self-help participatory activity between individuals and households rather than with organisations' (Machin, 2005: 7). And the youngest adults in society, although undoubtedly less responsive to participatory opportunities within traditional politics and service delivery for example, are however some of the most active in virtual participatory spaces, both politically and socially (Gibson et al., 2005; Notley, 2009; nfpSynergy, 2009).

4.1.3 The silent voices

Exploring the characteristics of participants within different participatory activities exposes the lack of a static 'typical' actor across the spectrum of activities. The literature raises some important questions about certain voices in society that are not being heard. We have highlighted how, broadly speaking, many participatory activities are to some extent dominated by the well-resourced, i.e. those from higher socio-economic groups, the educated, the employed, the affluent; as well as those often identified as older and white. Similarly, a picture has emerged of the younger, non-white, lower socio-economic group actor participating in a much less intense way across many forms of activities. National surveys such as the Citizenship Survey (CLG, 2009), The Audit of Political Engagement (Hansard Society, 2009) and the Helping Out survey (Low et al., 2007) have all detected some disparity between activity levels across age groups and socio-economic status.

Public participation in all its guises appears to increase with education. Commentators often argue how '[E]ducation builds self-confidence, increases political knowledge and provides literary skills, all of which are necessary for significant political participation' (Coxall et al., 2003: 77). Those from non-white backgrounds have been identified as particularly less engaged, especially in public participation arenas (Rai, 2008). Voices from minorities within minorities are often identified as muted; women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups within BME communities for example (Rai, 2008; Blakey et al., 2006). Important questions regarding inclusion and inequality of resources arise when exploring those less likely to participate, and such themes will be examined in greater detail in Section 4.3.

4.2 Classifications of actors

Overall, the literature presents a nuanced picture of participation. To expand on and illuminate this picture, we now turn to an examination of classifications of participants that some authors have developed based on explorations of the diversity of activities that individuals engage in. Some classifications focus on the increasing intensity of participation (from occasional to regular, for example); others interrogate the structure of individuals' participatory activities.

One widely applied model of public participation – the civic voluntarism model – has its origins in the research work of Verba and Nie (Verba and Nie, 1972) on participation in the US, which was subsequently applied in the UK (Pattie et al., 2004). Verba and Nie (ibid) classified individuals into six different groups on the basis of the types of activities they undertook (Pattie et al., 2004: 145):

- **Inactives** do little or nothing.
- **Voting specialists** vote regularly but do nothing in addition.
- **Parochial participants** contact officials in relation to specific issues.
- **Communalists** intermittently engage in political action on broad social issues, but are not intensely involved.
- **Campaigners** are intensely involved in a various campaigns.
- **Complete activists** participate in a number of activities.

This classification is framed around the increasing intensity of engagement, particularly in the public arena. Similarly, a small scale qualitative research study carried out by the Henley Centre examined patterns of engagement in the public realm. Individuals' attitudes and activities concerning engagement, community, public services and politics were profiled against their personal time, energy and money budgets.

Findings from this study resulted in an 'engagement segmentation' and the classification of five key groups of actors (Harrison and Singer, 2007: 55-59):

- **Community bystanders** are the least engaged across a range of activities and less likely to participate even passively. The authors suggest that a disproportionately high number of lower income people and older people fall within this group.
- **Passive participants** engage in 'easy' activities, such as socialising with neighbours, using local leisure facilities and participating in local school events. Passive participants are said to be disproportionately middle income and middle aged. It is also suggested that passive participants are often parents and typically tired, short of time and energy, and feel unwilling to do more.
- The **community conscious** have a strong belief in the values of community and in a sense of community where they live. They are described as making things happen in their community, though they are not necessarily 'political' or engage in local politics. The community conscious are said to be disproportionately women. Like community bystanders, they tend to be older, but are much more affluent and although they feel time pressures they are not low on energy.
- The **politically engaged** focus on local activities, such as local planning meetings and public consultations. They may also write to newspapers and their MP, or canvass for their local party, but do not socialise with neighbours or go to local leisure facilities. They are said to be in the oldest age group, the most affluent and frequently male.
- The **active protesters** put their time and energy into going on demonstrations and writing letters to newspapers. According to the authors they tend to be less satisfied with their local area and this, they suggest, may drive their participation.

They are said to be younger than the politically engaged, but like them are also frequently male. However, they include a high proportion of people with lower incomes, such as students.

By contrast, and drawing on the Citizen Audit – a large-scale study involving face-to-face surveys and postal questionnaires with 13,000 people across England, Scotland and Wales (Pattie et al., 2004) – Pattie et al observe that people's public engagement is multi-faceted. The authors identify three types of political activists. Unlike the classifications explored above, this classification does not focus on the depth of engagement. Rather, the authors argue that different types of people are interested and engaged in different types of participatory activities:

- **Individualistic participants** are people who purchase or boycott particular goods for political or ethical reasons; they are also more likely to donate to or raise money for an organisation, sign petitions, display a poster or wear a badge with a political message, and vote in local government elections with the aim of influencing political outcomes. The middle-aged, the rich and the better educated are more likely to be individualistic participants.
- **Contactors** are individuals who contact public officials and are also more likely to engage in other contact with politicians, organisations, the media or legal personnel. Contactors are more likely to come from among the poorer members of society.
- **Group activists** form groups of like-minded people or take part in demonstrations and political meetings, and may also participate in illegal protests. That is, they participate in or initiate collective action. The young and highly educated are more frequently found to be group activists.

Like the work by the Henley Centre (above), these conclusions from the Citizen Audit highlight that there is 'a structure to [people's] actions' (Pattie et al., 2003: 623), though this is not to suggest that the different categories are mutually exclusive and that people do not engage in a range of different activities.

The empirical literature reviewed identifies how the characteristics of actors vary across the broad range of participatory activities, while the classifications of actors illustrate how the depth of involvement differs for different people, as well as how different people appear to be attracted to different forms of engagement. The literature suggests that participation is unequal across different sections of society, reflecting the unequal distribution of power and resources in society. We now attempt to make sense of how and why such inequality influences participatory behaviour, by reviewing the literature on why some participate more, and others do to a lesser degree.

4.3 Why participate

The literature suggests that the reasons people become active and the reasons they do not, are numerous, hugely diverse and vary according to personal, cultural, environmental and structural circumstances. By teasing out motivational factors, barriers, triggers and enablers of participation across the different forms of activity we can begin to understand why some people participate more and why others participate less. These can be addressed by adopting a sociological perspective that examines the structural/societal elements that inhibit people's engagement, and by taking a psychological perspective to explore people's motivations.

In the formal volunteering field alone there have been numerous psychological and sociological studies that have attempted to explain motivation (Rochester et al., 2009 forthcoming). Rochester (2006)

highlights four explanations in the volunteering literature why people volunteer:

- **Socio-economic factors:** people with higher education and income volunteer more than those with fewer resources.
- **Opportunity or access:** this is connected to people's social networks; people who volunteer often do so because they have been asked.
- **Historical and cultural factors at the wider societal level:** for example, the bias in the UK for volunteering to take place within the realm of social welfare and the way in which people from certain cultures or religions are routinely involved in activities which might be seen as volunteering (e.g. Chinese and African-Caribbean communities caring for members of their family and neighbours).
- **Individual motivation:** some people have personalities which are more helpful and generous than others.

These broad explanations, although originally focusing on volunteering, provide a useful way in which to think about why people participate. Unearthing all the reasons why people participate and become active is, unfortunately, a task beyond the scope of this review. This section does not therefore exhaustively explore all the motivations and 'triggers' of participation, but provides an insight into the variety and breadth of individual drivers for participation, and the difficulties of investigating them.

