

Joining the adventure? Exploring young people's experience within spaces for
youth participation in the United Kingdom and Greece.

by

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Abstract

Youth participation has gained increased prominence within recent policies and is expected to serve a number of agendas and aims including the empowerment of young people, the creation of future active citizens, the prevention of anti-social behaviour and the integration of youth into society. When young people's involvement in participatory activities is discussed, it is often done on the basis of its expected outcomes, and more rarely in terms of how young people themselves make sense of and use existing opportunities. This study addresses this issue by focusing on how young people conceptualise participation, how they represent their experience within particular projects and how such experience relates to participatory policies. Drawing from different contexts - Greece and the UK - this thesis presents examples of how engagement with similar processes of participation is mediated through the environments within which young people shape their everyday lives.

The particular values and strategies that the participants associated with their involvement allowed for commonalities to emerge across contexts. Such approaches to participation are summarised in three profiles, namely the professionals, visionaries and adventurers. In this study, young people's perceptions of themselves as participants are often in stark contrast with policy frameworks which construct young participants as active citizens in the making in both countries.

Processes within the explored spaces for participation were dominated by policy priorities, while minimal space was allowed for a type of deliberation which enables young people to affect the contexts within which their lives unfold. While young people were expected by policies to populate spaces for participation, there were examples of the participants making efforts to re-interpret/contextualise the meaning of participation according to their lived experience, to maintain a critical distance from funding bodies and to enlarge their repertoires.

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Contents

Acknowledgements	3
List of Tables and Figures	I
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Exploring Youth participation	2
1.1.1 What is youth Participation?	4
1.1.2 What is youth?.....	8
1.2 Youth participation in context	11
1.3 Thesis outline	16
CHAPTER 2: PARTICIPATION, CITIZENSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT	18
2.1 Discourses and contexts of participation.....	21
2.1.1 Participation as responsibilities towards the community	21
2.1.2 Participation as a right and manifestation of identity	25
2.1.3 The significance of participation within deliberative and governance processes	30
2.2 Participation in Social Policy: from beneficiaries to active citizens	37
2.3 Discourses of youth and participation.....	45
2.3.1 Participation as positive youth development.....	48
2.3.2 Participation as active citizenship in a risk society	52
2.3.3 Participation as the right to have voice in decision making	57
Chapter Summary.....	61
CHAPTER 3: SPACES FOR PARTICIPATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS SOCIAL ACTORS	63
3.1 Participation as policy space.....	66
3.1.1 The multiple facets of participation	70
3.1.2 Youth participation and space	77
3.2 Young people as social agents	83
3.2.1 Discursively constructed social actors within fields of possibilities	84
3.2.2 Habitus and social world: like fish in water	87
3.2.3 Connecting agentially with structuring environments	91
3.3 Young people's socio-political expressions.....	98
3.4. Establishing the Research Questions.....	103
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY	107
4.1 Making sense of and acting upon the world	107
4.2 Making sense of and acting upon the world: Research design	111

4.2.1 Case studies	116
4.2.2 Instances of participation	124
4.2.3 Ethical considerations.....	130
4.3 Data collection.....	131
4.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews	132
4. 3.2 Document analysis.....	141
4.4 Making sense of and acting upon the world: Interpretation	145
Chapter Summary.....	153
<i>CHAPTER 5: FRAMING YOUTH PARTICIPATION WITHIN POLICY CONTEXTS.....</i>	<i>155</i>
5.1 English context- Background information	158
5.2 Youth participation in England	163
5.2.1 Devising standards and targets	164
5.2.2 Citizenship notions	168
5.2.3 Participation and antisocial behaviour	171
5.2.4 Implementation.....	174
Concluding remarks on the English context	176
5.3 Greek context-Background information.....	177
5.4 Youth participation in Greece.....	182
5.4.1 Synchronising with international practice.....	183
5.4.2 Citizenship notions	187
Concluding remarks on the Greek context.....	193
Chapter Summary.....	195
<i>CHAPTER 6: ENACTING PARTICIPATION.....</i>	<i>198</i>
6.1 The Facets of participation	202
6.1.1 The performative facet of participation	205
6.1.2 The managerial facet of participation	211
6.1.3 The creative facet of participation	217
6.2 Locating the origin of the facets	220
6.2.1 Policy impact	221
6.2.2 Ability to engage in participatory processes	226
6.2.3 Hierarchical relations and discourses of youth	229
Chapter Summary.....	231
<i>CHAPTER 7: MAKING SENSE OF PARTICIPATION AND THE WORLD</i>	<i>235</i>
7.1. The Professionals	243
7.1.1 Professionals' Motivation and Values	244
7.1.2 The purpose of participation	246
7.1.3 Professionals' understanding of power	251
7.1.4 Professionals' sources of agency.....	254
7.2 The Visionaries	256

7.2.1 Visionaries' Motivation and Values	257
7.2.2 The Purpose of Participation	261
7.2.3 Visionaries' Understanding of Power	266
7.2.4 Visionaries' source of agency	272
7.3 The Adventurers	275
7.3.1 Adventurers' Motivation and Values.....	276
7.3.2 The Purpose of Participation	280
7.3.3 Adventurers' understanding of Power	284
7.3.4 Adventurers' source of agency	286
Chapter Summary.....	287
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION	289
8.1 Youth participation as a shifting terrain	289
8.2 Findings.....	292
8.2.1 Representations of experience within spaces of participation	292
8.2.2 Conceptualisations of participation.....	296
8.2.3 The interplay between individual histories and policy agendas.....	306
8.3 Spaces of participation as arenas for youth empowerment?	311
8. 4 Concluding Remarks.....	318
REFERENCES	322
<i>Appendix 1. Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation</i>	<i>343</i>
<i>Appendix 2 Shier's model for youth participation</i>	<i>344</i>
<i>Appendix 3 Treseder's Model of youth participation.....</i>	<i>345</i>
<i>Appendix 4 Participant Information Leaflet.....</i>	<i>346</i>
<i>Appendix 5 Consent form for 18-25 years olds-Professionals</i>	<i>348</i>
<i>Appendix 6 Consent form for under 18 years old participants</i>	<i>349</i>
<i>Appendix 7 Vignette 1.....</i>	<i>350</i>
<i>Appendix 8 Vignette 2.....</i>	<i>351</i>

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1-Arnstein's ladder of participation	39
Table 2-Rhetoric, Book II, Chapter 12	49
Table 3-Pathways to Adult Status	53
Table 4-UNCRC 1989	58
Table 5-Expert Citizens credos:	100
Table 6-Maxims of everyday making:	101
Table 7-Participant Profiles	127
Table 8-List of sources of information:	144
Table 9-Description of groups involved in the study	201
Table 10-Participants' approaches to participation	241
Table 11-Composite profile of a professional:	244
Table 12-Professionals' perceptions of themselves and other young people	249
Table 13-Composite profile of a visionary	257
Table 14-Visionaries' perceptions of themselves and other young people	270
Table 15-Composite profile of an adventurer	276
Table 16-Adventurers' perceptions of themselves and other young people	283

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore how young people engage with participatory processes and what participation might mean when it is viewed from the standpoint of young people. In doing so, it explores how young people conceptualise participation, how they represent their experience within particular projects and how such experience relates to participatory policies.

This thesis contributes to the study of youth, an approach that looks at young people's own interpretations of policy concepts and informs about the ways in which they understand their role as social actors in particular contexts. While an increasing volume of research provides information about how participation is organised, this study aligns with calls within the literature highlighting the lack of knowledge in regard to how young people make sense of and use participatory opportunities. Indeed, this study aims to explore how young people experience and conceptualise their involvement, rather than assessing the effectiveness of existing methods of participation. Thus, this thesis extends the study of participatory processes by shedding light onto the nature of practices that occur when young people join projects.

An interest in exploring such issues derives from the researcher's professional experience in working with young people in various settings which involved participation practices, combined with personal experience as a young participant in similar processes. This led to thinking about how the nature of the engagement and collaboration between young people and adults can be improved.

Discussing youth participation is like 'grasping hold of water', since concepts of both youth and participation constitute contested areas which involve a variety of interpretations within different contexts and agendas. This thesis focuses on contributing to a discussion of youth participation as a means of empowerment. Thus the aim is to discuss young people's experiences and conceptualisations and at the same time interrogate such conceptualisations in regard to what they reveal about empowerment and citizenship. Although clarifying the relationship between these concepts is a guiding theme in the literature review chapters, this introductory chapter will establish how concepts such as youth, participation and empowerment are approached in this thesis

1.1 Exploring Youth participation

Until recently, young people have largely been absent in citizenship debates. An emergence of an interest in young people's participation and expressions of citizenship has grown alongside larger shifts that have marked a focus on deliberative forms of democracy, social justice issues, recognition of difference and

identity struggles. Although these shifts may relate to different and sometimes contradictory agendas, they have reinforced discussions about citizenship and recast the role of the citizens as participants in governance by enabling a “consensus in both the North and South for a more active and engaged citizenry” (Gaventa, 2004:6). Young people’s participation relates to key developments such as the endorsement and integration into national contexts of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which created legal responsibilities in upholding young people’s rights, the introduction of consumerist principles in order to improve services and the modernisation of governance (Sinclair, 2004). At the same time, concerns about young people’s lack of civic engagement and increased uneasiness regarding anti-social behaviour highlighted participation as a means to increase civic involvement and ‘re-embed’ youth in society.

In this context, young people’s and children’s participation has attracted increased attention within a considerable range of academic disciplines. This involves an interest in exploring the ways in which young people’s political identities, roles and perceptions are expressed within the various opportunities for engagement (e.g. Marsh et al., 2007; Lister et al., 2003; Wood, 2009; Tisdall et al., 2008; Barnes, 2007; Matthews and Limb, 2003). As examples of such research originate from a range of disciplines involving social policy, politics, development studies and geography, this study draws from all of these perspectives to inform insights into how processes of participation and youth participation in particular are shaped.

1.1.1 What is youth Participation?

There is a considerable lack of clarity when the participation of young people is discussed. Its meanings, forms and processes are in constant formation. Participation is usually defined by what it is meant to achieve. Youth participation is expected to achieve a wide range of aims. These include direct gains such as increased personal skills, education, leisure and networking aspects, all of which are seen as aiding the young people to navigate the intense psychosocial development they are undergoing. Thus participation contributes to the development of both individual responsibility and resilience and nurtures identity (Kjorholt, 2002).

Participation is also seen to have a positive impact on community ties, as it supports the 'vital engagement' of youth in community life (Pancer et al., 2002). By helping to develop individual skills and promoting connectedness to the community, participation can also counterbalance social exclusion (Colley and Hodgkinson, 2001). Youth participation is also seen as a vital part of an effort to sustain democratic values in contemporary societies (Matthews, 2003) which needs to fulfil young people's legitimate right to participate in decision making on matters affecting them (Frank, 2006). Furthermore, young people's involvement is approached as an issue of social justice (Checkoway, 2005).

Increased opportunities for youth participation have involved, in practical terms, the introduction of citizenship education through involving young people in decision making about issues affecting them in education, recreation and the local environment (Davis and Hill, 2006; Sinclair, 2004). Processes and activities can involve forums, advisory panels, councils, cabinets, consultation groups and membership in groups initiated by young people. Such a focus on decision making is reflected in the increase of consultation and representative forms for youth participation around Europe. The European Union and the Council of Europe have produced a number of publications in which they encourage both governmental and non-governmental organisations to include youth in consultation and decision making procedures in their practice (e.g. The EU White Paper for youth) (Colley et al., 2005; Williamson, 2002; 2009).

Such a variation in processes and expectations has sparked criticism regarding a lack of clarity about the purpose of involving young people. These criticisms relate to how institutions respond to demands for the inclusion of young people, which young people are included and how young people's opinions are acted upon. There are numerous criticisms regarding the impact of youth participation. Badham (2004) attributes the low impact of youth projects to the fact that they are 'top-down' and 'adult-led'. Tisdall and Davies (2004), referring to children's participation in the UK, argue that many projects are selective in the type of the children they recruit and fail to enable decision making. Existing criticisms of current practices of participation stress that participation activities have not succeeded in giving real power to young people, that they fail to include certain

groups of young people and, especially, that they have been unsuccessful in including young people who are already disadvantaged (Thomas, 2007). Research conducted by Neary and A'Drake (2006) shows that experience for young participants of youth boards was beneficial, but there was no apparent impact on the decision making process.

Such criticisms focus on practices within participation rather than principles, and reveal an expectation of participation achieving empowerment. To overcome the shortfalls attributed to the practice of youth participation, a number of participatory ladders have emerged over time, which aim to provide frameworks through which the purpose of involvement becomes clearer and the role of professional and institutions is outlined (see Appendix 1-2). However, such ladders, while they have been valuable in highlighting a lack of youth input to decision making processes (Tisdall, 2010) often employ, as do many of the above critiques, an understanding of power within such processes as a commodity, and construct empowerment in terms of independence from adults or control of processes. Furthermore, they employ an understanding of agency which emphasises individual exercise of direct control; or what a person is free to do and achieve (Luttrell et al., 2009:9).

Empowerment is thus measured as the opportunity to make a choice, the decision to make this choice and finally the achievement of the desired result when doing so. These interpretations rest on a belief that power is exercised through the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices, thus,

empowerment can be achieved through the expansion of core elements of personal agency.

Approaches to youth participation influenced by the above conceptualisations argue that “empowerment that brings meaning into the lives of youth is facilitated through giving youth the opportunity to make meaningful decisions and learn the skills needed to be an invested member of the group” (Larson and Wood, cited in Sherrod et al., 2006: 279). However important, a sole focus on learning echoes a deficit approach (France, 2007) which sees young people as in need of support and as citizens in the making. Thus, participation becomes preparation for full adult citizenship through developing skills and learning about democratic processes.

Hart (2008:414), advocating from a rights-based approach, argues that youth participation is empowering when its purpose is framed around giving young people voice, bringing transformation of both lives and societies, and when it serves as a means for the realisation of other rights. This nevertheless raises questions in regard to how listening to young people’s voices can be translated into action, and especially transformation. For example when the right to be listened to is coupled with an understanding of power as a commodity, then raising one’s voice becomes a gift that the adults offer to young people (Lundy, 2007). This, then, would deny possibilities for collaboration between adults and young people to jointly develop the agenda of the involvement. The above position also raises questions of whether it is one unified voice that young people need to have.

This study argues that, in order to be able to reach a conclusion in regard to the purpose of participation, it is necessary to critically consider what is meant by young people, how youth lives unfold and what role participation can have within such lives. This brings the discussion to the first component of ‘youth participation’, and more specifically to what is meant by the term ‘young people’.

1.1.2 What is youth?

The emergence of the category of youth in modernity is associated with an effort to protect young people’s innocence from the dangers posed by the destabilisation of the established order. Alongside this, there are increased anxieties about youth delinquency, moral decline (Cohen, 2002) and efforts to regulate youth behaviour (France, 2007). These anxieties have led in western industrialised countries to interventions which aimed to bring regulation and protection and which in the long term created the universalised and distinct from childhood and adulthood phase of youth (France, 2007:12). This interplay between dangerousness and innocence has since then played out in the ways that institutions legislate and provide services for youth (ibid.:13). Similarly, these principles are visible within constructions of the purpose of participation.

Criticisms of the dominant assumptions within participation often stem from an increased acceptance that youth as a life stage is a socially constructed group, and, as such, youth experience varies according to time and context. Thus expectations that participation can achieve similar outcomes over time and across contexts are highly criticised. Seeing youth as socially constructed highlights the divisions within young people themselves which stem from inequalities regarding social background (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; McDonald and Marsh, 2005) and their subsequent differentiated negotiations of transitions (Thompson et al., 2004).

Although research has widened knowledge of how young people experience and negotiate with their environments, the focus of policies since the late 1990s has constructed youth experience around social exclusion, life-long learning and citizenship (France, 2007:76). In this context, young people's participation is constructed around discourses of minimising risk, preventing anti-social behaviour and promoting active citizenship. Such a focus on social exclusion and employment opportunities neglects the effect and the variety of social processes through which young people shape their experience.

These discussions regarding approaches to youth and participation will be further elaborated in Chapter Two. Meanwhile, a brief discussion highlights the approach this study adopts in regard to the main concepts involved in the discussion to follow. As a result this study incorporates the following standpoints:

Youth is a socially constructed category, whose meaning needs to be understood in relation to the socio-cultural context within which young people's experience unfolds.

Processes of participation can only be understood within the particular context/organisation that implements or guides the various projects. Such processes relate to the image of youth and the vision of society shared in this context, as well as to young people's own experience. Current research has offered sufficient evidence which portrays young people as situated social actors who engage with their environments in a dynamic and relational way (e.g. Marsh et al., 2007; Mannion and I'Anson, 2004; Lister et al., 2003; Fielding, 2007). In line with this corpus of literature, the purpose of youth participation is framed around its ability to incorporate the knowledge and experience of young people.

Thus *young people's citizenship* can be explored, not on the basis of legal rules, but on the basis of an interest in exploring the ways in which they conceptualise rights, responsibilities and lived experience.

Consequently, *empowerment through participation* becomes defined as offering the possibility for young people to learn and give direction to the activities in which they are involved, as well as form relations and create the agenda of involvement jointly with adults.

1.2 Youth participation in context

This thesis aims to explore how young people engage with participatory processes and involves insights from two different contexts. Adopting an understanding of youth and participation processes as relationally and contextually situated meant that direct comparisons are not feasible. Thus, the aim is to offer examples about how young people make sense of similar processes, rather than to evaluate and compare levels or types of participation in each context. Employing such distinct contexts as the UK and Greece necessitates a discussion about the socio-political conditions within which young people's participatory experience unfolds.

When discussing welfare systems and availability of mechanism to promote citizen involvement, a picture of considerable difference between the contexts is portrayed. When, though, one considers the type of processes young people undergo in both countries and the transitions they are faced with, then more similarities occur.

Starting with differences, the UK has an established liberal welfare system whose role is to function as an insurance in case of unemployment or illness through the provision of benefits low enough to motivate people to return to employment (Esping-Andersen, 1989). As part of a residual model of welfare (developed to expand Esping-Andersens's initial framework to account for the southern European countries) (Aassve et al., 2006) Greece represents a welfare model which involves

minimal state involvement to support citizens, strong familialism and selective distribution of benefits (Karamesini, 2008). Thus, young people rely mostly on the support of their families, which provide financial support, and networks through which employment is achieved. In this way, the relationship between young citizens and the state is mediated by the position and resources of their families. Hence it becomes clear that there are marked differences regarding the support young people get in each context to achieve successful transitions.

Such differences regarding the availability of support to achieve transitions, combined with the particularities of the employment markets in both countries, has resulted in youth as an age-bounded stage of life to be defined differently in each context (Gladstone, 2002). Definitions of youth in the UK include young people 16-24 years old and in Greece 16-29¹, with the lower age corresponding to the point at which young people can leave school and look for employment, and the upper limit to the stage at which they have achieved stable adult status (stable employment, relationships, and housing) (IARD, 2002).

Regarding the availability of opportunities for involvement, UK is perceived as a 'champion' (Clarke, 2004) in regard to governance processes, while Greece could be characterised as an import agent of such processes (Featherstone, 1998). The UK has witnessed in the last decades, in line with similar international trends in

¹There is a degree of vagueness in regard to age-related definitions of youth, with international organisations and national institutions adopting their own each time. The UN and the EU, for example, define as youth those aged between 15-24 years old. The Economic and Social Research Council in the UK describes youth as 15-25

citizenship (Bessant, 2003), a shift towards rethinking citizen' rights in relation to welfare (Arnott, 2008), which has promoted an increased role for civil society. This has meant that the focus has been placed on rebuilding the relationship between citizen and state or "bridging the gap between citizens and democracy" (Miliband, 2006). As part of this shift, there was by the early 2000s a sudden increase in the UK of formal structures, toolkits and policy papers for youth participation (Tisdall et al., 2008:350). Participation became an overarching principle in every policy intervention in regard to youth, and was implemented by a variety of actors. For Bessant (2003:87), the increase of such opportunities in conjunction with the dominance of a discourse of 'youth at risk' in reality offered the opportunity to governments to promote new modes of youth work and extended the governance of young people.

In the Greek context, while discourses about the improvement of the relationship between citizen and state were introduced, they did not effect large scale institutional change. Organised efforts for youth participation, which exceeded school forums, have been introduced in the country as a result of the country's obligations deriving from its membership of international organisations such as the EU and the UN. Thus, it seems that while the UK youth has become the target of participatory policies which aim to control youth through volunteerism, for the Greek youth, opportunities for participation are shaped/regulated as part of EU efforts to develop European identity and "create the future European citizens and voters" through increased opportunities of participation (Wallace et al., 2005). As such, discourses of participation and anxieties about youth underlying the policy

frameworks of these organisations have been introduced in the national context. Such an effect has also been evident throughout the 2000s, when the issue of youth was re-constructed around social exclusion and especially inclusion of youth in terms of employment participation. A number of recent national plans to combat social exclusion place youth among the disadvantaged social groups whose integration and social participation through employment is a policy priority (Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, 2006). Thus, employment is considered the prerequisite for civic and social participation.

Turning to the similarities now, young people's social experience is framed in both countries around processes of negotiating transitions to adulthood. Furthermore, research in both countries identifies an interest in less structured activities and unwillingness to identify with official discourses. In the UK, and despite efforts to increase involvement, young people are less likely to involve in civic participation and feel a sense of belonging in their communities (DCLG, 2009). Research regarding the political attitudes of young people in the UK concludes that election turnout is falling (Park, 1998; Pirie and Worcester, 2000; Park et al., 2004; Sloam, 2007) and young people lack social trust (Sloam, 2007). However, despite such research portraying young people as 'disengaged', the large amounts of young people who mobilised in the anti-war protest in 2003 (Cunningham and Lavallette, 2004) and the anti-poverty campaigns, take an interest in wider socio-political issues, and place more value on leisure than civic engagement (Park et al., 2004) indicate social actors who enact engagement outside official discourses.

Research on youth attitudes in Greece reveals overwhelming levels of mistrust towards the political system, a lack of interest in volunteerism (IARD 2001, G.G.S.Y, 2005), and a lack of confidence in their ability to influence larger social change (Chtouris et al., 2006). At the same time they express a preference for unstructured activities and they rank more highly values such as family, love, friendship and knowledge respectively (G.G.S.Y, 2005). Similar to the UK, this can be read as portraying social actors who frame their lived experience on a relational basis. Outbursts of youth protesting are quite common in the Greek context, especially within educational settings. These are usually approached by society as a rite of passage to adulthood rather than as an expression worthy of more attention and discussion, confirming thus a perception of youth as ‘becoming’ or ‘citizens in formation’.

Despite differences in regard to the extent to which participatory mechanisms have been introduced in each context, the identified similarities allow some common ground to emerge. If citizenship is defined to include emotional ties to the community and a sense of belonging, the results discussed above indicate that young people in both contexts are lacking such a conviction. Nevertheless, as the aim of this study is not to compare the different contexts but to draw examples of how young people in these contexts engage with similar contexts, this study becomes feasible. As has already been discussed, participation principles, purposes and processes have become prominent internationally and are similarly promoted by varying institutions.

1.3 Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter Two reviews the literature in order to locate the significance of participation within citizenship discourses. This chapter establishes that an increased interest in youth participation is part of wider shifts in citizenship discourses combined with concerns regarding the integration of youth, successful management of transitions to adulthood, and an interest in upholding young people's rights.

Although participation is seen as a way to empowerment, there are increasing concerns regarding practices within participatory projects in relation to how such practices may trigger transformative or reproductive potential. Chapter Three looks at the possibilities involved in the daily function of participatory opportunities and at how young people may wish to engage with such opportunities. This chapter explores a number of theoretical concepts which offer different entry points to examining both micro-practices within participation and young people's role within such settings. The research questions are established at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Four presents the research framework. It outlines how the chosen methods enabled an exploration of the research questions. It thus establishes a connection between the aims of the study, the research design and the methods used to obtain information.

Chapters Five to Seven present the analysis of the data and follow the order of the research questions. Chapter Five explores the *policy context* for participation, Chapter Six looks at *processes* within spaces for participation, while Chapter Eight focuses on participants' *meaning making*. More specifically, Chapter Five presents the results of a document analysis of policies for youth participation in UK and Greece. The aim of this chapter is to provide the background against which the experiences of the participants are framed.

Chapters Six and Seven present the results from the qualitative interviews. Chapter Six presents participants' interpretations of their experience within spaces for participation. This chapter looks at how the discourses and the practices narrated by the participants inform an understanding of the processes, the range of participation practised in these spaces and the type of agency involved.

Chapter Seven explores participants' individual meaning-making in relation to the purpose of their involvement and links it with representations of lived experience. Three dominant profiles are identified which describe participants' approaches to participation, namely the professionals, the visionaries and the adventurers. Chapter Eight summarises and offers a discussion of the results, connecting them with the main themes discussed in the literature review on the empowering potential of youth participation.

CHAPTER 2: PARTICIPATION, CITIZENSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT

The idea of participation has a privileged position within discourses of citizenship and empowerment. There is a consensus within these discourses about the significance of participation in bringing about social change. However, the nature of the underlying principles of these statements varies. The meaning of participation is constantly shifting and continuously incorporating multiple meanings in order to integrate the interests of specific social actors which invest participation with their own versions of citizenship and empowerment. Therefore, participation can be pursued under a banner of strengthening democracy, addressing community deficit, promoting social cohesion, or fighting social exclusion and poverty. This plurality regarding the agendas within which participation is promoted means that the project of developing the ‘good citizen’ might encompass different roles for individuals such as becoming volunteers, taking part in deliberation processes, voting, becoming members of committees, being partners in the delivery of services, consuming services, participating in educational programs and citizen panels, keeping themselves out of trouble and more rarely protesting or campaigning.

Recent developments regarding deliberative democracy and governance processes have furthered the meaning of the ‘good citizen’ to involve that of the ‘active citizen’. An active citizen is expected to take advantage of available opportunities such as community-based initiatives, partnerships with state or processes opened by the free market in order to develop responsibility and control over their own life. Despite the common use in all these agendas of a language that highlights the empowering potential of participatory processes for individuals and communities, the type of citizen promoted through such processes is open to investigation each time. For Gaventa (2002:3) there is often:

*... little conceptualisation of what this [participation] in turn implies:
individual rights, collective rights, rights to participate on the basis of
particular identities or interests, rights to difference or dissent?*

Therefore the broad range of aims and practices covered by the term ‘participation’ raises issues regarding the way it is used to legitimise particular agendas. Cornwall (2003:31) gives an example of the possibilities for appropriation raised by the ambiguity of the term when she discusses how neo-liberal advocates took ownership of the language of participation and empowerment, the meaning of which they redefined to one that implies independence from the ‘interventionist state’. In this way, participation is used to mask social inequalities, justify lack of state support and reinforce existing power relations. Participation thus, despite a language of empowerment, contributes to the creation of passive citizens (Cornwall, 2003). Similarly, Beresford (2002), commenting on the persistence of public dissatisfaction despite the increase of official participatory commitments, argues that it is necessary to consider the political, ideological and socio-economic

relations impacting participation within social policy. This makes it clear that understanding youth participation involves initially an exploration of the idea of citizen participation in general and then a consideration of how youth participation relates to approaches to citizenship and empowerment.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will present two major discourses within which participation is understood and often enacted, in order to highlight the multiple agendas involved in the discussion of participation. The first discourse involves approaches which, by incorporating a civic republican understanding of citizenship as rights and responsibilities, see participation as the creation of ties within communities. The second discourse involves approaches which stem from either radical or social justice approaches which see participation as the fulfillment of citizenship rights and as a significant milestone in the recognition of identity and difference.

These discourses adopted participation as the main route to empowerment under a banner of deliberative democracy and within a shift towards governance; influences which are particularly evident within social policy and welfare governance. Thus the second section will briefly present the impact of these discourses within the area of social policy. The third section of the chapter will discuss youth participation in particular and draw links with these major discourses and developments. Participation as ‘as positive youth development’, as ‘active citizenship in a risk society’ and as ‘the right to have voice in decision making’ are

all discourses which this study has identified as being dominant within the academic and policy arenas. It will be argued that, rather than merely being directly linked to these discourses, youth participation reflects an even more complex process. This is because youth participation as a hybrid incorporates discourses of citizenship, empowerment and approaches regarding young people's role as social actors which, when combined, produce different expectations and practices for youth participation.

2.1 Discourses and contexts of participation

This section discusses the major discourses within which participation has emerged. It starts by presenting a discourse of 'participation as responsibilities towards the community' and then proceeds into discussing a discourse of 'participation as a right and manifestation of identity'. The section concludes by presenting the context within which these discourses have found an application, which context is currently characterised by a shift towards deliberative democracy and governance.

2.1.1 Participation as responsibilities towards the community

This discourse employs a 'community deficit' (Taylor, 2003) approach which is concerned with community breakdown and lack of social cohesion, alongside a focus on partnership and social capital. Drawing from communitarian perceptions of citizenship and the civic republicanism of the city-states of ancient Greece

(Dwyer, 2004), this discourse criticises libertarian individualistic conceptions of the self (Sandel, 1998) and highlights the importance of the community. Thus, communitarians argue, the only way to understand human action is to place it within the social, historical and cultural settings within which it unfolds, since individuals are “primarily socially embedded” (Dwyer, 2004:26). Central to both civic republicanism and communitarianism is an emphasis on people’s social identity, shared community values and common good (Etzioni, 1998). Such a focus on the social embeddedness of individuals shifts attention to institutions within the community, such as family and workplace, which shape the social experience. Social goods and a sense of common good are produced and distributed within community and create a sense of citizenship which affects the kind of demands made through participation in political processes.

The idea of reciprocity is central in communitarian thought, this is because individuals are shaped by the community; they are under an obligation to respect this community and to display an attitude which involves contribution to common affairs. Thus, the legitimacy of individual wants is measured against an idea of common good that may vary in given socio-political contexts.

In traditional communitarianism, participation is merely seen as access to social goods and manifests itself through strict moral terms (Delanty, 2000:30). Civic republicans adopt a different approach when they focus on the expression of political identities and especially active citizenship. The emphasis in this approach

lies mostly on individual duties and obligation to take part in community. Thus it privileges deliberative forms of democracy over systems of representation (Heater, 1999) and focuses on the associational character of citizenship which becomes significant only through participation (Delanty, 2000).

While communitarianism traditionally focused on the social embeddedness of individuals, ideas of reciprocity became increasingly more popular in recent versions of communitarianism such as New Communitarianism (e.g. Etzioni, 1993, 1995; Selbourne, 1994), which put forward a crisis caused in Western society by a focus on individual interests as expressed through liberal theory and an expansion of the welfare state which removed responsibility from families and communities. These conditions are seen as undermining the ideal of a good society (Dwyer, 2004:28).

Such a reinforced focus on reciprocity and responsibility renders citizenship from being a pre-fixed status, as it was understood in liberal theory, to being a right contingent upon an individual's virtue (Dwyer, 2004: 29). This is, individuals are not entitled to access social goods as long as they do not contribute towards society through work or other socially valued activities such as volunteerism (From Plant, 1998:30 in Dwyer, 2004:29).

Central in this discourse are also the ideas of community, civil society and the development of networks. In Putnam's (1993:664-5) version of civic

republicanism, trust and common interests make democracy work, while participation is understood to be manifested through the promotion of engagement and development of social capital. Thus the role of participation is framed around promoting trust, common values/norms, reciprocity and shared objectives, rather than dealing with conflict. The role of the state is minimal since it is civil society which is assumed to take over the responsibility for creating a strong democracy through participation. For Delanty (2000:35), “civic republicanism, then, is a communitarianism of participation, with identity playing relatively little role”.

By evoking an image of a strong civil society in which the state acts as an investor, enabler and empowerer and by “emphasizing the things that constitute a common identity for citizens and the obligation of individuals to participate in communal affairs” (Gaventa 2002), the communitarian tradition aspired to offer an alternative to neo-liberalism. However, Moosa-Mitha (2005) argues (from a post-structuralist critique) that this contractual relationship privileges participation defined in normative terms and activities, such as marriage, the military and the marketplace. This can therefore be seen as highly discriminatory, since women and young people are not perceived as citizenry which possesses the skills necessary to participate as active citizens, such as rationality and maturity (Moosa-Mitha, 2005:371-372).

Despite the above criticisms, this discourse has become prominent on the global level and its language is apparent in participation policy claims. Within this

discourse, community and civil society are seen as the domains within which citizens are expected to become active, make use of social capital, develop partnerships, strengthen democracy and therefore empower themselves. For Taylor (2003: 63) this discourse is attractive because words such as 'power' and 'conflict' are missing. Furthermore, structural inequalities deriving from class, gender and ethnicity are neglected; instead, there is an assumption that "communities will somehow and autonomously generate a morality which we can all in some way buy into" (Ibid.). The above criticisms raise questions regarding the extent to which such 'ideal' community is attainable, and the extent to which it can fulfill the functions that politicians and policy makers ascribe to it.

2.1.2 Participation as a right and manifestation of identity

A second discourse within which the rise of participation can be understood is a broad church which involves radical and poststructuralist (Marsh et al., 2007) or difference-centred (Moosa-Mitha, 2005) approaches. These approaches focus on issues of social justice, difference and equality within pluralist societies. What they have in common is an understanding of citizenship as right to participate and as encouragement of agency through active participation in social life. These approaches aim to unite a liberal focus on individual rights and equality, and a communitarian emphasis on belonging (Marsh et al., 2007), with civic republicanism's preference for deliberation and collective action (Jones and Gaventa, 2002). Recent approaches to deliberative democracy have endorsed pluralist concerns which extend to whether public participation can accommodate

for an increasingly complex and differentiated society. In doing so, they aim to bridge the gap between citizen and state by recasting citizenship as practised rather than as given (Jones and Gaventa, 2002:4).

While Moosa-Mitha (2005) describes these approaches under an umbrella term of 'difference-centred', Marsh et al. (2007) employ an analysis which distinguishes between poststructuralist and radical positions in recent citizenship. Poststructuralist thinkers frame the discussion in terms of identity, difference and power relations while radical positions still retain an interest in structured inequalities when they discuss identity and power. Both poststructuralist and radical perspectives criticise liberalist assumptions of involvement as unfolding on a level playing field and stress that liberalism's focus on individual agency underplays the importance of the structural barriers which social groups face in their effort to participate in democratic processes. Poststructuralist approaches place increased emphasis on agency, while radical ones adopt an intermediate position (Marsh et al., 2007:38) aiming to unify the liberal views on individual rights with the communitarian ideals of collective action and responsibility.

When the emphasis is placed on difference, conceptualisations of citizenship involve an interest in people's rights and agency, especially those of excluded groups such as women, young people, ethnic and minority groups. Lister (1997) suggests that citizenship means organising around group identities, which stimulates the emergence of counter-publics which in their turn form an element of

democracy owing to their capacity to formulate oppositional views. For Squires (1998 cited in Newman, 2005), rather than being sites within which participants bring fixed identities, such participatory spaces function as arenas within which identity is potentially constituted and mobilised.

Radicals agree with the poststructuralists about the value of identity but they argue that struggles for political identity arise on terrains which are still defined by structural inequalities such as gender, class, ethnicity and age. Structured inequalities remain relevant in contemporary society because of contemporary capitalist democracy's dependence on market and politico-economic elites which can only, according to Barber (2003), be addressed through participation and engaged citizenship that constitute a 'strong' form of democracy. In that way, experiences in all aspects of individual lives can have political dimensions, and the 'personal becomes political' (Marsh et al., 2007:39). People's political identity can be expressed through a variety of involvement opportunities within local structures which foster individual identities. Lack of involvement is perceived, not as apathy, but rather as alienation from dominant political structures.

Similarly, difference-centred theorists, borrowing from civic republican relational approaches to understanding experience, locate their analysis "within the lived realities of communities of difference" within which citizens form their experiences (Moosa-Mitha, 2005:374-377). Despite their different focus, both perspectives seek thus to extend the meaning of participation beyond the

private/public split as it was constructed within the liberal theories (Ibid:374). Both perspectives recognise the value of Marshall's three-dimensional perspective of rights, but at the same time they are critical of a universalist conception of citizenship with its emphasis on a given set of social goods being guaranteed by the state, because it excludes diversity in experience and needs. Furthermore, they argue that universalism disregards difference, produces a sense of 'false uniformity' and exacerbates social exclusion by imposing universal sets of values for all (Ellison, 1999:59). In addition, universality neglects inequalities of resources and power which often result in some claiming their rights more efficiently than others:

Concepts of citizenship which abstract rights from the political and historical contexts in which citizens find themselves, and which ignore differences in both awareness of rights and the capacities to claim them, will inevitably lead to differential outcomes. (Gaventa, 2002:5).