4.3.1 Why people say they participate

There is a considerable body of literature on the reasons people volunteer. Respondents to the Helping Out survey (a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving, Low et al., 2007) identified a variety of pragmatic, egotistic and altruistic reasons for volunteering. The most common motive was 'to improve things

and help people' (53 per cent). This was followed by an affiliation with the cause, and an availability of time for the individual (41 per cent). A plethora of other motivations have been cited, such as 'to use existing skills', 'part of my life philosophy', 'part of my religious belief' and to assist career. Life experience has also been cited as a key driver, and can contribute heavily to a participant's choice of activity; an individual is likely to participate within a particular cause if they have been affected by it during their life course. This is supported by some of the 'new social movement' literature. Searle-Chatterjee (1999) argues that the propensity to participate is established early in the life course, and emerges from the intersection of socialisation within the family and personal life experience.

Helping Out (Low et al., 2007) identified some variation between motives and social demographics. Age was fairly constant across the various motivations; however volunteering in order to meet people and widen social networks was more common for the youngest and oldest age groups. Young people were also more likely to volunteer to enhance their employability. Perhaps rather more surprising, however, was the disparity within ethnic groups; white people for example were significantly more likely to volunteer because they had time on their hands compared to black or Asian volunteers.

The literature on public participation also identifies a variety of reasons for getting involved. A personal interest, an aspiration to change things, background influences such as upbringing, faith, life experiences, and exposure to the community and voluntary sector all affect individuals' propensity to participate politically within their communities (Rai, 2008; CLG, 2008b; Haberis and Prendergrast, 2007). More specifically however, some commentators stress how individuals want to have a voice, and by participating through these direct political channels they are given the opportunity to 'have their say'

(CLG, 2008b; Foot, 2009). Indeed this voice in the community and sense of empowerment means individuals can feel they are making a positive difference in the local and wider area (ibid). Perhaps not surprisingly considering these reasons, it has been suggested that the stronger the commitment to the local area, the more likely the individual is to participate in local activities (Skidmore et al., 2006). Furthermore, it has also been demonstrated how individuals are more motivated to get involved and stay involved politically when they are asked or invited, when an active interest is shown in their opinion, when they have had a positive previous experience and feel their engagement was influential and acted upon, and when they feel confidently equipped (practically and mentally) with the resources needed to engage (Lowndes et al., 2006; CLG, 2008b).

Many of these factors are similar to the motivating factors for people getting involved in less formal and structured participation. For example, Klandermans (2003) notes how people join social movements when they care about an issue and aggrieved, and when individuals and organisations have the resources to mobilise (money, time, technical expertise etc.). More than a decade before this, Taylor (1992) identified various social, economic, political and cultural reasons people have to form and participate in community organisations. These motivational factors include a desire to engage in shared activities, to provide mutual support, to reinforce a community identity and give individuals a sense of belonging, to try and improve services for the community and to gain influence in the larger environment. Such motivations, Taylor argues, flow from a number of common interests which she describes as cultural heritage, social relationships, common economic interests and the basis for political power.

Literature attempting to explain why people participate in individual, everyday spaces tends to take a

more philosophical approach. Barnett et al (2005) discuss two philosophical positions regarding ethical consumption. Firstly, these authors suggest that ethical consumerist choices are often made with consequentialist underpinnings; where consumers are concerned with the consequences or outcomes of their actions. The authors discuss how ethical consumption campaigns and policies usually rely on and assume a consequentialist position of the consumer, and that such a position implies that there is a 'single measure of what 'the good' is, and of what 'acting ethically' should entail, and that the main challenge is to get consumers to adopt the appropriate forms of conduct and behaviour' (Barnett et al., 2005: 12). Secondly, and in contrast, they suggest that ethical consumption can be understood from a deontological perspective. Such a duty-based approach identifies 'right actions' as independent of the outcomes/favoured goals. The authors acknowledge how the reasons for consumers to shop ethically may be based around 'moral obligation', as the ethical consumerist agenda invokes 'highly universalized arguments about people's responsibilities to care for others – whether this is other people, other creatures, the environment, or future generations' (Barnett et al., 2005: 13).

Altruism prevails, or does it?

The motive to improve things and help people is consistently reported as important across social groups and UK regions. There has long been extensive psychological exploration into the altruism factor of volunteering, and whether altruism actually exists in terms of pro-social behaviour (Smith, 1981; Unger, 1991; Maner et al., 2002; Burns et al., 2006; Carpenter and Myers, 2007).

However, the most common way to determine why people participate has been to ask them their reasons for doing so, and the findings from the empirical research studies that make up a large part of the motivation literature are therefore based on how

participants themselves make sense of their involvement. As a result, socially desirable responding may mean that 'people are reluctant to admit they are doing something without concern for their own welfare. They feel social pressure to avoid taking too much credit for their 'selfless' actions' (Musick and Wilson, 2008).

An additional methodological caveat is that the researchers often provide the list of motivations, from which respondents can choose so, although the motivational factors discussed above give us an indication that some respondents perceive their involvement as value-driven, this cannot be explicitly identified as their prime reason for volunteering. Empirical survey data can only go so far in explaining motivation.

4.3.2

Psychological motivations

An extended understanding of motivations can be developed through considering the psychological factors that may underpin survey results, and the sociological considerations of the wider circumstances which encourage participation. Two key studies provide valuable insights based on the analysis of motivations for volunteering specifically.

Clary and Snyder's work focuses specifically on volunteer motivational behaviour. They developed the now well-known Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1992) which identified six primary psychological motivations for volunteering:

- **Values:** Acting on altruistic beliefs in order to help others.
- **Understanding:** Volunteering to learn and experience new things and develop life skills.
- **Career:** Gaining career related employment skills and experience for work advancement.
- **Social:** Volunteering conforms to behaviours favoured by people's peer group.

- **Enhancement:** Volunteering to enhance one's self-esteem.
- **Protective:** Using volunteering as an escape mechanism to deal with negative feelings about themselves.

Clary and Snyder's model has since been the subject of much reflection and refinement, both by themselves and others (Omoto et al., 1995; Clary et al., 1996; Clary et al., 1998; Clary and Snyder, 1999). McEwin and Jacobsen-D'Arcy's (1992) Volunteer Motivation Inventory, built on Clary and Snyder's Volunteer Functions Inventory, has four further functions:

- **Reciprocity:** The individual volunteers with the belief that 'what goes around comes around'. Altruistic behaviour brings about positive things for the volunteer.
- **Reactivity:** The individual is motivated to volunteer out of a need to deal and eradicate personal problems (past or present).
- **Social Interaction:** The individual volunteers to build social networks and to interact with others.
- **Recognition:** The individual is motivated to volunteer by the appeal of being recognised for their contribution.

A rather different analysis is provided by Batson et al's (2002) study into motives for community involvement. This work suggests that participants are driven by one of four motives:

- **Egoism** – where the intention is to increase one's own welfare.
- **Altruism** – where the goal is to increase the welfare of one or more individuals.
- **Collectivism** – where the goal to increase the welfare of a group or collective.
- **Principalism** – which aims to uphold some moral principle.

Away from traditional volunteering, Klandermans (2003) notes how individuals are motivated to join social movements and protest activities by a desire to change circumstances

(instrumentality), to belong to a group (identity) and to give meaning to one's life (meaning). Klandermans' later work goes further and argues that together these three motives account for a majority of the collective political action in society (Klandermans, 2004).

4.3.3 Triggers for involvement: The importance of social relationships

Beyond personal motivations a number of factors can encourage and enable participation and help explain why people choose to continue or withdraw their involvement.

Personal circumstance, socio-demographics, life events and other factors can help explain involvement. Individuals may have similar motivations, values and circumstances, yet some may act on these and some may not. So how do motives transfer into active participation? Merely 'being asked' is seen as an important trigger (Rochester, 2006; Lowndes, 2006; Haberis and Prendergrast, 2007; Low et al., 2007; CLG, 2008b) as is finding out through 'word of mouth'. Some individuals referred to as 'moving spirits' by Gibson (1996) can motivate whole communities into action with their powerful community networking prowess. Social linkages therefore seem key, and the well-resourced, with further education, higher incomes and wider social networks are more likely to hear about opportunities for participation, and to be asked (Musick and Wilson, 2008).