Power inequalities also impact on identity since, when citizens' identities are not recognised, then it is very likely that there be a scarcity of the right resources/mechanisms to allow the expression of these identities. Power, though, can be approached as multifaceted, having both a material and a non-material nature (Lister, 1997). The material nature of power relations is expressed through hierarchies on the basis of gender, race and age, while the non-material is expressed through institutional practices and norms. The value of participation thus lies in recognising the existence of these power relations, in accepting difference and in enabling agency.

From a social justice perspective, Lister argues that participation in socio-political life should be approached as a human right (Lister, 1998). This contrasts with the liberal idea of negative freedom, which is freedom from coercion and constraint, and promotes positive freedom, which includes a conception of social rights as citizens' freedom "to realize their social rights" (Gaventa, 2002:5) and extends the role of social action to individuals who would otherwise be constrained (Byrne, 2005:22). The "politics of recognition and respect" (Lister, 2002; 2004) consists in acknowledging people's interests and identities and the exclusion they might face on the basis of difference, as well as recognising the right of people to participate on the basis of these differences.

Thus the above approaches to citizenship aim to offer a scope for participation which encompasses both the capability of users to be active agents rather than passive beneficiaries of rights, and empowerment opportunities for groups through using their identities in order to improve access to the services they need. Agency is seen as both active and relational and as a means for the struggle against oppression. As such, agency is transformative and a middle ground for a dialectical relationship between the self and collective action. Therefore, human agency is embedded in human relations and is intrinsically linked to consciousness:

To act as a citizen requires first a sense of agency, the belief that one can act; acting as a citizen collectively, in turn fosters that sense of agency.
Thus agency is not simply about the capacity to choose and act but also

about conscious capacity which is important to the individual's self-identity. (Lister, 1997:38)

This understanding of citizenship brings a new concept into the discourse of participation: that of accountability (Barber, 2003; Jones and Gaventa, 2002; Cornwall, 2002). This is the idea that citizens who perceive themselves as active citizens are very likely to demand more accountability from service providers and act as: “makers and shapers” rather than “users and choosers” of interventions or services designed by others (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000). Thus, the “concept of citizenship has been extended from one to social rights to one of participation through the exercise of agency, as well as through action to hold others accountable” (Cornwall, 2002). It becomes both a status covering rights and obligations and an active practice (Ibid: 5).

The language offered by this discourse, albeit not its preoccupation with power relations, was quickly adopted alongside the communitarian discourse within the processes of participatory democracy and governance, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.1.3 The significance of participation within deliberative and governance processes

The above approaches to participation have been played out and enabled within a context that witnessed the emergence of the new social movement action and the

rise of the political discourses of deliberative democracy and governance. As described in the previous sections, deliberative democracy was endorsed by both discourses which were focused on community and those which pinpointed the importance of identity and agency.

Deliberative democracy involves a belief that participative decision-making can be seen as “more legitimate if it draws on lay knowledge based in personal experience as well as on the expert knowledge of professionals and other public officials” (Barnes et al., 2007:34). Deliberative democracy thus carries the potential of responding to the complex needs of pluralist societies and to prevent state control of people’s lives established through bureaucracy and lack of access to power structures. This is to be achieved through dialogue, opening up information (otherwise restricted to policy makers) to the public, creating arenas for participation and in general through nurturing an ‘informed citizenry’ (Ibid:35), capable of getting involved in policy making processes. Drawing from Habermasian theoretical tools, the necessary elements for effective deliberation include the ability to master the rules of formal logic, linguistic, pragmatic and interaction rules within deliberative arenas (White, 1989:29 cited in Webler, 1995:44).

These views have, however been criticised as downplaying the ways in which processes themselves can exclude specific actors through lack of common discourses, communication styles, and through the prevalence of specific emotions

and perceptions of the participants as citizens (Young, 2000; Hoggett, 2001). Thus, rather than abandoning self-interest and adopting transforming views, citizens might be faced with limited opportunities to get involved.

Despite these criticisms, the recent rise of deliberative forums is seen by advocates of participative democracy as strengthening democracy, while for governance advocates it is also seen as an indication of a shift from government to governance, which is a solution to the shortfall of the state's ability "to deal with the complexity of policy problems and to the differentiated needs and identities of citizens" (Newman, 2005:119).

Changes in governance have been theorised by a variety of authors, often framed as a shift to 'institutional reflexivity' (Giddens, 1994), liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000) and reflexive modernity (Beck, 1994). For Beck this process is linked to how risk is managed. More specifically, while in the past the enlightenment project, with its scientific knowledge, was perceived as adequate to resolve social issues and promote progress, in reflexive modernisation, uncertainty and risk are central aspects of people's lived experience. In this context, state decision making has given way to new 'sub-politics' within local communities, involving activities different to traditional politics.

For Giddens (1994) these shifts signify a move from high modernity, where identity and emotional ties revolved around family and gender roles, to reflexive modernity, where trust has to be won and sustained rather than being taken for granted as a consequence of social status. Therefore, institutions had to respond and new forms of democracy had to develop. This resulted in authority being decentralised and in the replacing of traditional hierarchies or bureaucracies. At the same time, authorities have been challenged by new forms of association such as interest groups and social movements. Identities are thus reflexively formed: identity is turning to a political project, a domain within which political struggles develop or, in Giddens's words, 'life politics'.

Similarly, a shift in debates on citizenship signalled a move towards active citizenship as it contrasts with passive citizenship. Central to this was Turner's (cited in Yuval Davis, 1997) typology which relocated the debate from an understanding of 'citizen and subject' to a continuum of 'passivity-subject of authority' to 'activity' which introduces the idea of active political agents (Yuval Davis, 1997:15). For Bevir and Trentmann (2007), new governance refers specifically to changes in the nature and role of the state following the neo-liberal reforms of the public sector in the 1980s and 1990s. Typically these reforms are said to have led to a shift from a hierarchic bureaucracy toward a greater use of markets, quasi-markets, and networks, especially in the delivery of public services. The concept of the new governance thus captures the widespread belief that the state "increasingly depends on other organisations to secure its intentions, to deliver its policies, and to establish a pattern of rule" (Ibid: 2).

A move from government to governance, involving “self-organising, inter-organizational networks characterized by interdependence... [and] significant autonomy from the state” (Rhodes, 1997:15), is presented as a qualitative change in the relationship between citizens and state with the first being increasingly able to take control and participate in society. This rise of the good governance agenda re-enacted the meaning of participation as one of control, influence and accountability over government processes (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999; Jones and Gaventa, 2002). Societal accountability within governance processes is ensured through elections and also through horizontal accountability agencies in which citizens can participate and oblige the governments to respond on their issues (Ackerman, 2004). Furthermore, accountability can be ensured through societal accountability (Peruzzoti and Smulovitz, 2000, cited in Ackerman, 2004), which involves citizens employing media, courts and mass mobilisations to improve the accountability of government.

This focus on more ‘well behaved’ (Ackerman, 2004:450) forms of local participation ties in well with criticisms arguing that current governance processes delegitimise specific forms of involvement such as protest (Barnes et al., 2007). Furthermore, a focus on deliberative processes and governance within current debates of participation renders the impact of social movements invisible. Approaches to public participation are highly influenced by the rise of social movements which have aimed to act as counter-publics in creating new spaces

within which marginalised groups could share their perspectives and campaign for social change. These groups have often emerged as a result of the exclusion of parts of the population from deliberative democracy processes because of their lack of knowledge, background or inability to master the communication methods within deliberative processes. For Barnes et al. (2007:50), the significance of processes opened outside official structures in contemporary processes of governance lies in “constantly question[ing] the way in which the rules of the game are being determined and defined, in particular in relation to the rules governing the way in which those who are least powerful ... are represented within such systems”.

A post-structuralist critique of deliberative governance as a means to govern and regulate citizen behaviour at a distance sheds light on the reasons sustaining the focus within current deliberative discourses on well-behaved forms of involvement in conjunction with an underplay of the effect of power relations. Participation is seen in post-structuralist approaches as a strategy for the constitution of the disciplined subject, who is expected to activate their own commitments, energies, and choices in order to manage risk, exercise responsible self-government and to attach themselves to a moral community (Rose, 2000:327-331). Epistemic alignments which seek to normalise behaviour use the discourse of empowerment. By using the binary of control-dependency, this discourse appears to be rejecting previous patronising versions of the welfare state and constitutes individuals as free agents who will take responsibility for themselves. For Rose (2000:334), this binary:

becomes a powerful formula for judging the conduct by others and for judging oneself. Autonomy is now represented in terms of personal power and the capacity to accept responsibility-not to blame others , but to recognise your own collusion in that which prevents you from being yourself, and in doing so, overcome it and achieve responsible autonomy and personal power.

Therefore individuals' decisions to engage within their communities are not seen as the decision of free agents but rather as a mechanism to regulate and normalise individual behaviour at a distance through a discourse of empowerment. As such, developments in citizens' participation "may not just *reflect* external changes in the public realm and the public itself but may be *constitutive* in their effects" (Newman, 2005:128, emphasis in original).

In conclusion, the rise of the deliberative agenda with its focus on pre-defined deliberative processes signalled an array of policies which targeted neighbourhoods and communities, and gave rise to social inclusion policies and participatory techniques in order to eliminate exclusive dependence on electoral processes (Taylor, 2000) and to normalise behaviour. The next section will describe the impact of these developments within the general field of social policy.

2.2 Participation in Social Policy: from beneficiaries to active citizens

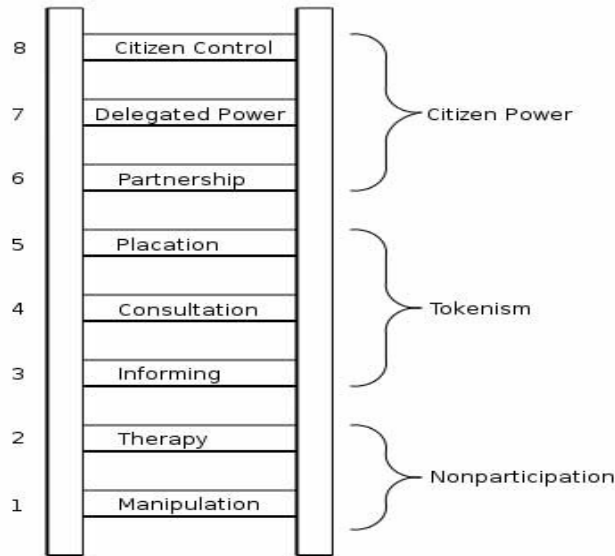
The discursive shifts on citizenship, participation and empowerment described above were gradually realised within the domains of social policy and welfare governance. Developments within social policy were instigated both by an effort to address community deficit (Taylor, 2003:18) and the failure of the state to support citizens. This failure was to be addressed initially through community work, a shift towards introducing market principles in the 1980s and a more recent understanding of citizenship as the right to define and control policies which affect individual well-being.

Cornwall and Gaventa (2000) identify key stages in the evolution of participation in social policy as part of a conceptualisation of citizenship which has extended over the last 30 years, from that of citizens as recipients of policies to that of citizens as active and direct participants in governance. This shift involves policy users, who were initially seen as beneficiaries, being gradually approached as service users, as service consumers/choosers, and finally as agents and active participants in broader processes of governance. For Croft and Beresford (1996) these developments related to changes in relation to citizenship as they were discussed in the first part of this chapter, such as increased concerns with notions of empowerment, the recognition of diversity, the emergence of new social movements.

The rise of participatory principles was manifested in the 1960s and 1970s through a concern over collective rather than individual action. Community work was perceived as the main route towards empowerment and focused upon workplace and neighbourhood, aiming at bringing about change and the involvement of people in processes related to both their economic and personal growth (Croft & Beresford, 1996). There were a wide variety of community action models ranging from encouraging self-help to politicisation and pressure group activity, either through collaboration or confrontation (Ibid). Citizens became involved in “numerous community health councils, parent committees in schools, tenant councils, and countless other beneficiary committees” (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999:4).

Although institutionalised participation offered opportunities for individuals to express their views, concerns about its limits increasingly emerged. These criticisms were mostly concerned with the degrees of power transferred to citizens in the participatory fora. This was exemplified by concerns about the ways consultation was used by service managers to justify their interests and with issues of exclusion from participatory processes of specific -often marginalised - social groups. Such concerns are reflected in Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation (Table 1).

Table 1-Arnstein's ladder of participation



Source: Arnstein, S. (1969), pp 216-224

Reflecting a conception of power as a commodity to be possessed and passed from one social actor to another, Arnstein advocates for a process of participation which in its best form transfers power to citizens. In her ladder, Arnstein presents the ideal types and stages of participation, with the bottom rung corresponding to manipulation of citizens and the highest rung relating to aspirations of citizen control over programmes and resources. More specifically, on the bottom rung, citizens are placed in committees just to create an impression of being given the opportunity to participate and to be consulted. Moving on from inadequate forms of participation to more efficient ones requires participants to be given the power to control and define the various processes in programmes and organisations on their own.

These ideas have been influential in shaping expectations regarding the scope of participation. In the 1980s, community work came under criticism for failing to address male dominance and racism, while the efficiency of its objectives to create more community and user leaders was questioned as a means of increasing people's participation (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999). Recognition of the drawbacks in the application of participation led academics and practitioners not only to distinguish between users as consumers and participation aiming to empower people to gain control over services and their lives, but also to further distinguish between kinds of participation initiated by the state and user groups themselves (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001). Croft and Beresford (1996) argue that, despite a general consensus for more user involvement, two different approaches to user involvement have dominated during the past 30 years, namely the consumerist approach and empowerment, which reflect different philosophies and objectives.

These two different approaches reflect trends in political ideologies as they were expressed through a revival of libertarian or neo-liberal understandings of citizenship in the 1970s and 1980s under New Right ideologies (the consumerist approach) and a republican understanding of citizenship with its focus on citizen deliberation (the empowerment approach) (Johansson and Hviden, 2005:109). The consumerist approach in health and welfare services, with its focus on clients as consumers rather than as service users, can be seen as part of a wider trend for commercial provision and a changing economy of welfare. Consumerism is based on two competing aims, which include first the need to pay attention to people's

needs, and also the commodification and conversion of these needs into markets (Prior et al., 1995).

The introduction of market principles meant that Welfare services such as health, and social care would be contracted out by the state and delivered by an array of agencies (Wright, 1994; Bevir and Trentman, 2007; Barnes et al., 2007, Jones and Gaventa, 2003). The right to choice was fulfilled by the principles of demand, supply, information and the right to complain (Prior et al., 1995:137). The demand side involves providing citizens with the financial means to purchase their chosen services, while the supply side refers to the existence of a range of opportunities to choose from. Information refers to available knowledge about the range of opportunities to choose from, about standards of services and about the previous performance of service providers (Ibid.). Systematic use of public meetings to air specific issues of local policy, the development of community consultation processes, the establishment of open neighbourhood forums and service and user panels and forums, are all ways of both enabling people to make their choices with regard to particular issues and also making clear to formal representatives and service managers what the nature of citizens' choices are. Furthermore, the above is achieved through mutual learning and communication, part of which involves the right of citizens to complain and allow service providers to know what is important (Ibid.).

As a result of the introduction of market principles, processes within welfare are becoming a matter of managerial decision making (Clarke and Newman, 1997), with efficiency and performance being at the top of the agenda (Taylor, 2003). For Prior et al. (1995), the effect of the privatisation of citizenship resulted in:

An ever decreasing capacity to deal with needs and problems that can only be resolved through collective commitment and action, and an ever increasing division between, on the one hand, those citizens who are able to compete and succeed in the market place and, on the other hand, those who are either unable to compete in the first place or who lose out, and for whom little in the way of a safety net of public provision exists. (Prior et al., 1995:167)

These changes marked a gradual shift, all over Europe, towards ‘active’ policies. These policies promoted a form of social protection based on labour market promotion, in contrast to older ‘passive’ policies of state driven welfare (Johansson and Hvinden 2005:103). In this way, the role of the welfare citizen was gradually reconceptualised from one that was ‘old’ ‘passive’ and rights-based to one of an active and performing subject (Newman, 2005). Similarly, in the wider international context, structural adjustment policies:

subordinated state welfare to an economic growth agenda, reproducing on a global scale the increasing polarisation, disenfranchisement and social division that the market was bringing to the North (Taylor, 2003:3).

Thus, the opportunities of community-based approaches in dealing with problems of poverty and exclusion were minimised, as often community was reconceptualised as self-help. At the same time, the voluntary and private sectors in the North, and NGOs at the international level, were seen as the preferred means for service provision.

The democratic or empowerment approach (stemming from radical perceptions of citizenship) on the other hand, while it recognises the value of having a voice in services, is not service centred; it is rather concerned with the attainment of people's rights and equality of opportunity. The principal aim is empowerment and, more specifically, dealing with how power can be redistributed to provide people with opportunities to express their views and exercise control over their lives. This approach came about as "a third approach to social policy" to overcome both state driven forms of engagement and consumerist versions of citizenship (Croft and Beresford 1996; Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001) as well as being borne of frustration with the possibilities for mainstream participation to account for social exclusion, difference and hierarchical relations.

Inspired by the new social movements and growing alongside a discourse of good governance, this approach suggests that people's participation needs to be the cornerstone of any policy. Accordingly, participation in social policy should not be perceived in narrow terms, only as a provision for citizens whose interests have been rendered marginal to that of policy, but as linked with wider issues, and as a

possible route to more participatory politics. By supporting and enabling citizens to be effectively involved, and by offering opportunities for equal access, this kind of participation is perceived as a means for citizens to achieve their civil rights.

Barnes and Bowl (2001) extend the meaning of citizenship beyond the rights and obligations related to being part of a community to the extent to which space is provided for people to contribute to the creation of the context that shapes their experience; in other words, the extent to which people take part in the development of services. The role of the state becomes one of 'enabler' (Newman, 2005:123): one that creates a platform or environment in which people take decisions about their lives in different ways (Leadbetter, 2004:16 cited in Newman, 2005:123). Thus, participation becomes a means for people to become actors and agents in broader processes of governance through partnership. This increased interest in partnership was witnessed at the international level with the re-emergence of the ideas of community involvement, while participation was endorsed as a means of dealing with wider issues such as poverty and exclusion, even within neo-liberal institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF (Taylor, 2003).

Youth participation initiatives can be traced within the developments described and alongside concerns with developing responsible, self-sufficient, active and well-integrated future citizens. Participation in programmes in the general area of social policy, as described above, is not always restricted to young people who experience a form of disadvantage, but is available to all young people, under a conviction that

participation ensures control over the processes that affect young people's lives. As the next section will explore, assumptions of the scope of youth participation stem from different understandings of youth and incorporate different aspects of the discourses and developments described above.

2.3 Discourses of youth and participation

As youth participation is gaining increased prominence and being employed to describe a variety of activities occurring in different circumstances, the calls for clarity and precision (Sinclair, 2004:108) when the term is used are also increasing. This section will now turn to young people's participation and will locate the impact of the developments described in previous sections on the rise of opportunities for youth participation. Perceptions about young people's access to participation result from normative assumptions regarding both the nature of youth as a life stage and theoretical approaches to the role of citizens.

Contemporary understandings of youth can be described as multifaceted, since they have been developed within an array of disciplines and institutions. Disciplines such as psychology, sociology, social work and philosophy have been employed over time to inform state policies, the entertainment industry and penal systems on adolescents' or young people's 'special' characteristics. The combination of these disciplines, institutions, commentaries, discourses and practices constitutes a mechanism that produces knowledge and the 'truth of youth' which is used to classify behaviour; to regulate and normalise individuals. It is also used in the

production of laws and social expectations which shape young people's opportunities to participate. Current discourses and policies aiming at youth have developed around the recurring themes of youth disenfranchisement, immaturity, apathy, risk and anti-social behaviour.

Similarly, contemporary perspectives on young people's participation have emerged from a range of fields such as global discourses and conventions, individual countries' and states' legislative practices, academic paradigm shifts, development discourses and young people themselves. Work has been done to outline and categorise the discourses that have led to the development of youth participation (e.g. Tisdall et al., 2008), the purpose of participation (Sinclair, 2004) and the way notions of youth involvement are constructed (see Norris (2009) for participation as 'youth development' and 'youth involvement').

For Matthews (2003), there are three arguments regarding the purposes of youth participation, which involve interests in providing education for citizenship, fitting young people into society and reinforcing young people's status in the adult society. Drawing from the field of children's participation, Thomas (2007) identifies two dominant discourses within contemporary youth participation. Firstly, there is a predominantly social discourse which focuses on networks, inclusion, adult-child relations and on the opportunities for social connection that participatory projects can create. Secondly, there is another discourse which is more political and stresses issues of "power, challenge and change" (Thomas,

2007: 206). Predominantly, though, citizenship and youth participation discourses connect with the contradictory construction of young people as ‘becoming’ or as “democratic citizens in formation” on the one side and as ‘being’ on the other. Following these distinctions, participatory activities may either focus on preparation for the future or on solving problems in the present. Examination of current practices of participation reveals that it is rather the first approach that dominates initiatives, with most of them aiming to focus on the value of active citizenship with a concentration upon acquiring skills for employment.

While these distinctions are highly informative for this study, the aim here is to trace the links between these approaches to youth participation in regard to the developments in approaches to citizenship discussed in previous sections of this chapter. As such, this section will outline three different approaches to participation as they have emerged, in an effort to sketch the multiplicity of discourses and political agendas involved in the discussion and promotion of youth participation. As there is no straightforward answer to the question of what is youth participation, at this point the identification of such discourses is aiming to bring together both approaches to participation and notions of youth, highlighting the way in which these combinations affect the aims and the range of activities of youth participation. As Thomas (2007) observes, demands arising from the purposes of participation have varied implications in terms of the kind of the means and procedures put into action in order to achieve each one of these purposes.

Therefore this section explores the following discourses:

1. Participation as positive youth development
2. Participation as active citizenship in a risk society
3. Participation as the right to have voice in decision making

These discourses draw both from academic work and policies, as participation processes involve many stakeholders such as researchers, academics, practitioners, communities policy makers, and young people themselves. Despite operating at many levels and despite the distinctive contribution of each of these groups, the lines between them are not always clearly demarcated, while “there is also much in the theory and practice of participation that is common to all” (Sinclair, 2004:106).

2.3.1 Participation as positive youth development

This discourse is concerned with how participation can be translated into positive youth development. It assumes both that youth is a homogeneous group experiencing similar age-related developmental process and also that this process is a transitional stage towards mature adulthood. With its focus on personal development, maturity, good judgement, learning, and avoidance of risky decision making, it is linked to the emergence of developmental psychology and reflects positivist and functionalist epistemological positions. The ideas of psychosocial development are central in this discourse, often drawing from biological and criminological theories that approach youth as a time of storm and stress, when young people are “in the grip of hormonal and physiological changes that produce an erratic range of feelings and behaviour” (Kehily, 2007:13). The benefits young

people are expected to gain through participation, such as personal skills, education, leisure and networking opportunities, have increased value, as they aid the intense and rapid psychosocial development that young people are undergoing. Thus, engagement is expected to promote both positive individual identity and a sense of responsibility (Kjorholt, 2002).

The focus of ‘youth participation as positive development’ on rationality and moral behaviour is not new, but can be traced back in time as it has historically affected dominant understandings of youth. Concerns about young people’s propensity to irrational and immoral behaviour such as risk taking, lack of respect, inability to control anger and deviance can be traced directly back to Aristotelian perceptions of youth, as the Table 2. shows.

Table 2-Rhetoric, Book II, Chapter 12

[Young people] have exalted notions, because they have not yet been humbled by life or learnt its necessary limitations; moreover, their hopeful disposition makes them think themselves equal to great things-and that means having exalted notions. They would always rather do noble deeds than useful ones: their lives are regulated more by moral feeling than by reasoning...They are fonder of their friends, intimates, and companions than older men are, because they like spending their days in the company of others, and have not yet come to value either their friends or anything else by their usefulness to themselves. All their mistakes are in the direction of doing things excessively and vehemently.

These positions are not characteristic of only a specific historical period but have continued to inform attitudes to youth over time and to provide ground for

emerging moral panics. Contemporary versions of such an approach see youth as a transitional period through which young people need to be taught how to exercise rational and moral reasoning, while the importance of the social context is downplayed. Over time this discourse has been linked with fears of young people's behaviour as a threat to societal values and interests, tradition and established processes (Cohen, 2002). Furthermore, it involves increased anxieties on the part of parents and society about the decline of morality as it has been expressed through young people's manners, music, cinema and fashion which "were seen as corrupting young people" (France, 2007:16) which thus need "punishing, controlling or rehabilitating" (Ibid.:48).

Alongside these moral panics, issues of generational change were raised and any youth expression such as counter-cultures was interpreted in the context of inter-generational relations. Prominent in these positions has been a sense of the responsibility of older generations to help young people develop the necessary skills for adult citizenship, often through participation (Jones, 2010).

In this context, young people were internationally constructed as passive social actors, at the risk of expressing emotional and irrational responses to social change. There is no acknowledgement of young people as positive contributors to social change or of the effect that context and social structures might have in shaping their attitudes. Therefore:

Young people's voices and perspectives are marginal to these forms of analysis, leaving us with a perspective of 'causes' that are defined by the researcher's interpretation and moral judgements (France, 2007:37).

Additionally, youth as a social group has not only been treated as a threat, but has also been depoliticised. Young people have been approached as material to be moulded according to the dominant institutions rather than having their own political ideas. In that context, young people's efforts to become socially active have been approached as a ritual of passage, or, in the words of Musgrove (1974:19 cited in Jones, 2010:15) commenting on student movements of the 1960s, "the revolt of the un-oppressed" or part "of an exploratory curriculum". The legacy of these approaches is still evident through modern moral panics regarding disenfranchisement, apathy and anti-social behaviour and minimal tolerance of young people's political expression beyond that expressed through formal structures.

The effect of such conceptualisations is evident within contemporary participation too. Participation projects often approach young people as apprentices, with adults having a responsibility to promote young people's psycho-social growth through providing opportunities to learn, increase skills, and improve attitudes and relations with adults (Frank, 2006:353). The developmental approach is primarily based on liberal perceptions of citizenship which frame the rights of young people in reference to adults, rendering them thus 'non-yet-citizens' (Moosa-Mitha, 2005:371). When participation with a developmental focus incorporates civic

republican concerns then community-based programmes aim to foster youth empowerment through the development of leadership among youth (Larson, 2005) and youth-adult partnerships (Zeldin, 2005). Engagement in shared decision making with adults is expected to promote a sense of community and help build civil society (Zeldin et al., 2003 cited in Zeldin et al., 2005) through endorsement of “aspects of positive youth development, such as initiative, identity, or civic competence” (Ibid.:125).

With its focus on the individual, its functionalist concern with integrating young people into existing structures and its underlying biological rationale, participation as individual development neglects issues of power and social positioning. Therefore this kind of involvement, despite being still dominant in many contexts, cannot be approached as representing meaningful participation. That is, while it can be the first stage of participation it cannot assist in bringing about social change as it neglects acknowledging how young people’s opportunities to get involved might be differentially impacted by power relations and omits ‘discussions about outcomes’ (Kirby and Bryson, 2002:9).

2.3.2 Participation as active citizenship in a risk society

Skills and competencies acquired through participation are seen in this discourse as a means to assist transition to adulthood and to combat social exclusion. Involvement is perceived to equip young people with the necessary skills and social competency to manage risk through volunteering, achieving educational

transitions and through seeking and maintaining employment. This discourse is highly influenced by the theoretical tools offered by the individualisation theories and their particular understanding of youth transitions. Thus, while youth studies have been heavily influenced by functionalism, developments in contemporary society such as consumerism, globalisation and neo-liberal ideology stimulated discussions about the multiple dimensions of social stratification and identity formation. Thus the debate shifts from the effects of social class and culture to the role of the postmodern era in shaping young people's experiences.

Central to this shift were Beck's and Giddens' ideas regarding the breakdown of institutions and individualisation processes (e.g. Beck, U. Lash, S. and Giddens, A. 1994); ideas that sparked a discussion within youth studies regarding the individualised and reflexive character of young people's transition to adulthood. Therefore, national and cross-national research (e.g. Walther et al, 2002) on youth aims to evidence the individualistic paths and patterns young people develop in attaining their 'reflexive biographies' (Giddens, 1991; Beck and Beck-Gernstein, 2002) in a 'continuous project of self' (Thompson et, al., 2002; 2004). Table 3 summarizes the main transitions young people undergo towards adulthood.

Table 3-Pathways to Adult Status

Educational transitions: School to work/ School to higher education/training
Housing Transitions: Parental house to own house
Personal Transitions: Parental family to own family

Following a popular sociological debate which constructs agency and structure as binaries, transition studies used a variety of terms such as ‘pathways’, ‘journeys’, ‘navigations’, trajectories’ and ‘routes’ to argue that there was a shift in the late 1990s towards a greater degree of individual agency in young people’s efforts to negotiate childhood dependence and achieve adulthood independence. Thus transitions are approached, not as a life stage on their own, but as a crucial part of a process towards successful adulthood.

While initial transition theory adopted a normative assumption that transitions occur in a linear manner, research proved that life events pose risks, they may delay transition or they may lead to prolonged periods of ongoing transition stages, known as yo-yo transitions (EGRIS, 2001; Du Bois-Reymond and López Blasco, 2004); extended youth (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997); post-adolescence (Williamson, 2002); and emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004).

For Beck (1994; Beck and Beck-Gernstein, 2002), while there are more opportunities, contemporary societies entail increased risks. These risks consist in educational failure, unemployment, homelessness, job market exclusion, mental health problems, substance abuse such as alcoholism and exclusion from the community. Living in this risk society

means living with a calculative attitude to the open possibilities of action, positive and negative, with which, as individuals and globally, we are confronted in a continuous way in our contemporary social existence.

(Giddens, 1991:28)

According to Giddens, the individualisation of young people's biographies and increased choice also had a political dimension, as it gave young people more options regarding involvement. He differentiates between the emancipatory politics of modernity and the 'life politics' of late modernity. While emancipatory politics is about people's struggle to liberate themselves from any form of domination or hierarchical relations, be it gender, economic inequalities or race, life politics is about opening possibilities for self-actualisation and for choice of lifestyle (Giddens, 1991).

This suggests that there has been a shift from traditional politics and that young people are now looking at forms of engagement that are experienced in relation to their values and worldview. That means that young people have increased choice about the projects they will identify, and that they might wish to direct themselves away from traditional politics to issues that relate to identities.

Despite recent research on transitions which acknowledges the non-linearity of experience (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Thompson et al, 2002; Evans, 2010), and acknowledgement that transitions do not occur merely on the basis of personal biography but also within the frames of already carved out pathways to adulthood (institutional biographies) policies often base their interventions on the notion of normative, linear transitions to adulthood. Such notions in conjunction with new communitarian perspectives construct transition as an individual responsibility to become successful and avoid failure (Jones, 2009).

Normative assumptions about individual biographies were accepted with enthusiasm from policy makers, both at the national and international level, where institutions such as the EU developed frameworks to enable youth transitions and combat social exclusion. Such normative assumptions, according to du Bois-Reymond and Lopez Blasco (2003), create 'misleading trajectories', that is, policies that aim to integrate young people "by way of counselling, education, training, welfare and labour market policies" (Ibid.:26). In reality, though, these policies reproduce existing exclusions by forcing young people to make choices that do not guarantee a socially accepted status or stable employment.

Alongside the above focus on managing risk and promoting integration through labour market participation, concerns over young people's perceived apathy, and often antisocial behaviour, gave rise to discourses of the 'good citizen' (Lister, 2003) and active citizenship. Young people are thus encouraged to participate in the labour market and volunteer in community affairs in an attempt to attain good citizen status. Participation in this context is perceived both as equipping young people with skills necessary in employment market and as part of exercising citizenship. The terms of citizenship, volunteerism and participation are often used interchangeably.

These developments framed citizenship as requirement to undertake work, and access to support became dependent upon the fulfilment of this obligation. The

meaning of citizenship has thus widened to include both employment participation and taking up the civic duties of an ‘active citizen’ or, in other words, work and responsibilities (France, 2007). This approach, though, is a deficit model (Ibid.: 69), as it implies that young people are unwilling to take their responsibilities seriously: they are apathetic or unable to manage risk and thus “less than good citizens” (Osler and Starkey, 2003 cited in France, 2007:68).

2.3.3 Participation as the right to have voice in decision making

This discourse criticises the lack of opportunities for young people to be part of discussions related to their socio-economic futures, and sees participation in decision making as a right for young people. Making the right social and institutional arrangements in order to give young people voice to express their points of view is central in this discourse. This approach equally originates from both social studies and developments within international organisations.

According to Skelton (2007), there was a paradigm shift within the ‘new social studies’ which marked an increased interest in rights, that framed a critical discourse and conceptualised youth as a socially constructed group. This shift enabled a “practice-based discussion about youth participation to emerge” (Ibid.:168). More specifically, this shift is expressed through an attitude which sees young people as active social agents rather than as dependent and passive recipients of services. In contrast to previous approaches within which young

people were constructed as ‘becoming’, here young people are valued for ‘being’ (Qvortrup, 1994). That is, young people’s age is not perceived a sign of immaturity, but as a different stage in life with a value of its own and in that sense young people are accepted as competent social actors with the right to participate in decision making about issues that affect their lives.

Apart from the academic community, this discourse became increasingly relevant among international organisations. The dramatic growth of interest around young people’s rights was first expressed through the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989. This convention seeks to both provide protection for young people and to promote their rights for consultation, under the premise that they share the same fundamental rights to participation with adult service users. As Table 2.3 shows, the Convention explicitly recognises children’s right to not only express their opinions, but also to be listened to and to be taken into account.

Table 4-UNCRC 1989

Article 12: The right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting them.
Article 13: The right to freedom of expression
Article 14: The right to freedom of thought
Article 17: The right to appropriate information
Article 29: The right to an education which will encourage responsible citizenship

The Convention has been followed by legislation within national policies and by the launching of initiatives from inter-governmental organisations, especially those working in the field of international development. One of the major developments includes the establishment of ‘children’s ombudsman’ on a national level, which aims to act as a “horizontal accountability mechanism within governance networks” (Ackerman, 2004:451), in order to protect young people and force accountability onto governments which fail to incorporate youth voice in their practices.

The expansion of legislation is based on a liberal assumption that changes in legislation can have a direct practical impact. Legislation initiatives in improving young people’s social status are introduced alongside a common rhetoric of rights-based organisations that participation is not only a child’s right but also a means to the realisation of other rights (see Lansdown, 2003; Theis, 2004; 2005). A rights discourse also reflects social justice concerns which see participation as the enablement of a sense of agency, a process which involves nurturing the belief that one can act as a citizen and the confidence to do so (Lister, 1997). It also reflects social justice advocates’ relational understandings of agency: by conceptualising young people as autonomous and similar to adults, the status of young people in relation to adults is raised in order for them to become equal to adult citizens. These approaches highlight, thus, that the ability of young people to act depends on a recognition of power relations regarding their relation to adults. Participation is therefore constructed as a middle ground for the development of respect and equal relations.

With the expansion of the rights discourse, however, arrived the first criticisms. One of the major concerns is that of North-centrism (as opposed to the majority world) in definitions of youth. According to this critique, while studies provide evidence of the contextual and cultural specificity of youth experience, international organisations seem to have a more de-contextualised, homogeneous, globalised understanding of what youth is (Skelton, 2007). Furthermore, choice of language is criticised as for many commentators (e.g. Mannion, 2010) it is dangerous to collapse the views of a varying group such young people into a 'voice'.

The impact of interventions to give voice to young people has also been at the focus of discussions. Matthews (1999), for example, argues that if participation is to be truly effective it should be carried out in such a way that the material influence of young people becomes progressively enlarged. Youth participation, thus, is more broadly conceived within these criticisms to be the right to influence in a democratic manner processes bearing upon one's own life and the development of local youth policy. For Lundy (2007), giving space to young people to express their voice is not the aim but the first step in participation; her critique focuses on the need for this voice to be heard and enacted. She proposes a framework that includes the 'right to voice' but additionally involves an 'audience' which is willing to listen to young people's views and 'influence', which means action upon these views.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the main debates and developments which relate to the rise of participation, and has made the link with debates of youth participation in particular. It has argued that there is lack of clarity about the meaning of the term ‘participation’ which relates to the broad range of agendas and discourses involved in the rise of participation initiatives. Similarly, there is a difficulty in defining the term ‘youth participation’, as it has emerged from an array of disciplines, discourses, institutions and practices, all of which involve citizenship discourses and their own conceptualisations of youth.

While on a theoretical level, participation is presented as a way to realise rights, strengthen the status of citizens and increase inclusion on a practical level, this very lack of clarity raises questions about the micro-practices and the outcomes in spaces for participation. In simple terms, this raises questions of how opportunities for young people to achieve the desired empowering outcomes described in this chapter are played out on the daily practices of participation. Although opening up participatory processes has increased opportunities for involvement, there is limited knowledge in regard to how practice unfolds within such processes (Barnes et al., 2004; Gaventa and Barrett, 2010). To the extent that deliberative fields contain the possibility of promoting transformation, they equally involve the interplay of power relations, which might be played out at the expense of specific individuals or social groups.