4.4 Reviewing the barriers to participation

As well as reviewing why people become participants, we also need to look at the barriers that prevent people from participating, to gain further clarity of individuals' participatory patterns.

4.4.1 Institutional barriers

The literature suggests that officialdom and the complex structures of government and voluntary and community organisations can often deter people from participating. Bureaucracy is often cited as a prominent put-off for would-be formal volunteers, with increasing numbers being potentially deterred by lengthy, formal recruitment processes (Low et al., 2007). Local governance structures are often perceived as frustratingly bureaucratic, complex and unnecessarily formal (Rai, 2008; CLG, 2008b). Consequently those more at ease in such environments are over-represented in these activities, whilst non-participants may be those that find the process intimidating and inaccessible. There have also been a number of structural barriers identified for individuals becoming and remaining a local councillor, including the current electoral system and restrictive anti-discriminatory legislation (Haberis and Prendergrast, 2007).

The role and influence of existing community leaders has also been identified as a hindrance for wider participation. According to Francis and Henderson (1992: 24) 'the tendency can be for existing leaders and gatekeepers to play a dominant role'. The authors note how such gatekeepers, who may be formal leaders or simply powerful local figures, often facilitate people's entry into particular networks in the community. This can be an enabling mechanism, but it is important to recognise that, by controlling access and pathways into groups and networks they can also reinforce the existing social system and encourage exclusion.

At a national level, the Power Inquiry (2006) suggests that individuals are becoming disengaged from established political participatory channels because of a perceived lack of principles of and differentiation between the main political parties. Disengagement is also seen to result from a perception that the processes

do not give individuals enough influence, as well as pessimism over the electoral system and the impacts of voting, and the perceptions that voting procedures are difficult and unappealing.

Lack of resources

Education as an individual resource is a strong predictor of participation. Some commentators argue that 'the more education people have the more extensive and heterogeneous are their social networks, which increases the chance they will be asked' (Musick and Wilson, 2008: 120), thus a lack of education and the opportunities it brings can be seen as a barrier to participation. The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG, 2008b) note how a gap in education can deter participants in other ways. For example, a lack of awareness and understanding of governance and political processes can prevent people from getting involved.

Financial resources, or rather a lack of them, can also create a barrier to participation. Lack of disposable income is consistently the most common reason why people do not give to charitable causes (Low et al., 2007), and the financial costs involved in more demanding roles of participation can also be a barrier to engagement (CLG, 2008b). For instance, childcare costs can deter potential school governors (Ellis, 2003) and the cost of travel for local councillors in rural parishes has been identified as an obstacle (Haberis and Prendergrast, 2007). Cost can also be a deterrent in the ethical consumption market (Harrison et al., 2005), and 'for people on low incomes, the incidental expenses of providing food and other services to people in need...decent clothing, or the costs of transportation can make all the difference between volunteering and not volunteering' (Reitsma-Street et al., 2000: 665). Lack of time (see below) and poor health are also seen as barriers to participation (Musick and Wilson, 2008; Harrison and Singer, 2007).

Practical deterrents

Practical difficulties such as not knowing how to get involved, lack of time, childcare, timing of events/participatory opportunities, access and location of meetings and transport difficulties are often identified as obstacles to participation (Ellis, 2003; IVR, 2004; Morris, 2006; Skidmore et al. 2006; Blake et al., 2008; Low et al., 2007; CLG, 2007; CLG, 2008b). Practical impediments can differ by activity, O'Brien and colleagues for example do not cite lack of time as a barrier in environmental volunteering, but rather identifies obstacles such as costs and transport issues (O'Brien et al., 2008). Practical barriers also inevitably differ with individual circumstance; those with dependents face specific barriers for example, whilst those with long-term limiting illness may face a different set of practical barriers.

4.4.2

Psychological barriers

Individual lack of confidence to participate appears to cut across many different participatory activities. It has been suggested that people's lack of confidence and insecurity about their knowledge of formal politics, and difficult voting procedures, is a barrier for many in formal politics (Power Inquiry, 2006). A lack of knowledge and confidence are cited as barriers to people becoming councillors, especially women and young adults (Haberis and Prendergrast, 2007) as well as Further Education governors (Collinson et al., 2007), school governors (Ellis, 2003), and volunteers more generally (IVR, 2004). Self-image and lack of self-confidence can also be an issue for would-be formal volunteers; two-thirds of respondents in the Helping Out survey did not feel they had the adequate skills or experience to volunteer (Low et al., 2007).

Suspicion and lack of trust also seem to be an underlying deterrent. For example, people are often deterred from committing financially to a cause because they are cynical about charity

business models, and question whether they provide 'a hand-up or a hand-out' (Hibbert and Farsides, 2005: 6). Certain groups have reservations that volunteering may adversely affect their welfare benefits (IVR, 2004; Ramsey, 2005). A lack of faith in the engagement process at local decision-making level also often appears to limit participation (Lowndes et al., 2001; Skidmore et al., 2006; Blake et al., 2008; CLG, 2008b), where people often suspect their views will not be taken on board and they consider that their input will not have any tangible outcomes. Distrust in ethical marketing claims is also growing, and the literature indicates that consumers are becoming desensitized and suspicious of environmental and ethical advertising claims, hindering people's enthusiasm to participate on an individual level in their everyday lives (Shrum et al., 1995; Futerra Sustainability, 2008).

Perceptions of the stereotypical participant can create additional barriers. The idea of a dominant participant, or the 'usual suspects' can exacerbate divisions between those who participate and those who do not. Active participants are often seen as an elite clique, and 'part of the establishment'. This in turn makes it difficult for non-participants to join in and become active; 'the fear of alienation or setting yourself apart from the crowd puts people off' (CLG, 2007: 26). Likewise in formal volunteering, the clichéd image of an 'old, do-gooder' volunteer can deter certain groups (Marta and Pozzi, 2008; Volunteering England, 2008; IVR, 2004; Rochester et al., 2009 forthcoming).

It should also be noted that some of the practical barriers cited above may also be psychological. 'Lack of time' for example is the most commonly identified barrier for participation. However, as has been established, those who do participate are often in full-time employment and lead busy lives, suggesting time may be less of a practical barrier than often claimed, and more a perception barrier (IVR,

2004). Lack of time may be an easier, more socially acceptable reason given for non-participation.

4.4.3

Discrimination and prejudice

Blakey et al (2006) suggest that certain groups may face high levels of stigma from within their own communities, as well as the wider population, discouraging individuals' involvement. Rai (2008) found BME women often experience gender, race and/or faith discrimination which can deter them from participating politically. At councillor level, the literature suggests women are often put off by the male-oriented culture of local government whilst a barrier for some BME candidates is hostility; for those with a disability, discriminatory or ignorant attitudes are also cited as a deterrent (Haberis and Prendergrast, 2007). Within formal volunteering, some commentators have suggested BME groups also face racial hostility and discrimination (Niyazi, 1997; Reid, 2004). It is likely that those who have encountered such discrimination in the past are going to be more cautious in the future (IVR, 2004; Rochester et al., 2009 forthcoming).

4.5

Sustaining participation

Why people continue participating (or not) is as complex an issue as exploring what motivates people to begin, and '[A] great deal of attention has been given to understanding initial motivation and comparatively little to explaining why people stay' (Rochester, 2006: 13). Commentators are not under the illusion that there is a single answer. Within the formal volunteering field for example, '[T]here is no 'factor x' that explains why some people continue volunteering and why others withdraw...not only has no factor x been found – it does not appear to be worth looking for one' (Locke et al., 2003: 95).