Therefore, while participation is presented as a means to promote deliberation and empowerment there are challenges involved in regard to how spaces for participation can achieve transformative outcomes, rather than reproducing existing social order. The next chapter will discuss these issues by looking at the variety of possibilities within spaces for participation as they are framed by power relations in specific contexts. It will also discuss how young people as social actors might wish to make use of these spaces.

CHAPTER 3: SPACES FOR PARTICIPATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS SOCIAL ACTORS

The previous chapter has established the emergence of an increased interest in citizen participation and youth participation in particular. It has been shown that both ‘participation’ and ‘youth participation’ are terms that involve differing agendas. Discourses of participation encompass varying conceptualisations of citizenship, political agendas and ideological backgrounds which provide different constructions of the role of the ‘active’ or ‘good’ citizen. Similarly, youth participation involves the interplay of multiple citizenship discourses in conjunction with perceptions regarding the role of young people as competent social actors. A discussion of these discourses in the previous chapter demonstrated dominant assumptions in regard to what participation is expected to achieve.

This chapter focuses on how possibilities and outcomes within projects are in practice framed by the play of power relations in specific contexts and young people themselves as social actors. This chapter argues that, rather than being independent of power relations, spaces for participation are socio-culturally

embedded and framed; furthermore, they are animated by social actors which bring with them their own particular social history.

For Dryzek (2000:29), one of the ways in which participation promotes democratisation is by giving “authenticity of control” over practices which facilitate involvement of “autonomous and competent actors”. This statement raises issues regarding the interplay of agency and structure and especially questions of whether social action is identical to transformative agency. In regard to youth participation, this would mean asking whether young people are free to act autonomously within projects and use their agency independently of social structures that frame individual experience.

When it comes to youth participation, policies aiming to empower young people conceive young people as a homogeneous group whose needs and aspirations are common (Hine, 2009). Furthermore, when agency is recognised, this is to assume that young people who enter participatory projects are motivated by an interest to represent other young people and that they uncritically accept the aims of policies. Discussions of young people’s participation in social life are often developed around a deficit model (France, 2007; Brooks, 2009), while lack of involvement is attributed to apathy. Involvement in projects is then seen as enabling agency and offsetting perceived apathy. Thus, young people are expected to be transformed from apathetic into active citizens, who are able to exercise conscious goal-setting and rational thinking (Mannion, 2010); a rational

thinking often assumed to be identical to the rationality underlying policy making. This reveals understandings of agency as a commodity which needs to be transferred to young people. For Jones (2009:57), acknowledgement of young people's agency as rational, calculative and instrumental "with access to the knowledge and intellectual capacity to undertake a cost-benefit assessment before deciding what to do" empties them from agency, as it neglects the social connectedness of their experience. Such a conceptualisation of agency which is separated from a discussion about the scope of young people's social action raises important questions in regard to the function of spaces for participation. For example, what is the aim of agency in participation? Are young people expected to use participatory spaces to learn how to navigate (and maybe reinforce) existing processes, or to transform the world they live in?

Cornwall and Coelho (2007:10) argue that participation is "animated by actors with their own social and political projects", which one would argue may not fit to the projects pursued by those initiating participation. This acknowledgement opens up theoretical and empirical challenges to locate these social and political projects and to explore their impact upon participatory process. In other words it opens up the challenge to locate the interplay between individual agency and contexts which frame possibilities for social action.

To understand young people as actors within participation, we need to think both about the constitution of participatory projects themselves and the

preferences and abilities young people bring with them. In doing so, this chapter initially discusses participation projects as spaces embedded in socio-cultural relations, which carry the potential to involve varying agendas and aims and which deliver a variety of outcomes. Using a spatial metaphor allows a better insight into the power relations which frame the possibilities of these spaces. Then the discussion turns to major theoretical perspectives which give an insight into how young people are constructed as social actors by power relations and simultaneously equipped with particular dispositions and aspirations which affect the ways in which they orientate their participatory agency. Participation is thus viewed as a contested process which unfolds on a shifting terrain of varying agendas and dispositions and can deliver a range of outcomes in different socio-cultural contexts.

3.1 Participation as policy space

In attempting an alternative entry point into the discussion of power relations within participatory spaces, this study will adopt a standpoint which explores the spatial constitution of participatory spaces. Spatial terminology is often used when participation is discussed, but rarely is this explained (kesby, 2005; Mannion, 2010). For example, authors often refer to the aims of participation as ‘opening up spaces’ for empowerment, creating ‘space’ , ‘contexts’ , ‘arenas’ and ‘settings’ for engagement. Although the processes are assumed to be embedded in space, there is little explicit discussion of how an understanding of participation in spatial terms will impact on the study of the micro-operations

within participatory projects. There is also limited focus on the relation of participatory projects to existing dynamics in wider society, since there is a “tendency to ignore or engage only metaphorically with spatiality” (Kesby, 2005:2053).

Debates on participation have, until recently, focused mostly on how power is distributed within participatory spaces, in terms of how control over processes is established rather in terms of issues regarding agenda setting and the scope of participation. This concern about control over processes and understandings of power as possession is reflected within youth participation models too. Different understandings of the purpose of participation and power dynamics within projects have led to different suggestions regarding practices as they are reflected in a considerable number of typologies for action, with the most influential being Hart’s (1992) ladder of participation (see appendix 1).

Hart adopted Arnstein’s ladder (discussed in Chapter 2) of citizen participation as a framework for exploring young people’s participation. This ladder involves three levels, with the lower representing “non-participation”, the middle level involving stages in which young people are being “consulted and informed”, while the highest involves stages in which “young people initiated and shared decisions with adults”. While this ladder was designed to aid an understanding of participation, it became a model for practice, or, in Hart’s own words, a ‘straitjacket’ for practice (Hart, 1997). The ladder came to be understood in

hierarchical terms and as progressive stages to a form of participation which enables adults to hand over power to young people (Thomas, 2007). Modifications of this ladder (see Franklin, 1997; Shier, 2001) imply power imbalance within participation and argue for more power for young people.

Often the discussion and use of these models is accompanied by a conception of power as ‘a zero-sum phenomenon’ where power is ‘in limited supply’ and someone gains it when someone else is giving it up (Kreisberg, 1999 in Wong et al., 2010). Kothari criticises similar tendencies within development practice, where binaries such as ‘North-South’ and ‘professional knowledge-local knowledge’ have framed the role of participation as one of reverting these oppositions (Kothari, 2001:140). Practices evolving within the local context, for example, are framed as being against the elite, the micro is understood as opposite to the macro and the powerless as being against the powerful (Ibid.). This is potentially problematic, as it emanates by assumption that the power lies solely amongst institutions, while those without power are in the peripheries and at a local level. Thus empowerment is to be achieved through strengthening the local knowledge of the marginal people.

Similarly, analyses of power dynamics within participatory spaces for young people based on ‘zero-sum’ conceptions construct young people as marginal and powerless, while adults, and especially youth workers, as holders of power. This way a binary of ‘youth-led’ and ‘adult-led’ emerges which assumes that adult involvement limits the ability of young people to express their opinions

independently and that genuine participation involves minimal or no adult involvement (Gallagher, 2008b). Consequently, empowerment through youth participation becomes a struggle for the acquisition of power, where young people are expected to become central in the management of projects and resources with minimal adult involvement.

In reality, the above approaches may represent a misleading idea of how young people participate in public life. Participation may be more dynamic, more complex, influenced by a variety of processes. Such approaches thus construct power on the basis of dichotomies and material accumulation and not as social discourse and embodied practice which is manifested through knowledge comprised by rituals, norms and practices (Kothari, 2001:141). A preoccupation with the 'how much' of power is to be restored to young people through participation, rather than with the forms of power and the range of the enabled activities, distracts critical engagement with issues of normative power, agenda setting, practices and the purposes of participation. Furthermore, focusing our observations on ideal outcomes diverts our attention from studying less 'ideal' forms of participation. The latter can reveal how the experience of structural inequalities might mediate the outcomes of involvement.

Treseder's (1997) modification of Hart's ladder reflects similar concerns (see appendix 3). Treseder removed the lower rungs of 'non-participation' from Hart's ladder and evened out the ladder into a circular design in order to highlight that different contexts and circumstances require different forms of

participation, which are all of equal value. While it disentangles itself from the ‘ideal’ or ‘youth-driven’ understandings of participation, this model does not retain an interest in the scope of participation and does not consider how youth status is mediated by social relations. In that way not all forms can assist young people to achieve a degree of influence over their environments if there is not an explicit consideration of how participation is linked to inequalities in society.

Thus a spatial approach allows this study to move beyond hierarchical understandings of processes within participation. A discussion of participation as rooted in both material and metaphoric space will shed some light on the socially embedded discourses and practices that constitute inclusion and empowerment in particular sites. Therefore, the question shifts onto the workings of power, and especially the range of activities it enables, the kind of facilitated agency and its aims, or, in other words, the multiple facets of participation.

3.1.1 The multiple facets of participation

A discussion of the power dynamics within spaces for participation brings up the different forms and aims (facets) which participation might aspire to achieve in the different contexts. Adopting a spatial perspective allows insights to spaces for participation as the products of socially and culturally embedded discourses, which interrelate with other domains of social experience and as such reflect existing social relations. Lefebvre (1991) conceptualises space as a domain of

social practices and social relationships, as a cultural space where values, rights and cultures are created:

Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information. Such 'objects' are thus not only things but also relations. (Lefebvre, 1991:77)

Social space is seen as a produced space, an outcome of past actions which allows some actions to occur and constrains others. Lefebvre argues that social relations are shaped within and through spaces, which in their turn reshape and reproduce existing social relations. Space is also constituted by social practices, in the sense that it is transformed and reproduced by the lives of the people that inhabit, experience, and use it in a habitual manner. For Lefebvre (1991:34), “space is sculpted by social action” which involves things often being done before being concretely conceptualised. In that way, social practices within spaces which might not yet have been articulated in a particular narrative can still inform us about the meaning that participation has in specific contexts. Practices are also revealed in priorities and political agendas as:

Space is social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure. (Lefebvre, 1991:94)

Therefore, practices and aesthetics of space, resources and budgets talk about relationships and agenda as they provide a window to the habitual; they talk of how processes are to evolve and of who is worthy of them (Knowles, 1999:252).

Discursive practices are essential in the production of relationships within social spaces, since they act as mechanisms which allow one to distinguish between what is ‘true’ and which procedures or individuals are perceived as telling the truth in given contexts (Foucault, 1980). Thus, discursively constructed truths within spaces can define the limits of what is to be included or excluded from them.

In this way, boundaries for participation are shaped by participation discourses and their mechanisms. This means that positioning within specific social spaces, agency and opportunities for inclusion are shaped according to the meaning with which participation is attributed within such spaces. Whether people are constructed/perceived as passive recipients, clients, users or citizens influences not only what they are expected to contribute or entitled to know, but also what kind of obligations bind those initiating participatory activities (Cornwall, 2002; Lister, 2002). Therefore, how we construct what is to be discussed, how involvement and decision are to occur and how we exclude whatever is not part of this construction frames opportunities or “fields of possibilities” (Hayward, 1998) within the spaces of participation.

Furthermore, on a practical level it is crucial to not only pay attention to the interplay between how participatory spaces come to be defined and perceived but also to how they are used. This includes issues of who initiates, determines the form which participation takes in any given space, chooses the methods or

techniques, facilitates, and finally who participates (Barnes et al., 2007; Cornwall, 2002).

Recent approaches to the participation of citizens explore the power dynamics in involvement, considering how spaces for engagement have been developed (Brock et al., 2001; Cornwall, 2002; 2004). They argue that it is important to distinguish and highlight the relationship between spaces that are created through invitations to participate and those that people have developed themselves (Cornwall, 2002; 2004; Gaventa, 2006) as well as those ‘closed spaces’ which are restricted to policy makers (Gaventa, 2006). Cornwall (2002; 2004;2008) distinguishes between ‘invited’ and ‘created’ spaces for participation. Invited spaces are often owned by the officials who initiated them and transferring ownership to participants is challenging. Claimed or created spaces, on the other hand, involve people with common interests rather than competing points of view and exhibit fewer differences regarding the status and power of participants.

As produced by social relations, spaces are not independent of what happens in other domains of association in everyday life (Lefebvre, 1991). Invited spaces for participation, for example, exist alongside other spaces shaped by other social actors. Participants themselves can be engaged in different spaces simultaneously. This perspective prompts us to make the links to other spaces with which participatory arenas interrelate. It also enables us to understand that

the places in which people are invited to participate or develop themselves are not neutral.

Understanding participation as a spatial practice draws attention to how production of space both creates and circumscribes possibilities for agency, in other words, the productive- reproductive possibilities of power. Thus participation, as embedded in different socio-political conditions, can take multiple meanings. The effects of the reproductive element of participation are obvious when, instead of bringing to light perspectives generated through bottom-up processes, it reproduces dominant discourses. Furthermore, spaces shaped by those who are most powerful might be discursively conditioned only to allow partial citizen involvement and influence through processes of selection and gate-keeping. Drawing from the field of Development studies, Cooke and Cothari (2001:7) strongly criticise these forms of participation as the “tyranny of decision-making and control”. Far from being radical, participation, they argue, has been developed in order to promote specific political agendas and antagonistic power relations, and, as such, participation becomes power to be resisted.

In such forms of participation, actors might be encouraged to enter participatory spaces but they might lack the skills to communicate, or the mediators, participation workers or representatives might “amplify the voice” (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007:13) and “purify the knowledge” (Kothari, 2001:146) of the

participants by overshadowing them when they employ their own interpretations or means of communication. Barnes et al. (2007) offer an example from UK public participation research, showing how youth workers attempted to frame young people's opinions into acceptable forms regarding their language and presentation. This resulted in the silencing of young people and in the creation of an oppositional discourse on the part of young people. Controlling processes, techniques, tools and funding and attempting to "produce the norm, the usual and the expected" (Kothari, 2001: 147), are all means by which professionals and projects confine modes of representation, develop knowledge truths and shape the information that is to be known about certain people's lives.

Invited spaces, as conceptualised by Cornwall, carry the potential of reproduction, as the possibilities for people to express their voices is restricted by the power relations that these externally produced spaces bring with them. For Mohanty (2007:76-94), created spaces have the potential of creating "empty spaces" for participation which, despite their name, are filled by members in local communities and have structures and procedures in place; however, they lack the potential for achieving political participation. In her example of women's representation in India, this potential was undermined by local power dynamics such as male control and public stereotyping about women's roles.

However, participants are not always passive recipients of policies: there is also the possibility of subversion, as participants "can also have enough power to

carve out spaces of control” (Kothari, 2001:150). This occurs when participants choose how to perform, how much information they share about themselves and their individual aims and even when they choose to discontinue participating. Moving thus towards the creative end of the spectrum, participatory approaches are seeking to disrupt the order of hierarchical institutions through the creation of new and different spaces within which different rules offer possibilities for frequently silenced actors to speak and be heard (Cornwall, 2002). The articulation of alternatives can be achieved by opening up participatory spaces which can redefine expertise, legitimise the knowledge claims by those at the receiving end of policies and reveal power relations (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2002:10-11). Instead of seeing power as something to be resisted, power is approached as something “that must be worked with” (Kesby, 2005:2039).

Authors who pinpoint the constructive potential of participation respond to claims that knowledge cannot be transferred from one space to the other, arguing that experience in participatory places can inspire behaviour in other arenas (Jones and SPEECH, 2001). Thus, according to Kesby (2005:2039), the project can act as a rehearsal for reality, where participants draw on the techniques of participation to explore reflective thinking and alternative interactions, while practices such as free speech, collaboration and equity can be practised. Within such spaces, people can trace connections, deconstruct norms and reflect on their action. Thus:

The discourses and practices circulating within and constituting the 'other spaces' of participation are the same one that constitute and facilitate the performance of empowered agency. (Kesby, 2005:2055)

For Barnes (2007:258), spaces for participation are contested ones as they include both tensions and dynamic potential. She suggests that the necessary conditions to promote such potential involve trained officials who can negotiate rather than silencing conflict. They also include valuing different discourses, negotiating the rules of the game and experimenting with new knowledge before the groups engage in dialogue with officials. For Cornwall and Coelho (2007:24-5), there are three challenges that need to be addressed in order for the spaces of participatory governance to enhance their democratic potential. These include: supporting processes through which marginalised groups can nurture new leaders and political agency; addressing exclusionary institutional practices; and clarifying the role of participatory institutions alongside other governance institutions.

3.1.2 Youth participation and space

Applying a spatial perspective to youth participation gives insights in relation to three points. Participation being the product of culturally and socially embedded discourses points to a necessity to assess how these discourses construct and control what is to be said and done within youth participation projects. Furthermore, highlighting the interconnections of participation with existing

social relations renders empowerment unachievable unless dominant discursive practices in society which reproduce hierarchical relations are challenged. This points to the importance of young people's experience of other domains of everyday life and its impact on the potential of participation to promote inclusive spaces. These insights challenge assumptions about the de facto inclusivity of spaces for participation and problematize how the structure of participation opportunities might shape fields of possibilities for young people. Flows identified regarding participatory practice in the previous part of this chapter fit well within discussions regarding the participation of young people.

Concerns within youth participation pinpoint the shift on top-down organisation and the privileging of specific forms of involvement over others, or in other words, control over what is about to be said and done and what is to be excluded from spaces for participation. More specifically, although social change and empowerment is often referred to as the main aim of youth participation, in reality young people are encouraged to take part in projects that mimic existing institutional practices (Thomas, 2007). For example, representative structures such as national and local youth councils, school councils and parliaments have become the prominent method of including young people. By reproducing practices characteristic of formal representative settings, participation becomes more appropriate for young people who understand the rules and possess the necessary skills to contribute to formally structured processes (Matthews 2001). For Matthews and Limb (2003:190), youth forums in their study were mimicking

adult political structures and mechanisms, and were thus “divorced from that world of experience to which young people are routinely connected”.

Similarly, for Cairns (2006), formal structures such as councils lead to young people behaving as mini-adults, are dominated by the most resourceful young people and fail to instigate long term changes. This is particularly important if we take into consideration the fact that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or disabled young people (Badham, 2004) may be discouraged from participating, as they may lack the necessary communication modes to engage in formal processes. Marsh et al. (2007: 131) showed that possession of social, economic or social capital affects access to participation and willingness to get involved in structured politics. These criticisms bring into the fore one of the major limitations of formal participatory practices which, while they intend to create more inclusive spaces, do so by excluding different discourses and individuals who do not fit well to norms of inclusivity (Cornwall, 2004; Barnes et al., 2007). Such forms of participation, Cleaver (2001:37) argues, are unable to support greater levels of empowerment as they appear to have lost their “radical and transformatory edge”, while empowerment itself is presented in a “depoliticised” manner.