4.5.1

Personal continuation and withdrawal factors

A range of other personal factors can contribute to continuation along an individual's pathway through participation. Some researchers suggest that having a stable and settled personal life, such as being married and having children, contributes to sustained participation in the volunteering field (Locke et al., 2003). Higher levels of education, previous experience of participation and friendships and networks made through participation have also been found to sustain activity (ibid). Interestingly however, a number of studies exploring factors such as personality and attitudes, type of motivation, faith, and demographics do not find conclusive connections between these factors and continued participation (ibid). A number of personal withdrawal factors have been suggested, for example moving to another area (Davis-Smith, 1998) or changing employment (Wardell et al., 2000).

In less structured forms of participation, it is harder to explore pathways and decipher continuation and withdrawal factors. Indeed 'compared to the abundant literature on why people join movements, literature on why they exit is almost nonexistent' (Klandermans, 2004: 372). Unlike formal volunteering, where, as discussed above, personal stability and children can sustain participation. Doherty et al. (2003) find that direct action in social movements often ends with the arrival of children, marriage, full-time jobs and mortgages. Klandermans (2004) on the other hand argues insufficient gratification combined with declining commitment is the core route to withdrawal. Some authors identify a continuity in social movement involvement across generations (Searle-Chatterjee, 1999) while others have described activists such as environmentalists as 'sporadic interventionists'; as individuals protesting about a threat that

concerns them directly, who withdraw from the public arena once their purpose has been achieved (Coxall et al., 2003). However as global green issues continue to rise in political significance (along with increased activism), it will be interesting to examine whether the 'sporadic' participation of such activists diminishes.

Jasper (1998) on the other hand emphasises the importance of the individual's emotional attachment to protest and social movement activity in shaping the participant's pathway. The author argues transitory, context-specific emotions (for example frustration, compassion, anger, alienation and anomie) explain and provide motivations for beginning and remaining active in collective action, as well as reasons for withdrawal. According to Jasper, emotions both reactive and affective can 'help explain why individuals join protest events or groups, ranging from emotional responses they can have as individuals to those that recruiters can stir in them...[I]n many cases, the same emotions - in different contexts, or with different objects - that lead people into social movements can lead them out again' (Jasper, 1998: 404-405).

Passy and Giugni (2000) argue that once participants have established a connection between the three principal life spheres (namely family, studies and work) and their political engagement, then their commitment to an issue will be interlocked and strengthened by this intertwining of spheres, thus: 'the higher the chances that such an issue will become a crucial element in the construction of the self, and as a result, the higher the chances that their political commitment will stabilize, leading to sustained participation' (Passy and Giugni, 2000: 125).

4.5.2. Organisational and institutional factors

Organisational factors such as poor management and supervision, lack of training, the undervaluing and overburdening of participants, and disillusionment with the organisation's work can all contribute to participant withdrawal (Locke et al., 2003). Continuation appears likely if participants 'are managed in an explicit, developmental, supportive and appreciative way' (Locke et al., 2003: 87). The public policy context also plays a key role in an organisation's ability and capacity to manage its participants. A loss of independence in voluntary and community organisations, for example, has in some areas led to decreased flexibility, autonomy and consequent motivation of volunteers (Russell and Scott, 1997).

The literature suggests that participation is created and maintained when people are 'enabled to do so by an infrastructure of civic networks and organisations' (Lowndes et al., 2006: 281). Some local programmes have attempted to improve participant continuation. For example, Bradford's Active Citizen Programme exemplifies how the council has worked with the Local Strategic Partnership, health bodies, the University and voluntary and community organisations to improve the recruitment, training and retention of active citizens (Home Office, 2004b).

A barrier for people becoming and remaining community leaders is that such individuals can be identified by government organisations and institutions as the sort of people they can work with, and who are able to cope with bureaucracy and finance (Taylor, 2003: 133). Such levels of participation, Taylor argues, where individuals are in danger of being drawn into formal mechanisms such as partnerships, can mean that 'community stars' can easily become victims.

The pressure of constant demands on their time and the complex relationships they have to manage can lead to burn out and unsustainable participation (ibid).

Some insight has been provided into how individuals' participation might be sustained and how their pathways in and through participation are shaped regarding specific forms of participation such as volunteering and social movements. However, there remains a distinct paucity of literature exploring how people's participation interweaves through and between the various forms of activity, and there are few studies exploring 'how individuals participate and get involved over time, how their experience might change with life stages, and how different episodes in their lives might be connected' (ESRC, 2007: 2).

4.6 Conclusion

Exploring who the actors of participation are and the factors that enable or hinder individuals' involvement has demonstrated the complexity of participatory behaviour. While no typical participant can be identified across the whole range of activities and forms of participation in the different bodies of literature, an examination of distinct participatory activities highlights typical participants within specific contexts of participation. This reveals a more nuanced picture of the variety of participation practices and their actors which emphasises the importance of examining participation in the context of the lives of individuals. Table 3 below summarises some of the key questions that emerge from a consideration of participation in context. These questions will become central to our enquiry about people's pathways through participation.

*Table 3:
Participation as
situated practice*

Who?	Participants and non-participants, and the 'myth of the typical participant'
Why? Or why not?	Motivations, barriers, triggers, enablers
What? (Breadth)	Activities and type of activity (e.g. mutual aid, service, self help, governance)
What in? (Breadth)	Fields of interest (e.g. personal experience, identity, values and worldviews);
How? (Depth)	The different techniques that are used to create spaces for participation, combined with other 'triggers' that facilitate or lead to participation
How else? (Dimensions)	Dimensions of participation (e.g. in/formal, un/structured; un/paid/incentivised, regular/occasional)
Where? (Context: spaces and places)	Different contexts/spaces (e.g. public, everyday life; closed/invited/claimed spaces, etc)
When? (Context: time)	Life history and personal experiences
So what? (Outcomes)	Personal benefits, wider societal outcomes

As this review demonstrates, there is a wealth of empirical research that explores people's motivations, barriers, enablers and triggers of participation, as well as recruitment and retention. By contrast, there is a relative absence of explorations of participation practices across the life course of individuals. How and why people become involved in different activities and different forms of participation, and how and why they might move between them throughout their life time remains under-researched.

An exploration of people's personal histories and experiences within the wider context of their lives, and their personal and social circumstances, is likely to constitute an integral part of better understanding participation and people's pathways through participation. We now move on to explore different bodies of theory that might help shed light on some of these questions; to help conceptualise and analyse the emerging themes and issues.

05

Participation in theory: The concepts

Previous sections have analysed literature on the practical aspects of participation activities, actors, motivations and barriers. Through the course of this review, we have identified key themes around the wider social and political context for participation, as well as the overall state of participation in practice. These themes include:

- the crisis of democracy and emergence of new governance spaces;
- the endurance of an independent and thriving civil society and new forms of activism;
- the importance of the individual participant's personal experience;
- personal experience as 'situated', or contextualised;
- the importance of relationships between individuals and the state and of relationships between individual participants;
- how these relationships shape the spaces for and experience of participation;
- the dynamics of power which underpin these relationships; and,
- how power dynamics manifest themselves in terms of exclusion/inclusion and inequality/equality.

This section focuses on theories – both structural/contextual theories and agential/individual-level theories – that help to explain and/or conceptualise participation, particularly in relation to the themes outlined above. Drawing on social science literature, we explore theories associated with wider political and social contexts including democratic, social capital and social movement theories. Understanding participation as situated practice leads us to a cross-cutting theme of power. We conclude with an overview of life course theory and life spheres which draw together macro- and micro-level theories and relate them to both individual and social change.