Adopting a perspective which argues that relationships in participatory spaces reflect relationships in the rest of society shifts the analytical focus onto the form and the degree of participation young people are expected to demonstrate

in particular contexts, and onto the readiness of this context to accept and recognise a more participatory role and involvement in decision making for youth. This highlights informal cultures of exclusion and pinpoints the idea that spaces can have a role if attitudinal change is achieved at both cultural and individual level (Ghallager, 2006). This argument poses a challenge for participation to break through existing structures of inequality in order to incorporate excluded discourses. Exclusionary discourses need to be resisted by achieving institutional change, both through functions of participation spaces themselves and by spreading/promoting the value of participation in society.

Tisdall et al. (2008:350) suggest that to avoid technical rational approaches to participation we need to enable discursive spaces where young people and adults work through what participation and inclusion mean in local contexts (see also Cockburn, 2002; Moss and Petrie, 2002). For Knowles (1999:250) such social space is a domain of social practices and relationships, a cultural space where values, rights and cultures are created. It is also a discursive space for differing perspectives and forms of expression, where there is room for dialogue, confrontation, deliberation and critical thinking, and where youth and others can speak and be heard. But relationships outside participatory spaces are important too. Understandings developed within spaces need to become popular within communities; otherwise:

Participatory projects will simply produce temporary carnivalesque arenas that allow yet contain a 'ritual of rebellion' against prevailing frameworks. (Kesby, 2005:2058-9)

The above suggestions, however, reproduce a common assumption within participatory literature that spaces for participation are not only open to all young people but also that those involved in these spaces will work towards the empowerment of all young people as a social group. The belief that opening spaces for participation is sufficient to promote the empowerment of youth as a social group neglects the effect of hierarchical social relations as expressed through the different opportunities young people have to develop their identities. This highlights the second point regarding the need to recognise the diversity of young people's experience. Hine (2009:34) criticises existing policy for youth as unable to understand young people's complex identities and social standings:

[Policy] tends to function on the basis of identifying young people as belonging to a specific category and deal with them within those categories or boxes ... These boxes tend to be dualistic and separate young people in ways that do not match the real world, for example they are an offender or they are a victim ... they are in need of protection or not.

This signifies an adult perspective and interpretation of how the lives of young people unfold and of what the role of participation might be. Barnes (1999) suggests that there is a need for more debate about the goals, nature and effects

of widening the participation of all citizens within a representative democracy. To further this suggestion in regard to youth participation, there is the need to look at ways to involve young people's perspectives. This therefore, directs attention to a form of participation that is not just about facilitating young people's agency but also allows them to present their own perspectives and emphasises the interplay of the personal and the structural in their lived experience. Consequently, participation needs a focus not only on how to support young people to raise their 'voice(s)' but also on how to ensure that this 'voice' or 'voices' affect institutional change (Lundy, 2007). In regard to this, Matthews and Limb (2003) suggest developing the repertoire of participation into forms of engagement which are rooted in everyday life and challenge adult structures.

The dual focus suggested in these last accounts seeks to create an impact that brings together personal and collective empowerment in order to promote systemic changes. For Hart (2008:416), "it may be time, therefore, to reflect more deeply and thoroughly on the relationship between participatory initiatives and wider social change". Such a focus, though, raises questions regarding the role of young people as social actors as well as those regarding how young people may wish to use these spaces. The following section will discuss approaches to young people as social actors and the insights such approaches open up regarding the use of participatory spaces.

3.2 Young people as social agents

The above discussion has shown that participation unfolds within shifting terrains characterised by the interplay of significant power relations, and as such it can take many facets. It was also discussed that participants themselves are not passive recipients of policies, but still maintain the possibility of choice and resistance. This acknowledgement shifts attention to how young people may engage with and within spaces for participation.

To achieve different entry points into the operations of participation, this chapter has drawn from the tools offered from three theoretical approaches to social action. A combination of these theoretical tools was necessary in order to accommodate for the variety of processes, actors and agendas involved in participatory processes. More specifically, it draws from theoretical tools which aim to explain how social actors are discursively constructed and determined by power relations (Foucault, 1980), how power-produced dispositions affect choices for action (Bourdieu, 1990a; 1990b; 1992) and, finally, how social actors extend their agency in order to develop reflexivity and manoeuvrability in regard to the effects of power in their contexts (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). These approaches give an insight into the different ways that the interplay of context and agency occurs and to the variety of dispositions and outcomes involved in the use of spaces for participation.

3.2.1 Discursively constructed social actors within fields of possibilities

Structuralist writers criticised a focus on the individual which stems both from Rational Choice Theory and a Functionalist interpretation of agents as rational individuals, capable of transcending personal interest in order to act for the common good, because it overlooks the effect of socio-cultural resources in the reproduction of inequalities.

For Foucault (1980), the way an individual comes to experience the world is a result of behaving in certain ways, being categorised in certain ways, and being dealt with in certain ways. Becoming a subject means coming to hold certain things as true about oneself, saying certain things about oneself, and intentionally acting in certain ways. For Foucault, the subject is mostly a product of an “obligation” to seek and state the truth about oneself (1980) through a process of “learning” what one is by internalising power-produced truths and “acting as one should”, to conform to what is learned about oneself (Prado, 2000:80).

In this way the subject arises as an effect of power/knowledge in the sense that it is knowledge that authorises the exercise of constraint, and authorised constraint, in its turn, enhances power relations. The subject is the result of the internal and external constraints of regimes of power. The external controls exclude certain identities by defining desires as unacceptable; the internal controls operate through technologies of the self, according to which individuals construct themselves in agreement to the ruling configurations of power/knowledge (Bevir, 1999).

Therefore, power as the “conduct of conducts and the management of possibilities” (Foucault, 1980:341) may enable a range of options and it may inhibit other options. It is for this reason that it should not be thought that power provides subjects with free choices; it rather shapes and defines individuals or, as Foucault describes it, acts through the provision of a “field of possibilities” in which behaviour is inscribed (Ibid.).

Drawing from the above understanding of power, Rose (2000) argues that in advanced liberal democracies, young people’s ability to become social actors is determined by “technologies of prudentialism” as they are expressed through specific technologies such as language and knowledge that produce the truth on youth. Within the technologies of governance, young people, their families, organisations and communities are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves, which includes responsibility for their behaviour –especially avoiding criminal activity - their families and the security of their properties. In order to do this, individuals should not look for the support of public institutions, but should educate themselves, seek expert assistance and become active in engaging in partnerships.

Therefore young people are expected to activate their own commitments, energies and choices, to manage their own risk, exercise responsible self-government and to attach themselves to a moral community (Ibid: 327-331). In that way, young people’s decision to engage within their communities is not seen as the decision of

free agents, but rather as a mechanism to regulate and normalise individual behaviour at a distance through a discourse of empowerment. Inability or lack of willingness on the part of young people to do so results in punishments, as citizenship depends upon individual conduct and not rights.

Focusing on the way social subjects are produced within the operation of power relations gives a significant insight into the way fields of possibilities for young people are constructed; at the same time, though, an analysis of how subjects decide to act within these fields is still missing. Thus, while the theoretical tools offered by Foucault have a valuable explanatory power when it comes to exploring the types of knowledge that construct the truths about the form and purposes of young people's participation, important questions such as: "why do agents engage in specific struggles rather than others?" or "how do young people engage in one type of relationships rather than others?" remain yet to be answered. More specifically, these theoretical tools help to explore how individuals are positioned in this field of possibilities and are included or excluded by its discourses and thus explain "why those in power have on occasion seen young people as empty vessels waiting to be filled with ideologies" (Jones, 2009:34).

However, if young people are so determined by regimes of truth, and their action is defined within fields of possibilities, how is it then that some young people choose to identify with particular projects rather than others? Furthermore, if we accept that power operates on many levels, then young people can be simultaneously the

effects and producers of power relations, an acknowledgment which locates them in a more active social position. Foucault himself agrees, when he highlights both the productive and the reproductive aspects of power, that making truth claims involves endorsing a discourse and resisting another (McNay, 1994; Gutting, 2003) Despite these criticisms, a Foucauldian perspective is important in this study as it allows us to explore the interplay of power relations as it is exemplified in the ways young people are constructed as participants within policies and spaces of participation, and the possibilities to transform these relations.

3.2.2 Habitus and social world: like fish in water

From a Bourdieuan perspective, the above questions regarding the ways in which social actors engage in particular projects can be answered through an exploration of the interplay of agency and structure and its effects on people's possibilities for social action, rather than through merely focusing on the effects of power. Although discourse has a significant role in constructing the habitual, it is of "limited use" on its own, as it is important when "contextualised by practical intervention, actions and behaviour" (Knowles, 1999:247). The analytical challenge becomes, thus, to put people's action into the centre of attention and explore how they understand themselves as social actors and how they use existing resources. Bourdieu, similarly to Lefebvre in his discussion of spaces, shifts our attention to everyday life, the habitual and the taken for granted (Hayward, 2000).

Drawing from a reading of power as culturally and symbolically created, Bourdieu locates decision making and social action within individual embodied dispositions, values and rules (habitus) which are acquired through a process of socialisation. The dispositions which comprise habitus are acquired through “impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions” (Bourdieu, 1990a:54) within different formative contexts such as family, social class systems and education, with the latter providing the significant dispositions comprising a “cultured habitus”. (Bourdieu, 1967:344 cited in Reay, 2004)

For Bourdieu, individuals operate within specific fields which have their own logics and rules; at the same time decisions are made on the basis of motive, goals and values acquired through habitus and of which an individual may be unaware. Therefore, individuals are able to participate in these fields in terms of their background or the capitals they possess. According to this idea, participation in public matters depends on habitus and is more likely to occur among those who possess more capital, or the middle classes, which have the adequate cultural capital for effective involvement. Habitus is governed not by rational action but by what Bourdieu calls the ‘feel for the game’, which involves habitus with its unconscious dispositions and values emerging when a choice is to be made or a decision to be taken:

When habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a ‘fish in water’: it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127)

Therefore it is the interaction of habitus, field and cultural capital that gives rise to the logic of practice. This interaction involves:

On one side, it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of the field (or intersecting fields, the extent of their intersection being at the root of a divided or even torn habitus). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction. habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value, in which it is worth investing one's energy. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127)

Thus choices in Bourdieu's work are restricted within the remits of opportunities and constraints that a person encounters in their interaction with external reality; at the same time, though, it is recognised that choices are also produced by an "internalised framework which makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable" (Reay, 2004:435). Social reality unfolds both "in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside social agents" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127). Practice is highly contextual, as it is informed from understandings of power, politics and self-interest (Webb et al., 2002:38) and people's perception of control in relation to structures. Thus, choices are defined by people's judgment of opportunities and constraints, and especially their assessment regarding access to resources, in order to achieve their aims. So participation is not organised around what is desired for the future, but

mostly around available resources and structures, as well as individual assessments about possible choices.

Bourdieu's theoretical tool of habitus has been criticised as being deterministic (Reay, 2004). In relation to public involvement, it is seen as restricted in exploring enduring oppositional social movements, since it sees activism as arising only in times of conflict (Crossley, 2003), as overplaying the unconscious aspect of human action (Sayer, 2005) and as neglecting the importance of inner conversations in human agency (Sayer, 2004; Archer, 2003). Furthermore, current critiques include calls for the need to include the more positive aspects of practice in the concept of agency (Crossley, 1999) and "dialogues with oneself" (Crossley, 2001).

Despite these criticisms, Bourdieu's theory of habitus is important in this study in two ways. Firstly, it shows that solely opening spaces of participation is not an adequate condition for empowerment, as they cannot automatically neutralise or overrule the values, dispositions and social histories that individual actors bring with them. People have different "starting positions with respect to resources and power" (Danermark et al., 2002:26) and thus not all of them will use participation spaces in the same way. Secondly, Bourdieu's theory challenges the communicative claims put forward by the proponents of deliberative spaces, which argue that by altering the communicative standards people will gain more control within participation and processes of democratisation (Hayward, 2000). In relation to spaces for participation, the habitus appears in the skills people carry with them,

the ways they speak, dress and communicate and master the rules of the game, and can reinforce hierarchies. Thus, perception of choices /opportunities within participation and decisions for involvement can be impacted by judgements regarding the capitals required to develop mastery of the rules in given participatory contexts.

3.2.3 Connecting agentially with structuring environments

Emirbayer and Mische (1998:964), responding to the above criticisms and drawing on symbolic interactionism, develop Bourdieu's concepts in order to turn our attention to the different aspects of human agency as they are expressed through "inventiveness, manoeuvrability and reflective choice" shown by social actors in relation to the "constraining and enabling contexts of action". Their approach to exploring agency resonates with Archer's (1998) argument which criticises a tendency to see structure as strictly entangled with practice. This tendency renders impossible the exploration of the interplay between agency and structure since their "constituent components cannot be examined separately" (Ibid:77). Therefore, they argue, contexts support and shape agency "and are (re)shaped by it in turn" (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:1004). This 'double constitution of agency and structure' means that agency and structure support and give rise to one another, but are never so intertwined, which allows for their constituent elements to be separately and independently explored.

In order to gain an insight into the interaction of structure and agency, it is necessary to discuss agency with its different dimensions/constituent elements and to consider its temporal and relational manifestations. Agency is understood as inherently both social and relational as it evolves through social actors which orientate their social engagement within particular contexts. This means that agency is always “agency toward something, by means of which actors enter into relationship with surrounding persons, places, meanings, and events” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:973). Agency is also relational and social, as it involves actual interaction: an ‘ongoing conversation’ within contexts which are collectively organised. Furthermore, agency is temporal, since social action can only be captured, explored and analysed when it is situated within particular time flows/passages. Thus agency is defined as a:

temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented towards the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment. (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:963)

Exploring the relationship between agency and structures involves an understanding of social action as engagement by actors in particular, and temporally structured environments as something which: “through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgement, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems by changing historical situations” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:970). Accordingly, human agency can be analysed in terms of its constituent elements or ‘chordal triad of agency’, namely iteration,

practical-evaluation and projectivity, which correspond to the temporal orientations of past, future, present.

The iterational element of agency describes instances when social actors selectively retrieve past patterns of thought and action which have been incorporated into daily practice as a matter of routine. The language used to describe the iterative element, such as dispositions, habit, patterns and schemas, in a similar way to Bourdieu's theory of practice, often seems to imply structure rather than agency. Despite a recognition that such a dimension of human action is based on routinised activities which constantly recur within structures, the authors draw on Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) to highlight that the notion of habit can be understood as both active and creative in its relation to the world. Thus the iterative, while it carries a potential for reproduction, at the same time offers the opportunity for "manoeuvre among repertoires", as it involves a process of selection among "practical repertoires of habitual activity" (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:980). Thus, even less flexible processes involve selective attention, recognition of typical patterns of experience and categorisation (Ibid.: 979-80).

For Emirbayer and Mische (1998:983-4), Bourdieu's perspective, by selectively focusing on habitus, accounts only partially for human agency and exhibits low consideration of reflectivity. Social actors do not merely repeat past habits, but they are able to be producers of new dimensions of thought and action. Habitus is only one aspect of human agency, and restricting the analysis to the iterational and

habitual means losing sight of the projective dimension of human agency. The projective element of human agency consists in agents' ability to imaginatively generate "future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future" (Ibid.:971). Thus, projectivity consists of the capacity to distance oneself from one's experience, to generate alternative schemas and to "construct changing images of where they think they are going, where they want to go, and how they can get there from where they are at present" (Ibid.:984). Projectivity involves identifying future possibilities of action, constructing narratives around these possibilities, proposing solutions to issues arising from people's lived experiences and possibly exploring and experimenting on these solutions (Ibid.:990).

Emirbayer and Mische (1998:985) are very careful in highlighting that projectivity does not always produce "morally superior or desirable engagements" with given issues, as it can also produce reproductive or even destructive responses. The importance of projectivity lies not in future outcomes but in its effect on people's choices when issues arise at present; in highlighting that the socio-cultural ways in which "people imagine, talk about, negotiate, and make commitments to their futures influence their degree of freedom and manoeuvrability in relation to existing structures" (Ibid.).

The above habitual dispositions (the iterative) must be understood within the changing circumstances of experience and the imagined futures (the projective) and they both need to be anchored in present experience. This leads to the third member of the chordal triad of agency, the practical-evaluative. Practical-evaluative dimensions of agency consist in actors' capacity to contextualise habitus within the requirements of emerging situations at present and make judgements among possible trajectories. Practical evaluation evolves through problematisation, contextualised judgement, and deliberation on the basis of past experiences and future aspirations in order to meet present demands (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:996-999). What distinguishes the practical -evaluative aspect from the iterative is its communicative character. While the iterative is routinised, the communicative character of the practical-evaluative enables actors to deliberate with others and make informed decisions through contextualising experience, problematising a situation, responding to this situation in both cognitive and emotional ways, deciding how to best deliberate and choosing a course of action.

Social actors' capacity to make judgements in both cognitive and emotional ways resonates with what Sayer (2009; 2010) calls the ethical dimension of everyday life. Sayer (2009:2) introduces another perspective in the exercise of agency which involves recognising the importance of feelings and "a focus on emotions as intelligent responses to objective circumstances". For Sayer (2009; 2010), Bourdieu's work recognises how people value themselves and other people, but it still needs adjustment in order to include an account of emotions as a "response to and commentaries on our situations" (Sayer, 2009:7). He further argues that

individuals should not only be seen as able to exercise mastery of specific actions, but also as carrying ethical and political concerns “which derive from living within the particular social relations and practices available to them in their part of the social field” (Ibid.:2).

The above agentic orientations, with their particular focus on routine, purpose or judgement, appear in varying degrees in every social action, and they all constitute equal parts of human agency. Equating one or another with agency can obscure the dynamic interplay between these elements, and we can then lose sight of how this interplay relates to different social structures (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 963).

By making a distinction between agency, action and structure, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) avoid falling into the trap of using agency as “a temporally embedded process” and as “referring to the individual as an element of this process”, or using “agency both as explanans and explanandum” (Biesta and Tedder, 2006:16). This means that social action as a synthesis is constituted and conditioned by both temporal and relational contexts and by the above described dynamic elements of agency itself (Emirabayer and Mische, 1998). Therefore, to return to the initial question of whether young people can act as independent social actors, this approach suggests that there are no “concrete social agents but social actors who connect agentially with their structuring environments” (Ibid.:1004). In this sense, social action is never absolutely socially structured; in addition, human agency is never absolutely independent from structures.