5.1 Citizen and state relationships

The changing relationship between citizens and the state is fundamental to our understanding of how participation (public in particular, but also social and individual participation) has developed over recent years. Democratic theories provide an analytical tool to help us think about this issue. They help us to understand the current preoccupation by policy makers with the 'democratic deficit' and the drive to increase citizen engagement through new techniques of participation such as participatory budgeting, citizens' juries and partnership governance. Representative and participative democracy – two strands of democratic theory – propose different relationships between the state and

civil society but they are united in that public participation, whether directly or via elections, is a prime component, and that 'individual participation is essential to democratic governance' and in creating 'legitimate institutions' (Keohane, 2002: 340, 343).

In his landmark book, *Democracy and its Critics*, Dahl (1989) sets out the institutional features of liberal representative democracy (which he calls 'polyarchy'). These include: accountable government; free and fair competitive elections; civil and political rights, and associational autonomy. In this analysis, governments gain their legitimacy and mandate to govern primarily via the result of competitive elections. Concerns about the 'democratic deficit' connect to this: if people are voting in fewer numbers, and if the profile of people voting is becoming narrower, the government is not being effectively held to account by its citizens and it has a questionable mandate to rule (Power Inquiry, 2006).

Models of participative democracy have been proposed as a way to re-engage citizens and reinvigorate democracy (Mulgan, 2005; Smith, 2009; CLG, 2008a; Goodin and Dryzek, 2006). Participative democracy is seen to extend and deepen liberal representative democracy by involving the majority of people in decisions that affect their lives – from the workplace (Pateman, 1970) to all of society (Barber, 1984) including economic enterprises, local communities and the household (Potter, 1994).

Participative democracy is considered by some as keeping 'community life vital and public institutions accountable' (Roberts, 2004: 315). Although no nation-state currently conforms to a fully participatory democratic political regime, there are examples of deliberative democratic models operating at the local and regional levels, such as the much-celebrated New England Town Meetings (Bryan, 2004; Smith, 2009). In deliberative democracy, decision-making is reached through deliberation and discussion rather than through voting (Elster, 1998).

Attempts to re-engage citizens and revitalise democracy seem, in principle, only to have positive implications, although some critics are concerned about the way these principles translate into practice and fail to shift existing power relationships (Hay et al., 2008). Whilst it is important to be aware of some of the criticisms of models of representative and participative democracy, Ginsborg (2005) asserts that there is hope for democracy, particularly when both representative and participatory forms of democracy are combined for 'mutual benefit'. He calls for a 'sense or culture of everyday politics...mechanisms by which ordinary lives are connected to extraordinary problems' (2005: 171-2). To ensure the health and survival of democracy, Ginsborg suggests that the state act as a facilitator in linking an active civil society with family life to put an end to politics as 'an excessively separate sphere' (2005: 171).

5.2 Democracy, civil society and social capital

The concept of civil society is closely linked to democratic theories. For democratic theorists, a critical component of democracy is the provision of space for voices of different stakeholders to associate (Dahl, 1989). Whilst the state is separate from civil society, it is not divorced from it: Held (1996) notes

that the state is involved in the reproduction of everyday life, and accordingly there is a 'meshing' of state and civil society. Citing de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (2000 [1835-1840]), Ginsborg (2005: 165) asserts that if the 'habit of forming associations in ordinary life is not encouraged... then democracy is unlikely to survive', because the act of forming and taking part in voluntary associations teaches members civic skills and values – voluntary associations act as 'schools of democracy' (c.f. Tocqueville, 2000 [1835-1840]; Morales and Geurts, 2007). Here social participation is seen as having a by-product which benefits public participation.

Theories of social capital allow us to further our understanding of the complementary nature of representative and participatory democracy and the role of civil society within it, and to reflect on power relationships between individuals, amongst groups and in wider society. Theories of social capital, popularised by Putnam, draw on de Tocqueville's interest in civil society and associational life. Putnam describes social capital as the 'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (Putnam, 2000: 19). He proposes that joining and taking part in local organisations helps to foster trust in others and a sense of shared values, broadening participants' 'sense of self and enhancing "participants" "taste" for collective benefits' (Putnam, 1995: 67). Putnam highlights how the norms and networks of participation affect the performance of representative government, whereby the presence or absence of public engagement impacts on the quality of governance, democratic institutions and public life (see also Stoker, 2007). There is a growing body of evidence that suggests social capital can have a range of other positive impacts as a source of network-mediated benefits beyond the family (Portes, 1998) including increased educational

achievement and improved housing status (Portes, 1998; Woolcock, 2001; Field, 2003).

Despite the popularity of social capital as a concept and a theory, it has come under criticism, both theoretically and empirically. One of the main theoretical critiques of social capital theory is that it fails to establish the causal links between associational life, high social trust and better government. Whilst social capital may lead to positive outcomes, its very existence could be inferred from those outcomes (Jochum, 2003; Portes, 1998). There is also a body of empirical evidence on social capital which brings issues of power and inequality to the fore (Fox and Gershman, 2000; Silvey and Elmhirst, 2003; Jochum, 2003; Field, 2003). Social capital can entrench inequality partly because access to different kinds of networks is unequally distributed, as Field notes (2003: 74), '[e]veryone can use their connections as a way of advancing their interests, but some people's connections are more valuable than others'. Field therefore suggests seeing social capital as 'both an asset in its own right that is unequally distributed and as a mechanism that can further promote inequality' (ibid: 75). The French sociologist Bourdieu (1986) viewed the networks associated with social capital as a source of privilege that benefited the already privileged in society, and excluded other sections of society from opportunities for advancement.

Bourdieu's and Field's critiques of social (and cultural capital) can be connected to resource-based theories of socioeconomic inequality, which draw on the work of Weber and neo-Marxist theories of the class structure of society (Gilchrist, 2004). Weber argued that socioeconomic resources and status are the principle determinant of voluntarism (Janoski and Wilson, 1995). More recent studies of social capital in Britain tend to support that view in that class is an important determinant of participation, with middle-class people being more likely to be members of voluntary or civic associations (Hall, 2000).

5.3 Social networks and social movements

Social network and social movement theories contribute to our understanding of participation in a number of ways. In particular, they help us to better understand the notion of loose and informal and networked forms of participation and of networks as sources of power, influence and social change.

Castells (1996: 469) suggests that social networks are the 'new social morphology' of the contemporary era and the concept of social networks is important in the literature beyond social capital. It features, for example, in the literature on community development and social movements. It has been suggested that the term 'network' was used first by anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown in 1940 and that early sociologists recognised the significance of networks as an aspect of community living (Gilchrist, 2004). Networks can be understood as a 'web of lateral connections and avoidance of formal bureaucratic structures' and comprised of 'a set of nodes (where connections are made either through individuals or organisational units) and the linkages between them' (Gilchrist, 2004: 29). Network theories can help understanding of the interactions of daily life, community dynamics and collective action. Social network analysis suggests that the number and kinds of ties, and levels of communication, people have are key to determining the range of opportunities, influence and power they have (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1997; Lin, 2001). The idea of different types of networks being important in different ways has permeated the social capital literature in discussions on the different types of social capital: bonding (ties between people who are similar); bridging (ties between people who are different), and linking (ties between people without power with those in authority) (Jochum, 2003; Woolcock, 2001; CarnegieUK Trust/NCVO, 2009).

These different types of social capital can be illustrated and utilised in different ways. For example, a high degree of bonding social capital in groups and networks can undermine the development of cross-cutting ties, which enable 'public good' outcomes that benefit the community at large (Stone and Hughes, 2001). Jochum (2003) notes that if bonding ties exist without bridging and linking ties, they can lead to the pursuit of narrow self-interests and/or to the rejection of outsiders.

In social movement literature, the concept of social networks features prominently. Social movements can be defined as 'collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained action against elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes' (Klandermas, 2004). A common factor among these diverse movements is their largely informal character and the fact that collective challenges are posed against power holders and/or social and cultural norms and expectations; and that collective actions are informed by a common purpose and solidarity (Klandermans, 2004).

Social movement theories shift the emphasis from organisations to social networks, which allows for greater understanding of the importance of individual participants: 'social movements do not have members, but participants' (della Porta and Diani, 2006: 26) who have a sense of being involved in a collective endeavour. Social movements are distinct from other movements of collective action such as consensus or solidarity movements often found in the voluntary and community sector because they aim for a redistribution of political, social and economic power and an alteration in social structure (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 23).

Social movement scholars highlight a dynamic relationship between social networks and participation (Melucci, 1996; della Porta and Diani, 2006; Melucci, 1989; Ginsborg, 2005; Buechler, 2000).

They frequently treat social networks as predictors of individual participation (Diani, 2003). For Melucci (1989) networks act as 'cultural laboratories' where personal involvement and individual investment in the experimentation and practice of new cultural modes, new forms of relationships and alternative conceptions of the world are experienced and shaped. These personal experiences, Melucci (1989, 1996) argues, result in personal and individual change and transformation and can introduce new agendas and alternative ways of 'doing politics' which, in turn, can lead to cultural, social and political change. By linking personal change with wider social transformations in values, attitudes and social practices (Melucci, 1989, 1996) social movement activities challenge conceptions of 'the private' and 'the public' (della Porta and Diani, 2006) but also of 'the personal' and 'the political' (Nissen, 2008).

5.4 Space and place

Key to our approach to exploring the dynamics of participation are the notions of space and place. Cornwall (2002) advocates the notion of participation as 'situated practice' which involves a theoretical approach to participation that:

'locate[s] spaces for participation in the places in which they occur, framing their possibilities with reference to actual political, social, cultural and historical particularities rather than idealized notions of democratic practice' (Cornwall 2002: 51, emphasis in original).

Considering participation as situated practice in different spaces enables a deeper understanding of participation. This understanding brings together the public side of participation, characterized in 'invited spaces' such as deliberative forums with the social side of participation where people 'create their own opportunities and terms of engagement' (Cornwall, 2002: 50).

We can include 'online' as a space that also needs to be considered. Academics working within anthropology, geography and elsewhere are engaging with debates about virtual locality and place, and alternative universes such as Second Life (Boellstorff, 2008), as well as theories of place (Castells, 2000; Ingold and Vergunst, 2008). Such ideas of place and space are closely linked to the notion of 'community' – whether this is a geographical community located in a particular place (urban neighbourhood, village or town) or a 'community of interest' where people have a common interest through shared characteristics or circumstance (Conn, 2009).

To further develop the notion of participation as situated practice, Gaventa (2007) sets out a typology of three 'spaces for participation': closed, invited and created/claimed spaces. Closed or uninvited spaces are spaces in which bureaucrats, experts, elected representatives make decisions with little broad consultation or involvement. Invited spaces are those in which people are invited to participate by various types of authorities. Claimed spaces are spaces which are claimed by less powerful actors from or against the power holders, or created more autonomously by them (Gaventa, 2007). A second dimension to Gaventa's typology is place: he asserts that the three spaces of participation take place at local, national and global levels. All of these spaces and places are informed by a conceptualisation of power (see Figure 5).

5.5 The ubiquity of power relations

Before moving from the 'macro-level' theories to the 'micro' or individual level theories, we turn our attention to a theme that cuts across all of the theories outlined so far: the theme of power. Power cuts across all the theories (and activities and actors) covered throughout this review – from the critique of power relations not being fundamentally changed by certain types of deliberative democracy, to the power gained from belonging to particular social networks.

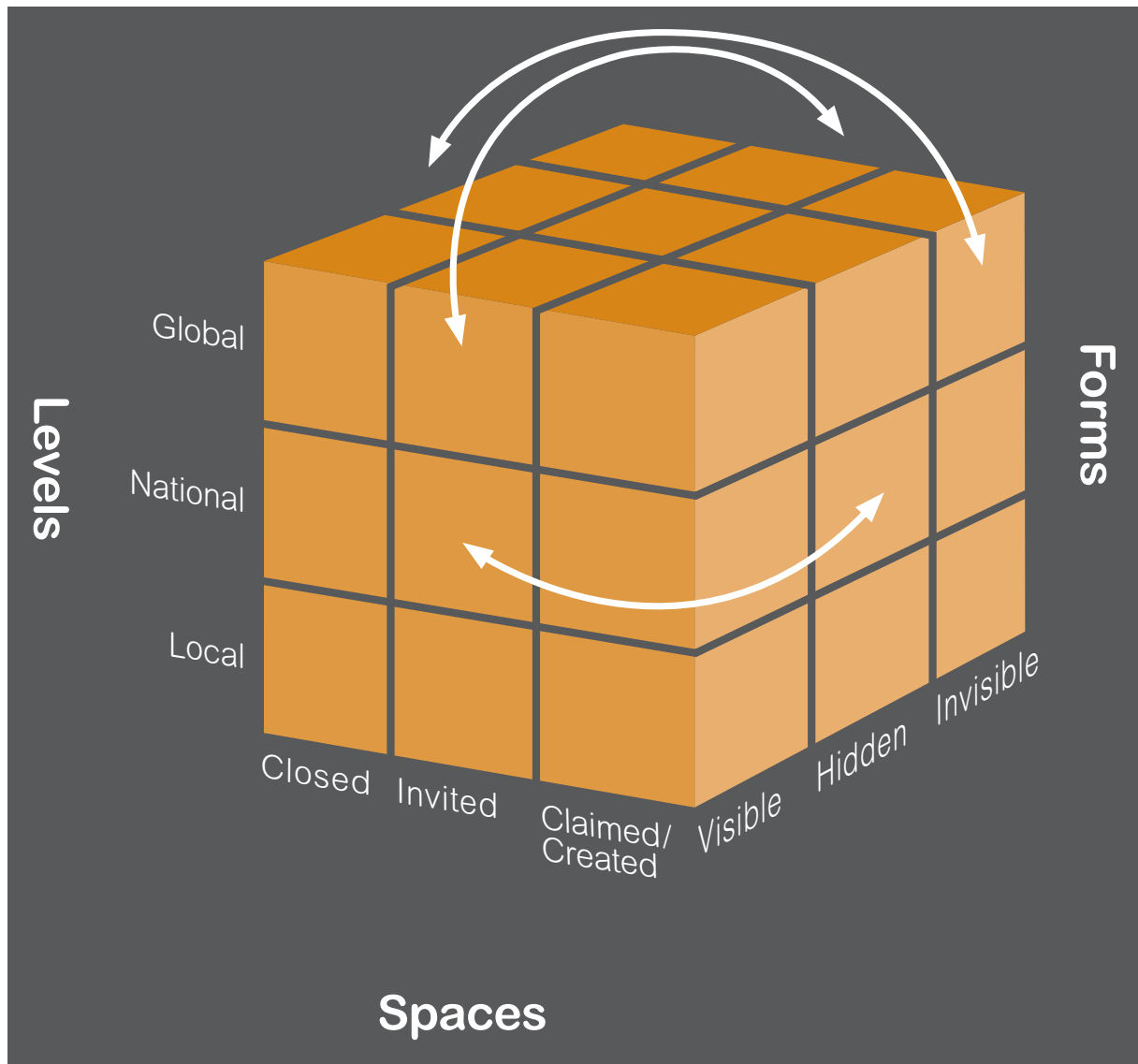
Here we draw on three (of many possible) theorists to enhance our understanding of these different types of power, and examine why they are important. First, Beetham highlights the notion of 'power as legitimacy', or that the effectiveness and acceptability of power depend on its degree of legitimacy (Beetham, 1991). Without legitimacy, power is diminished, which suggests a possibly more sinister reason behind politicians' concern with the 'democratic deficit'.