The empirical challenge that arises from such a conceptualisation of social action for social sciences is then to explore particular agentic orientations and draw links with the particular structuring contexts of action (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:1005). More specifically, this opens up the opportunity to explore how power relations in the form of institutions and social practices exert a differential impact on social actors' ability to achieve specific configurations of agentic orientations which will allow them to "shape the conditions of their collective existence" (Hayward, 2000:39). Thus an exploration of agentic orientations allows to explore actors' political freedom or the "social capacity to act, alone or with others, upon boundaries that shapes one's fields of action" (Ibid: 8) as well as to explore actors' "degrees of manoeuvrability, inventiveness, and reflective choice" (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 964) shown in regard to enabling/disabling structures.

Exploring, thus, young people's participation in line with the above involves understanding the interplay between contexts and the different kinds of agentic processes as it is manifested within spaces for participation. This allows us to understand "at what level and to what end" (Connor, 2011:ii06) young people express their orientations and how these relate to contexts of action.

This resonates with calls within studies of youth political expression to understand participation as part of lived experience. In discussing youth political behaviour, Marsh et al. (2007) argue for an approach that sees politics and citizenship as lived

experience, as part of young people's everyday life experience. This call brings attention to similar calls within the politics literature for a wider understanding of the political which goes beyond young people's interactions with official participatory mechanisms. This approach has given rise to explorations of the ways in which young people use existing opportunities for participation, and express their political beliefs, which in the context of this study can be approached as examples of the different configurations of agentic orientations.

3.3 Young people's socio-political expressions

There is a body of literature which, often following theories of individualisation and network governance, rejects claims of youth apathy and asserts that young people's involvement is shifting away from traditional and hierarchical forms of involvement into developing new forms of engagement and citizenship (Vromen, 2003). These new forms of involvement, according to this perspective, cannot be understood through old models of studying political expression, such as Turner's (1990) model of active and passive citizenship, within which participation is described as either state related and passive or society-led and thus active. Norris (2003) suggests that there is a shift towards networks and a diversification of agencies through which people can participate, while political action has been re-evolved through:

*(the) agencies (the collective organisation structuring political activity),
the repertoires (the actions commonly used for political expression), and*

the targets (the political actors that participants seek to influence).

(Norris,2003:1-2)

In her comparative study of young people's activism in fifteen European countries (Including both the UK and Greece) published in 2003, Norris concludes that young people are more likely to get involved in 'cause-orientated' political repertoires, such as petitioning, consumer boycotts and demonstrations rather than in 'citizen orientated' acts, such as elections. Similarly to Norris, Bennett (2007) accepts that there is a shift towards more reflective forms of participation. Instead of focusing on projects he focuses on how the political expression of young people differs from that of older generations by employing a binary distinction between dutiful citizens and self-actualising citizens. Dutiful citizens are involved in traditional politics such as political parties, voting and other government activities. This type of activity, Bennett argues, is more associated with older people. Younger people are more associated with the self-actualizing citizen seeing "political activities and commitments in highly personal terms that contribute to enhancing the quality of personal life...than to understanding, support, and involvement in government"(Bennett, 2007:62).

Bang (2005) challenges approaches which see citizen participation as developing around influencing public decision making. He rather observed an increase of micro-political participation in liberal democracies. According to Bang, whose theory is situated within the theories explaining the shifts regarding network governance, young people have responded to changes in late modernity in innovative ways, and instead of being apathetic they developed more reflexive and

diverse modes of getting involved. Rather on putting pressure on the state, citizens in his research are focused on developing networks within the two emerging identities of ‘expert citizen’ and ‘everyday maker’. Both expert citizens and everyday makers are project-orientated; while they are informed about politics they are more interested in developing their own capacity for self-governance.

Expert citizens possess the expertise to exercise influence in elite networks such as knowledge, strategic skills, ability to interact with politicians and officials, negotiating, building networks and the ability to influence others. Although they recognise that the antagonism between society and the political has not vanished, the expert citizens, in contrast to the activists of the past, do not oppose the system, but instead explore opportunities to develop partnerships and access to bargaining processes with public authorities, politicians, interest groups, media and experts from both private and voluntary sector (Bang, 2005:165). Table 5 summarizes expert citizen’s credos.

Table 5-Expert Citizens credos:

- A wide conception of the political as a discursive construct
- Adopting a full-time, overlapping project identity as one’s overall lifestyle
- Possessing the necessary expertise for exercising influence in cooperation with other elites
- Placing negotiation and dialogue before antagonism and opposition
- Considering oneself a part of ‘the system’ rather than external to it

Source: Bang, H. (2005), p 16

Everyday makers like being involved in activities at a local level; they are motivated by their interests rather than duty. While they keep themselves informed about politics, they do not want to get involved in politics or want to shape/alter others' identities. Their identity stems mostly from being able to construct networks in their local communities rather than being citizens. Instead of being concerned with 'big' politics, everyday makers consciously attempt through their action to bring together the personal and pleasurable with the political. Table 6 summarises everyday makers' maxims.

Table 6-Maxims of everyday making:

- Do it yourself
- Do it where you are
- Do it for fun, but also because you find it necessary
- Do it ad hoc or part time
- Do it concretely, instead of ideologically
- Do it self-confidently and show trust in yourself
- Do it with the system, if need be

Source: Bang, H. (2005), p 169

While expert citizens “express a demoelitist ethos in which the key meta-narrative of democracy is the need to rationalise, and gain legitimacy for the discourse of the experts who control complex negotiated democracy” (Marsh et al., 2007:50), everyday makers adopt a different stance which asserts that the everyday life experience and lay knowledge embodied in their activities is equally valuable (Bang, 2005; Marsh et al., 2007).

Although the above approaches to the political expression of youth allow for bottom up perceptions of the political to rise, they still homogenise young people and employ a conception of agency which is constructed as independent to structures. Through their ethnographic work with young global justice activists (in Europe, Mexico and the United States) and within an effort to explore structural effects, Juris and Pleyers (2009) identify a new form of political praxis among youth which they call 'alter-activism'. This form of social action is highly globalised, networked and deeply shaped by new technologies. Alter-activists are critical of institutional actors and the traditional Left with their hierarchical organisation; they instead argue for the value of horizontal coordination, direct democracy and flexible involvement:

... alter-activists are committed to an ethic of openness, local-global networking, and organising across diversity and difference. Alter-activists participate in broader global justice events, including regional and world social forums, but they do so by keeping 'one foot in, and one foot out', maintaining a critical attitude toward internal hierarchies and non-democratic practices. (Juris and Pleyers, 2009:63)

For these authors, alter-activism is both an emerging political culture and a youth culture characterised by an emphasis on creative forms of action, process and experimentation (Ibid.). Seeing alter-activism as political culture involves working in a shared way for social change, while seeing it as youth culture involves a shared way of experiencing the world, shaping identities, lifestyles and communicating with others. In this way, culture, class, race, locality, gender and race still remain

important factors which determine social divisions and the experience of the world. Therefore, social change for alter-activists is achieved both through a global vision and quotidian practice and local self-management (Juris and Pleyers, 2009:63). In contrast to other models which remain descriptive, alter-activism questions the aim of practice, which is discussed in terms of integration and social change. In this work, young activists are represented as political actors and active cultural producers, while alter-activism is approached as an emerging global culture of participation.

The above approaches are important for this study as they provide testimony to the different ways in which young people are currently expressing their agency. Although they do not always aim to illustrate agentic orientations as they have been discussed in this chapter, and do not explicitly address structural issues (with the exception of Juris and Pleyers (2009)), they still give an insight into the variety of potential ways in which young people might wish to either use existing opportunities or develop innovative forms of involvement.

3.4. Establishing the Research Questions

An understanding of youth projects as spaces for participation reveals that participation is an ever changing terrain comprised of the interplay of different priorities, conceptualisations, relations and even competing agendas, and thus highlights the different possibilities (facets) involved in their operation. Despite

participatory claims that spaces for participation can offset power inequalities, a conversation of social action reveals that action within spaces themselves is not divorced from, but is rather dynamically influenced by, power relations and the dispositions that individuals bring with them. Therefore, the ability of deliberative spaces to achieve empowerment depends upon a recognition of the different social histories and power relations at play in particular contexts.

Acknowledgment of the above allows a critical engagement with the issues regarding participation, an ability to assess both its advantages and disadvantages and a focus on ways of extending its transformatory potential. To achieve different entry points into the operations of participation, this chapter has drawn from various theoretical tools, a combination of which was necessary in order to gain multiple entry points into the variety of agendas and actors involved in participation processes.

A Foucauldian approach to the discursive constitution of youth and spaces of participation allows an insight to the discourses, expertise-derived practices and structures of participation which construct the subject of youth participation and set the boundaries of what is to be achieved within spaces for participation. Bourdieu's approach gives an insight into how the habitual and the taken for granted can affect processes and often undermine claims of empowerment through participation. Breaking down agency into its constituent parts and highlighting its contextual and relational character (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) adds an insight into the different

ways in which young people might engage with the discursive constructions of participation, make use of their dispositions and may seek to extend their repertoire beyond the habitual. Such an approach resonates with both a ‘cultural turn’ (Clarke, 2004; Lister, 2010) within social sciences, which is interested in exploring discursive constructions, and a more recent ‘affectual turn’, which is considering the “expressive, contextual and processual” nature of social experience (Taylor, 2011:782).

Understanding young people as social actors within participatory spaces involves acknowledging the different ways in which dimensions of agency intertwine (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) with diverse types of social structures. It involves considering the patterns of interaction occurring within spaces, their scope and how these relate to historical change, different institutional structures and shifting modes of communication. Spaces for participation can then be approached as the meeting ground where particular social histories and policy agendas interact in order to produce context-specific configurations of agentic orientations.

As a result, the above discussion leads to the research questions:

1. How are young people constructed as participants within national policies for youth participation?

- How are young people seen in policies?
- What type of citizenship is promoted?
- What type of participation is sought after?

2. How did the participants experience processes of participation within the explored spaces?

- What norms, practices and processes were involved in the participation implemented in the explored spaces?
- What configurations of agentic orientations were more prominent in the spaces of this study?
- How did processes and agentic orientations in the explored spaces relate to policy initiatives?
- How did the norms and practices involved in the processes within the explored spaces for participation frame the ability of these spaces to deliver empowerment?

3. How did the participants conceptualise participation?

- How did the participants define the scope of their participation?
- How did the participants link their involvement to their lived experience?
- How did the participants speak about the change they aspired to bring about and the resources they used to this end?
- How did the participants manifest their agency through their involvement?

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a link between the aims of the study, the research questions established in Chapter 3, and the research design. The discussion provided in Chapter 3 has already indicated that an understanding of young people's participation lies within an exploration of the dialectical relation between individual histories and the contexts which affect such histories. This chapter will initially build further on this discussion in order to provide the ontological positions of this study and the rationale which underlies the selected research design. This chapter will also discuss methodology, data collection and interpretation processes.

4.1 Making sense of and acting upon the world

Exploring engagement within processes of participation poses challenges in regard to where the focus of the investigation lies. This involves questions as to whether the impact of structures or the experiences of young people are given priority. It also raises questions about whether it is possible to make a line of demarcation between young people as social actors and social structures. For this reason, this section explores the dialectical relation between the ways in which people make sense of their world (the ideational) and the available opportunities which define

social action (the material). This discussion establishes the ontological positions of this study, which lead to the choice of the particular research design. This section argues that as it is not feasible to delineate a clear boundary between the action of social actors and the impact of social structures: an ontological model is necessary which sees young people as dialectically related to their contexts. In doing so it draws from social constructionism and incorporates Hay's (2002) discussion of the interplay between the material and the ideational. Recognising the interface between the material (structures) and the ideational (meaning-making) means accepting both that we cannot understand social change without understanding individual meaning-making, and that individual dispositions emerge within specific relational and temporal contexts (Ibid.).

Regarding the first part of this dialectical relationship: we cannot understand social and political behaviour without understanding the ideas actors hold about the domains they inhabit. Social constructionism suggests that, although the context of our thoughts is provided by wider social concepts and values, we do not simply absorb them uncomplicatedly and live them out in our lives (Burr, 1996:87). Access to the context is mediated discursively, as actors select their strategies on the basis of the understanding they have of their context. Hay (2002:209-10) suggests that the "ideas provide the point of mediation between actors and their environment". Therefore, social inquiry needs to explore the frames of reference through which social actors understand their contexts and negotiate their actions.

Social construction incorporates an interpretivist position in arguing that there are “no permanent criteria for establishing whether knowledge can be regarded as true” (Blaikie 2007:230). Based on the foundations of hermeneutics and phenomenology, interpretivism argues that the basis of social inquiry is social actors’ interpretation of the social world (Ibid.). Rather than aiming to investigate the ‘truth’, interpretivism seeks to understand the social world as it is constructed by people and reproduced through their actions. This is sustained by a belief that “understanding is a mode of being rather than mode of knowledge” (Heidegger, cited in Blaikie 2007:123). People are constantly involved in interpreting and reinterpreting social situations, other people’s actions, their own actions and natural and humanly created objects. They develop meanings for their activities together and they have ideas about what is relevant for making sense of these activities. In short, social worlds are already interpreted before social scientists arrive (Blaikie 2007:124).

An interest, though, in how people construct meaning does not need to deny the existence of structures. Macro (Burr, 1996) or weak (Sayer, 1997; Danemark et al., 2002) forms of social construction maintain an interest in contextualising meanings and actions. Thus social constructionism focuses on processes through which collective agreement is achieved about the value which is to be placed on structures (Schwandt, 1998; Lister, 2010). This leads to the other part of the dialectical relation: the material. Developing a critique of the debates in contemporary politics, Hay (2002) suggests a move beyond a dichotomy of the material and the ideational to a discussion of their interface. By being interested in the role of

institutional structures and divisions of power, constructivist positions (including social constructionism and versions of critical realism) aim to account for the conditions that give rise to interpretations and individual meaning making. This is because understanding discursive constructions is not sufficient for gaining insights into people's dispositions, because, for understandings to shape behaviour, they need to gain some significance within the context in which experience unfolds (Hay, 2002). For particular ideas, narratives and paradigms to continue to provide cognitive templates through which actors interpret the world, they must retain a certain resonance with those actors' direct and mediated experiences. The context imposes a 'discursive selectivity', selecting for and selecting against particular ideas, narratives and constructions (Ibid: 213-4).

Thus Hay (2002:208) concludes, it is important to neither reduce the ideational to a reflection of the material nor attribute the political to individual interests and motivations of social actors, but rather to recognise their interaction. Consequently, youth participation could be approached as neither a reflection of young people's intentions and understandings, nor as the mere impact of the contexts which give rise to these understandings, but as a product of an on-going interaction of contexts and individuals. Furthermore, spaces for youth participation can be seen as arenas within which this interaction is played out and produces different participatory processes.

Such an approach informs the research focus in this study which, rather than seeing participation as a possession or a stage at which individuals have arrived, explores it as a process through which individuals make meanings of and explore different ways of acting upon their world. This means that exploring experience in participation involves giving priority to the knowledge young people have about their world, and at the same time exploring the impact of social conditions as they arise through the individual narratives and through policy language which aims to generate specific meanings. The following sections will discuss how this focus leads to the specific research design.

4.2 Making sense of and acting upon the world: Research design

A discussion of the dialectical relationship between material and ideational aspects of human experience informs the research design, which involves an interpretive interactionist research method (Denzin, 2001). This is supported by the aim of the research in exploring processes within participation, which incorporates how young people conceptualise, practise and experience involvement within spaces for participation.

Interpretive interactionism looks at the interrelationship between private lives and public responses to individual issues (Denzin, 2001:2). Interpretive interactionism joins together traditional symbolic interactionism with critical forms of interpretive

inquiry. While interpretive interactionism emanates from the individual biography, from “those life experiences that radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their life projects” (Denzin, 2001:1), its focus expands beyond individual meaning-making to speak about the interrelationship between private lives and public responses (Ibid.:2) . The aim of interpretive interactionism is to produce meaningful descriptions and interpretations of social processes (Ibid.:43). This involves both producing rich accounts of individual knowledge, practices and strategies (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:335) and grounding such knowledge and practice in people’s lived experience (Denzin, 2001:42).

Everyday life experience includes processes through which individuals constantly interpret and make judgements about their own experience, and about others. However, not all meaning making occurs on the same basis, as some individuals use their own interpretations to design services for others which might not fit the meanings of those they are meant to serve. Thus the aim of interpretive research is to locate the different assumptions held by the different parts involved in a wider policy area and assess similarities and differences.

According to Denzin (2001:47) “a critical understanding and interpretation of everyday life must consider the gendered, situated, structural, and practical features of that world”. In practice this involves utilising multiple case studies to collect thick descriptions of both personal experiences and the plurality of interpretations around participation. Such an aim includes a process through which individual

biographies are explored for personal values, motivations, experiences and moments of epiphany which connect with decision making relevant to strategies of involvement. Locating life experiences in specific contexts is the second step in an effort to interpret particular meaning-making. As such, existing definitions of participation are identified from both the participants, through interviewing, and policy, through policy documentation. This allows the researcher to recognise the “moral biases” which structure such definitions and to locate “competing modes of truth” (Ibid).

A focus on participants’ experience and revision of policy documentation cannot be claimed to be a sufficient condition to provide direct access to the effects of the material on participants’ lives. Highlighting the interrelation between the material and ideational, the individual and the structural, involves interpreting participants’ interpretations of their experiences and maintaining a focus on how the material appears in these accounts. Documentation of existing programmes serves as a complementary aid which reveals the origin of individual meaning-making, but in no way can it be claimed to give a full account of how structures constrain or enable the lives of young people. Young people’s lives unfold in different domains that a study of participation might not cover. Thus the aim of this study is not framed around exploring which factors enable or constrain individuals. Neither it is solely concerned with how individuals make meaning, but rather with how such interpretations inform strategies and practices within participation. As such, unveiling assumptions and interpretations is a necessary condition in order to locate

the origin of specific strategies and practices which define the ways in which the participants engage with opportunities for participation.