Second, Lukes' classic analysis (1974, 2005) of power as having different 'faces': a public, hidden and an insidious face. The 'public' face relates to the world of public decision-making and the power to make and implement decisions; the 'hidden face' relates to how certain topics are simply kept off the public agenda, and the 'insidious face' refers to the 'shaping of the public domain through the beliefs, values and wants that are considered normal or acceptable' (Beetham et al., 2008: 15).

This 'insidious face' of power helps us to understand why people become willingly compliant in decisions that are against their interests by being prevented, 'to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things' (Lukes, 2005: 28). This reading of power also helps us to understand why some people are routinely and perpetually excluded from some forms of participation, and the importance of dominant worldviews and ideologies, from neoliberalism to ethical consumerism.

Third, building on the work on power by Lukes (1974, 2005), Gaventa (2006) suggests that different forms of power need to be understood in relation to two dimensions: how spaces for participation and engagement are created, and the levels of power (from local to global) in which they occur. Understanding each of these – the spaces, the levels and forms of power – as separate yet interrelated dimensions permits these dimensions to be analytically linked together.

Figure 5:
Gaventa's power cube



This framework for analysing relationships of power highlights how the dynamics of power create different obstacles and entry points towards changing power balances in emerging new forms of governance. As mentioned earlier, the processes of power have to be considered within wider social, political and economic contexts. Unequal power relations run

through the different forms, spaces and levels and explicit engagement with issues of inequality requires more attention (Cornwall and Goetz, 2005; Gaventa, 2006).

Other levels may be equally important and may comprise the household, formal and informal networks, and personal spheres of engagement

(ibid). Because of the globalised nature of contemporary societies it is important to consider the interrelationships between these multiple levels, even though one's attention might be on individual or local levels (Gaventa, 2006).

5.6

Life course and life spheres

Life course theories offer a multi-disciplinary, dynamic approach to the understanding of the adult life-course and later life (Hareven, 1982; Blaikie, 1992). They can offer a powerful explanatory tool that can help deepen our understanding of how and why people participate over time, and link the personal and public spheres of political engagement. There are two important aspects to life course theories: first, that earlier life course experience is important for an understanding of later life; second that life course theories 'encompass the interaction between individual change and social change, the latter encompassing both macro phenomena, 'historical time', and micro phenomena, like 'family time' and 'work time' (Jamieson et al., 1998: 216). They draw together both political and social, 'macro' theories with individual level 'micro' theories. Life course researchers recognise that people's life circumstances change over time beyond the ageing process and include events such as marriage and parenthood (Elder, 1985; Mayer and Tuma, 1990).

A number of studies have linked membership to voluntary associations with life-cycle transitions (Knoke and Thomson, 1977; Rotolo, 2000; Janoski and Wilson, 1995; Selbee and Reed, 2001). Age is a clear factor in explaining people's pathways through participation: volunteering 'rises from a low in teenage years through early adulthood to a peak in the late 40s and 50s and declines thereafter' (Selbee and Reed, 2001: 2) and life events such as marriage, parenthood and working are particularly influential (ibid). Putnam notes that 'age is second only to education as a predictor of civic engagement' (2000: 247) and that patterns in social behaviour vary according to the life-cycle. Putnam also states that when people are born, or the generation they belong to ('baby boomers' etc.) is a key explanatory factor behind the decline in civic engagement in

the United States. In research from Australia, cited by Rochester (2006), both the idea of life-stage (or -cycle) and the generation that people belong are important factors in explaining why people volunteer:

'In the first place people in their thirties and forties get involved because of the voluntary work associated with the services their children need...secondly, people in rural areas tend to be involved in volunteering because of the paucity of professional services. And, thirdly, well-educated and older people are committed to the idea of public service' (Rochester, 2006: 12).

Bringing in an appreciation of individuals' life events and the influence of different stages in life is an important addition to our understanding of participation and people's pathways through participation. To complement this appreciation of time, we can draw on Passy and Guigni's (2000) understanding of people's sustained activism in social movements which focuses on the role of life-spheres. They explain people's sustained participation in social movements as a 'joint impact of the actors' structural location and their individual life histories on political commitment' (2000: 119). Their approach understands people's lives as a whole made up of interconnected life spheres, or realms, which include: family; studies; work; friends; leisure, and in some cases, religious participation and political engagement. Not all life-spheres are equally important: whilst they interconnect, each has its own 'borders, logic and dynamic' (2000: 120). Different spheres will be activated at different times and be important at different stages in the life-course. They assert that 'the more connected the central life-spheres [of family, study and work] of an activist to his/her sphere of political engagement, the more stable his/her commitment' (Passy and Guigni, 2000: 123).

5.7

Conclusion

Contextual (or structural) and behavioural (or agential) theories can help us to understand how and why people are involved in political, social and individual participation activities. Through a better appreciation of political and social theories about participation, including democratic theories, social capital and social movements, we can move towards a more sophisticated understanding of participation as 'situated practice' and an appreciation of the power dynamics at work in different spaces and places of participation. When combined, these explanatory theories broaden and deepen our understanding of participation. However, our commitment to examining participation from the perspective of individuals and their experience of participation cannot be explored through these theories alone. We need to bring in life course theories to understand how participation may change according to life stage and the concept of life spheres to understand how different parts of people's lives and the way in which they participate are interconnected.

06

Participation in the round: Conclusions and next steps

The literature of participation is extensive. Much of what is relevant in the different bodies of literature examined here does not even frame itself as being about participation – it is about, for example, volunteering or ethical consumerism. In this review we have attempted to map out this vast and complex landscape, to integrate different bodies of literature on participation, and to move towards a ‘round-earth’ view of participation. In doing so, we hope to have mapped the terrain for our Pathways through Participation project, as well as providing what we hope will be a useful review for other readers. Emerging from this review are four key conclusions that we discuss below and which will form the foundations of our ongoing investigations.

6.1 People first

The review has confirmed our starting conviction that in order to understand participation we need to understand it from the point of view of the individuals doing it: we are understanding participation as an experiential phenomenon. Putting individuals at the forefront of our thinking about participation forces us to question who is getting involved at different points in time and across different types of activities; where, how and why they got involved; who is left out and how; what they have been doing, where, how and why this has been facilitated and to what effect.

Much of the literature on participation, and particularly on public participation, tends to start with the institutions – with those that are seen as creating the spaces for and putting in place the techniques to enable participation. Where these questions have been addressed, studies tend to focus on participation of one particular form (volunteering, voting, and political party membership, for example) and risk treating individual episodes of participation as if they were ‘frozen’ in time and space (Kamerade, 2009). There is very little sense of people’s pathways through participation within the existing literature.

6.2 Context is all important

While the individual experience is central to our understanding and exploration of participation, it is clear that this can only be understood in context. Our reading has confirmed our belief that participation cannot be understood by looking at the individual in isolation – we need to bring the individual and the institutional perspectives together and understand participation not only as experiential but as situated practice (Cornwall, 2002).

In considering the wider context, we have drawn on notions of situated practice as developed by commentators such as Cornwall (2002) and Gaventa (2006) to begin to understand the significance of space and place in shaping and defining people’s participatory activities. In order to understand an individual’s participation we must understand how that participation is rooted in place and space: ‘placing’ participants within their communities (be they geographical, of interest or other types of communities) becomes important to our understanding. While the literature does provide some insight into participation as a practice situated in space and place, again the emphasis tends to be on individual episodes of participation rather than on exploring how participation ‘flows’ through and across these different spaces and places and how participants navigate through these.

Further gaps exist in the literature concerning how participation is situated in time – both in individual's life times and in the sense of spaces for participation being bounded in time. A consideration of time in this way does emerge as a theme from the empirical literature (Passy and Guigni, 2000; Janoski and Wilson 1995; Rotolo, 2000; Selbee and Reed 2001) and reviewing the more theoretical literature on life course and life spheres has given us a framework to take this thinking forward, but to date there has been very little systematic study of participation in this way. As with the implications of situating participation in space and place, in adopting the approach of viewing participation as also situated in time we need to understand how individuals move in and out of different forms of participation over time.

6.3 Relationships matter

A third key conclusion is that relationships are essential to the study of participation (Cornwall 2002; Melucci, 1989, 1996). We need to consider the relationships between different elements:

- Relationships between activities: What links are there, if any, between different types and episodes of participatory activities, between the techniques that are used to facilitate participation and the dimensions of the participatory activities that emerge? The literature makes clear that there are multiple forms of participation, which vary in nature, field, depth and intensity, but sheds very little light on the links and flows between them, focusing instead on individual forms or indeed acts of participation without looking at the relationships between them.
- Relationships between individual life experiences and participatory activities: Do certain life experiences lead individuals to engage in certain types of participatory activities? Can any patterns be identified in people's participatory histories across the life

course, or according to life course events? The existing empirical literature offers relatively little insight into the nature of these relationships or their relative importance. We hope that our project will begin to address this important research gap.

- Relationships between people: The existing literature, both empirical and theoretical, stresses the importance of the social relationships and networks between people in shaping access to and the experience of participation (Bourdieu 1986; Portes, 1998; Melucci, 1989, 1996; Putnam, 1995, 2000; Hall, 2000). The role of social networks, for example, in determining whether or not someone is asked to get involved in a participatory activity has been repeatedly shown to be of significance (Diani, 2003). Drawing on social movement and social capital theories can help conceptualise our work in this area.
- Relationships between people and the state: With the potential to influence all the above sets of relationships, the relationship between citizens and the state have emerged from the literature as fundamental to our understanding of participation and as a potentially crucial influence in pathways through participation. There is much written about the importance of these relationships in shaping public participation (Dahl, 1989; Power Inquiry, 2006; Hay et al., 2008; Smith, 2009), but less so in terms of social and individual participation. Yet their relevance is likely to spread across the broad spectrum of participation that we have identified. Views of what these relationships should look like have fundamental implications for the amount of emphasis placed on public, social and/or individual participation and on the spaces that are opened (or indeed closed) for participation. They affect which forms of participation are seen as 'legitimate', and can influence what and who is included/excluded from participation. The framing of relationships between citizens

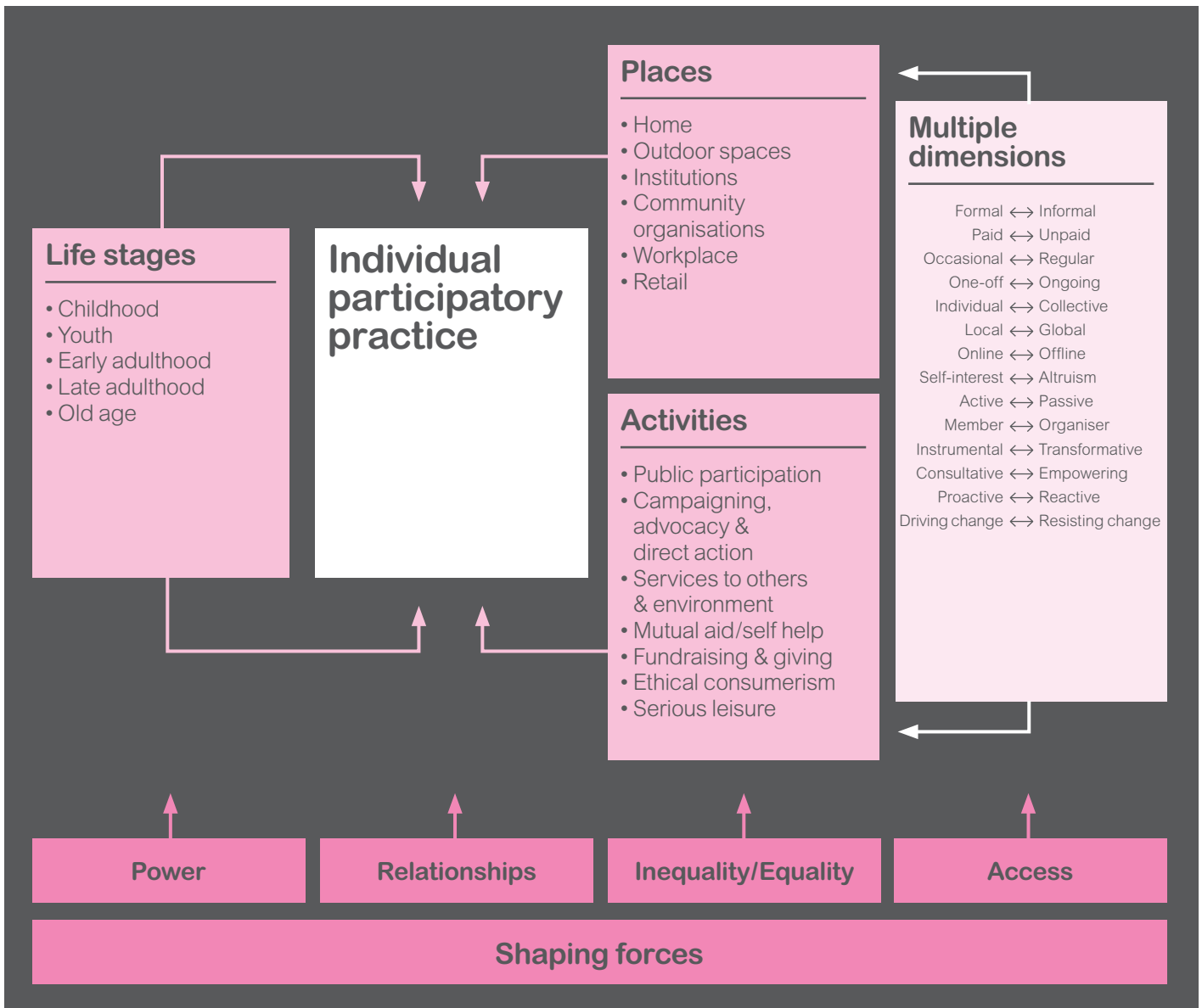
and the state has the potential to marginalise certain forms of participation, certain participatory activities and certain participatory actors, with a tendency for the privileging of a consensus, rather than conflict, based approach to participation which seeks to maintain rather than challenge the status quo (Beetham et al., 2008; Taylor 2007).

Investigating the significance of all these sets of relationships will be fundamental to the subsequent development of our project.

6.4 The pertinence of power

It is impossible to review the literature or indeed just the above three points without recognising the significance of power dynamics in shaping participation and the participatory experience. All participatory activities, the contexts in which they happen and the relationships which shape them, are affected by power relationships, and as such a consideration of power and its manifestations is central to an exploration of people's pathways through participation. The various manifestations of power particularly highlighted within this review include, for example: inequality/equality of access and of opportunity; inclusion/exclusion of participatory activities and of participatory actors. The different theories of power that we reviewed above will help to shape our exploration of people's pathways through participation and the analysis of our findings.

Figure 6:
*Framework for understanding
individuals' pathways through
participation*



**6.5
Moving forward**

The conclusions we have drawn from this review of the literature have shaped the development of our emerging framework for participation (see Figure 6). The framework reflects our understanding of what participation is and how it needs to be viewed in the context of our project. It also focuses on what we believe to be

the key experiential elements of participation in practice: the actors; the activities; the places in which activities occur; and the time over which they develop. It then focuses on what have been identified as some of the key dimensions of participation in the literature – the intensity of engagement, for example, or whether it is an individual or collective activity. Finally, the

framework highlights what are emerging as some of the key shaping forces, influencing people's pathways through participation. This framework will be developed further before becoming the basis for our fieldwork. It will be then tested through the subsequent stages of the research and refined on the basis of our research findings.

07 Bibliography

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Contact information

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