In interpretive interactionism it is important that such processes are interpreted through the stated actions and the language used by the research participants. This brings attention to key issues which fashion processes of interpretation such as the history, power, emotionality, and beliefs concerning the knowledge, (Denzin, 2001:49) not only of the participants, but of the researcher too. Participation has its own temporality, since it constitutes a process which, as described in Chapter 2, has evolved over time on a shifting terrain of agendas, ideologies and structures which shape fields of possibilities for involvement. This temporal character is affected by macro power relations which create cultural meanings in regard to the scope and resources of participation. The effects of such power become obvious when exploring participatory discourses, the language of which participants may use to represent themselves. The effects of participation discourses can be seen in the ways the participants choose to identify with, reject or alter them. Thus the aim of interpretation is to make the connections between these discourses and the personal histories that individuals carry with them in regard to strategies of involvement.

Discussing power also brings to light the role of the researcher in the collection and interpretation of the data. For Denzin (2001:49), the researcher “has a historical relationship to the interpretive process” which frames the research. This is because

the researcher's gendered and historical self is involved in the process, and all inquiry reflects the researcher's standpoint (Ibid: 3). This means not only that the researcher needs to be aware of his/her role in the production of data, but also to clearly demonstrate how value positions stemming from one's own understandings and experiences of socio-political contexts mediate the knowledge produced. With its stress on the role of the researcher and on power relations, interpretive interactionism shows that qualitative methods are both "material and interpretive practices" which "do not stand outside politics and cultural criticism" (Denzin, 2001:26), a point which is of increased importance when the outcomes of research on participation are assessed. An interpretive emphasis on meanings and experience rejects the idea of a distanced and objective researcher, but it rather requires that the outcomes of policy initiatives are judged from the point of view of those most affected.

In summary, an interpretive interactionist research method fits well with the ontological perspectives of this study and the aim of exploring young people's engagement with participation processes. An interpretive emphasis on individual meaning-making, on the significance of such meaning within specific contexts, and on the status of collected data, shifts the attention within the inquiry onto three important issues, namely: the role of the researcher, the collection of the data and the reporting of methods and data analysis. All are issues which will be considered in the following sections where the choice of case studies, the implementation of the research and the interpretation of the data are discussed.

4.2.1 Case studies

Use of multiple case studies is a suitable choice when there is an interpretive aim “to secure the multiple cases and histories which embody” (Denzin, 2001:74) a process and to “make people’s lived experience available to the reader” (Ibid.:xi). This section will discuss the case study approach, highlighting its value as a strategy which provides an entry point to researching processes within participation. For Yin (1994:7), the first step in differentiating between available research strategies is to identify the type of the research questions posed in regard to the aims of the research. In that sense, “how” and “what” (in their exploratory character) questions, as have been identified in this study, favour the use of case study strategies. Indeed, the aim of this study is not to measure frequency of participation or explanations in regard to behaviour but to discover the meanings, practices and strategies at play within the processes under exploration.

As the main aim of this study is to explore the experience of processes within participation, it is important that the research elicits the different motivations, expectations and conceptualisations of involvement which young people are likely to have. In exploring this, it was necessary to employ a research design which allows the participants to elaborate on such experiences and express themselves in their own words. Research exploring young people’s experience and conceptualisation of citizenship issues has involved young people in all stages of research and the opportunity to shape research through drawing from their own

frames of reference (Morrow, 2001; Lister et al., 2003, Wood, 2009). Involving young people in the early stages of the research was considered in this study, as this can produce a sense of empowerment for both researcher and participants, but it was soon abandoned due to time restrictions and the financial costs involved. Furthermore, use of questionnaires or structured interviews were deemed inappropriate, since exploring the different conceptualisations and experiences of young people involves encouraging them to represent their lives and define concepts in their own words.

The case study is an appropriate strategy in this study, as it allows us to gain in-depth understandings of a process in real life contexts (Yin, 1994:13). The major contribution of the case study strategy in this study is that it can assist in identifying units of analysis to be studied (Cresswell, 2007; Yin, 1994). This brings the discussion onto what constitutes case and case studies in this thesis. Discussions within the literature in regard to the nature of case studies highlight the need for the boundaries of the case to be clearly defined (Yin, 1994) and for a degree of connection to a type of context to be established (Lewis, 2004).

The establishment of case boundaries and the identification of the units of analysis in this study evolved on the basis of what Yin (1994) calls “the purpose of the study”. As such, the research is exploring processes of meaning making within participation. Defining the boundaries and identifying the units of analysis was complicated, as the concept of participation itself, as it has been discussed in previous chapters, can take on many meanings within and across different contexts.

Furthermore, and in relation to the fluidity of the term ‘participation’, the boundaries between community involvement and participation are not clearly demarcated, as many aspects of daily life can be seen as participation. The challenge that arose was identifying which forms of participation and what type of projects were to be included. As an interpretive interactionist approach suggests, research starts not when the researcher is able to capture the cases to be included in the study, but at a step before, when the researcher deconstructs or becomes familiar with how the process under investigation has been defined, theorised and analysed before. Critically interpreting the process and linking it with the purpose of the study allows us to define the boundaries of what and where is to be studied, and what constitutes the units of analysis.

This research aimed to explore meaning making processes within participation as they are exemplified through conceptualisations, strategies and use of resources. The critical analysis of participation in Chapter 2 showed that the aim of involvement in participatory projects is defined on the basis of claims of empowerment and voice. In this way, the boundaries of the cases to be included were set around claims made by projects in regard to their ability to empower young people through participation. The discussion of micro-practices of participation in Chapter 3 showed that participation is a socio-culturally embedded process. Furthermore, the discussion of young people as social actors revealed the contextual, interactional and processual character of their experience. In that way, the boundaries of the case study were also defined by context. The following

section will elaborate further how the definition of participation and the context have guided the establishment of case boundaries.

Definition of the aim of participation

In regard to the stated aims of participation within this project as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, dominant discourses of participation construct it as the means through which the voice of young people can be raised, and empowerment is achieved through involvement in activities.

Cresswell (2007) argues that, although qualitative research is not seeking generalisation, a researcher needs to choose representative cases to include in the study. However, Stake's (1995) argument of critical uniqueness is important here. Stake argues that a case needs to be seen as unique and as common at the same time: "Understanding each one requires an understanding of other cases, activities, and events but also an understanding of each one's uniqueness" (Stake, 1995:44). Thus, it is not necessary to see a particular case as representative through the use of variables, but to understand it in relation to the important ways in which it connects to other cases, its context and its relation to the topic of study. Thus the aim of the study becomes principally to understand the particular cases involved and their relations to the issue of study, rather than generalising for other cases. Similarly, for Flyvbjerg (2006), case studies should not be judged in relation to their ability to produce general, context-independent theory, as their value lies in offering concrete and context-dependent knowledge.

The projects to be involved in this research were identified on the basis of an aim of gaining more information about processes in spaces for youth participation which aim to empower young people by giving them voice and access in decision making. This involved councils and cabinets, which are the most typical ways through which policies attempt to give young people a voice. However, only selecting typical cases or a single case study would overlook other alternative, less privileged within policies, forms of involvement, and would offer limited insight into the case of youth participation. Also, “atypical or extreme cases” can reveal more information, as they “activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situations studied” (Flyvbjerg, 2006:229). Thus, youth-led groups, which often act as an alternative avenue to participation, were also included. The value of such multiple case studies (Stake, 1995; Cresswell, 2007) lies in the fact that they allow exploration of similarities and differences between cases and across contexts.

Thus, a focus on projects which claim to empower young people through participation and voice is not looking to produce generalisable truths which apply in every setting of youth participation but rather looks at highlighting how these particular cases speak about processes of meaning making within specific instances of participation.

Context

In regard to context, this study involves instances of participation from both the UK and Greece. Involvement of such distinct contexts was deemed as an

appropriate research strategy in this study as it corresponds to a discussion of young people in Chapter 3 as social actors whose agentic responses have a relational and temporal character.

It is common within the majority of qualitative research regarding young people's experience of citizenship, participation and the political (see Smith et al., 2005; O'Toole et al., 2003; Marsh et al., 2007; Vromen, 2003) to focus on single country contexts (see Norris, 2009 for an exception). Since the social status of youth as a socially constructed group can be traced in the changes taking place in social institutions, studies across contexts can shed light on key dimensions that shape the life course, such as institutional arrangements and culture. The inclusion of two different national contexts in this study aims to contribute to an understanding of the interplay between youth participation, policy and context. One of the advantages of small cross-national qualitative studies is that they can aid the conceptualisation of common characteristics regarding a process or event and at the same time they contribute to embedding these common characteristics in the particular context and time in which they were developed (Ragin, 1989:69).

Employing studies from two different countries highlights the role of the researcher in interpreting the collected data, as it requires caution about how social practices are understood. This involves developing awareness of the distinctive socio-historical processes which affect the emergence of social relations in each context. Therefore, exploring examples from the UK and Greece means taking into account

the distinctive routes that the two countries followed towards late modernity, and the effect of such developments on policies, especially those targeting young people. The diverse socio-economic developments in the two countries resulted in the UK youth drawing increased attention from policy makers while the Greek youth has often been rendered invisible within the boundaries of family which accommodates for their needs.

Despite the obvious differences, common to both countries is a perception of youth as citizens in the making and in need of support. In terms of transitions to adulthood, young people in both contexts are entitled to compulsory education to the age of 16, and they are perceived as mature enough to gain access to voting when 18 years old. Furthermore, current participatory discourses in both countries are affected by international organisations like the EU and UN, to which both countries are accountable for the implementation of youth participation and the promotion of youth voice. This theoretically allows some expectation of commonalities regarding the rationale of intended participation.

Attempting to explore the relationship between youth participation and context opens up different approaches, as there are different perspectives in the literature regarding research across contexts reflecting different ontological and epistemological standpoints. Hantrais (1999:94-7) summarises three dominant approaches, namely the culturalist, universalist and societal. Based on a relativist epistemological position, culturalist approaches reject the existence of universal

values and highlight the importance of context, cultural-boundedness, specificity and uniqueness, thus rendering any study across national contexts impossible. This approach reflects concerns that differences in the patterns of organisation between countries may be so marked that they render comparisons difficult to achieve.

This focus of culturalists on contextuality was mostly a reaction to universalist approaches, which aimed to study social phenomena as independent of context and culture. Universalists believe that all industrial societies are converging through similar evolutionary processes. Therefore the emphasis of research is on similarity and on generalisation from one national context to the other.

Societal approaches aim to bridge the gap between culturalist and universalist approaches. Societal approaches reject a possibility of international research being able to compare 'like with like' and argue that the aim of this type of research is to bring to the fore the effect of the national context on the issue under study. Important in this approach is to explore the relationship between the macro and the micro, as people and structures cannot be divided (Hantrais, 1999).

The insights offered by the societal approach are of central importance to this study. This is because this study focuses mostly on how young people understand and enact participation, rather than assessing which context achieves better performance regarding pre-given standards and frameworks for the implementation

of participation. From a societal standpoint, employing case studies from different national contexts is relevant to this study, as the explored spaces are approached as a coherent part of a similar process (participation), albeit rooted in the contextual specificity of each country. In this way it becomes apparent that this study does not aim to provide direct comparisons between national contexts perceived as 'like', but rather seeks to arrive at an understanding of similar participatory processes as they unfold within culturally different contexts. Therefore, employment of across-context case studies is a strategy rather than the aim of enquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

In conclusion, defining case studies to be included in this study on the basis of the context and definition of their aim allowed the prioritising of specific projects over others. The following section will further discuss how projects and participants were identified and involved in the study.

4.2.2 Instances of participation

Identifying instances of participation involves consideration of the necessary judgements which determine the selection of suitable participants. These judgements had to be made at two levels in this study. Initially, the organisations to be involved in the study were considered, and then the individual participants to be involved in the interviewing.

The initial criterion for the inclusion of the organisations is their mission statement to 'raise the voice' of young people and to create the conditions that would allow them a say in the decision making processes about issues that affect them. As the aim was to obtain the greatest possible amount of information in regard to processes of participation, random or representative sampling was not deemed an appropriate strategy. For Flyvbjerg (2006) a quest for representativeness and generalizability in case study research may not provide rich data, as less typical or average cases might produce more in-depth data. Therefore, and in an effort to gain different entry points to the processes of participation, the organisations selected to take part were perceived to relate to the issue of participation as both typical and alternative. As such, the organisations include representative and state/local authority initiated projects such as councils/cabinets which are the primary means through which governments aim to achieve youth empowerment and representation. Alongside these are included organisations which have been developed by young people themselves or other adult stakeholders, sharing a similar agenda of empowering young people through increased participation and 'voice'.

A number of organisations were identified to fit these criteria and letters were sent out at an initial stage, explaining the aim of the research and asking for access to individual participants. At the second stage, communication through telephone, email and personal visits was established with those organisations which had

responded. Overall, from the twelve organisations initially identified, seven took part (3 in UK and 4 in Greece) and 36 individuals were interviewed in total (table 7).

In most cases, the researcher attended meetings and events organised by the groups to become familiar with them and access participants. Selection was mostly on the basis of practical issues such as whether members had time to get involved due to their commitments within projects; who attended the projects during the period I visited; and also who felt more comfortable to talk about themselves. Only in one case were the participants directly selected by the youth workers.

In some organisations in Greece, access was obtained only to professionals both because some of the projects were not active at the time of the interview and also because the organisation followed strict processes of not allowing access to their participants. Owing to this difficulty of getting access to young people through agencies, snowballing techniques were used, whereby young people interviewed were asked to suggest other groups (Bryman, 2001). Snowballing was used until a “point at which efforts to net additional members cannot be justified in terms of the additional outlay of energy and resources; this point may be thought of as a point of redundancy” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:233). Adapting sampling strategies according to difficulties encountered in each context was the only feasible way to obtain an adequate sample.

Table 7-Participant Profiles

	UK			Greece		
	Name	Age/ Sex	Role in project	Name	Age/ Sex	Role in project
1	Aneesha	NA/F	Professional	Katerina	24/F	Participant
2	Vijay	23/M	Professional	Phaethon	29/M	Participant
3	Manpret	17/M	Participant	Michalis	28/M	Participant
4	Jas	17/M	Participant	Marina	22/F	Participant
5	James	16/M	Participant	Alexandros	26/M	Participant
6	Robin	19/M	Participant	Stefanos	24/M	Participant
7	Mike	16/M	Participant	Andreas	24/M	Participant
8	Keith	16/M	Participant	Melina	23/F	Participant
9	Meg	23/F	Participant	Pavlos	24/M	Participant
10	Alan	19/M	Participant	Daphne	21/F	Participant
11	Sophie	17/F	Participant	Zeta	NA/F	Professional
12	Nigel	18/M	Participant	Polina	NA/F	Professional
13	Stephen	28/M	Professional	Dimitris	27/M	Professional
14	Martha	26/F	Professional	Stelios	29/M	Professional
15	Nadine	17/F	Participant	Mariela	28/F	Professional
16	Nina	17/F	Participant	Markos	33/M	Professional
17	Rashid	20/M	Participant			
18	Brian	22/M	Participant			
19	Derek	17/M	Participant			

Although this study follows a definition of youth which as discussed in the Introduction, involves young people aged 15-24 in the UK and 16-29 in Greece, no age limit was posed as a criterion for the inclusion of individuals in the interview. This was driven by a willingness to explore the range of experience within these projects rather than establishing causal relations between age, attendance, role and quality of experience. Imposing such specific selection criteria would have

restricted the pool of participants and would have produced a misleading idea of who is participating in such projects. Not providing detailed sampling requirements regarding the profile of potential participants such as age, gender or role within projects, enabled the researcher to obtain a sample that reflected processes and dynamics within the projects for the period the research was conducted.

This does not mean, though, that the danger of bias was completely eliminated, as one could argue that those more confident and able to express themselves volunteered to participate. Consequently it is important to acknowledge that the more efficient members might have taken part as they were the more familiar with participation processes and thus more regular attendants. It needs also to be acknowledged that timing was important, since at any other period in time I might have had access to a different sample. Thus, this study is a snapshot in time rather than a representation of processes in every participation space. In summary, the criteria for selection of participants to be interviewed included: (a) Identifying individuals as member of a group which aims to give voice to young people, irrespective of age and role in such group, (b) Participants being willing to share their experience.

It needs to be acknowledged that had this research design established tighter sampling criteria in regard to gender it could have allowed a greater exploration of gender bias and insight into gender differences in experiences of participation. However, the main focus of this research was to reflect existing processes within

projects involved in the research, including ascertaining their extant gender make up. As such, it did not presuppose an effort to balance the sample according gender. It was observed that these projects tended to reflect a more central role for male participants, whereas female participants tended to have a more peripheral role. This in itself is approached as research evidence which the researcher intends to further pursue in the future: how does the structure of current youth participation projects accommodate for gender differences? Moreover, the research was restricted by the structure and location of the projects themselves and the influence of the gatekeepers' role throughout the selection process. While the gatekeepers did not pre-select the participants, it needs to be acknowledged that the way in which they presented the research to potential candidates could have inadvertently impacted upon young peoples' decision to get involved in this research, however the extent of this impact is not possible to identify. Obviously, the location of the research projects reflects specific socio-demographics. Having been able to obtain access to different groups and projects in other locations could have potentially opened access to other groups of young people with differential markers of identity, such as class, ethnicity and religion. However, a deliberate effort was taken in order to capture a variety of backgrounds, identity markers and experiences through involving participants from the widest range of activities and projects as possible within the organisations which took part in the research.

Consideration was given also to establishing a sort of parity between the locations explored in both countries. For that reason the West Midlands was chosen in the UK and the prefecture of Thessaloniki in Greece, which demographically have a

similar population size and both include the second largest city in their respective national contexts. In that sense they both are seen as highly urbanised contexts which shape youth experience in similar manners. Lack of response, however, from less typical organisations within the West Midlands and time restrictions meant that I had to widen my area criteria and include a group from London.

4.2.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in qualitative research involve both consideration of the research impact on participants, as it is not only about “collecting data from people” but also “about people” (Punch, 2005:276), and protection of sensitive information.

Managing expectations from the research is an important ethical issue. According to May (2001), it is important that participants understand the aims of the research, are clear about their roles and also that they feel that their opinions are valued. Participants were provided with information about the aims of the research, and where necessary the possibilities and limitations of academic research were highlighted so as to avoid creating unrealistic expectations. Giving each participant an information sheet before the interview, which outlines the aims of the research and their rights as participants to either refuse to answer questions or to withdraw at any time during or after the interview is essential in establishing a rapport. Also,

details of how anonymity is to be safeguarded and how data are to be stored are important in gaining trust.

The safety of the participants was of central importance, and all the necessary steps were followed in order to ensure anonymity. Special consideration was also given to not disclosing any information that could help to identify individual participants. The participants were assigned pseudonyms which they had the opportunity to choose themselves. Recorded and transcribed data were securely stored and password protected. In Greece, all participants were old enough to sign an informed consent. In the UK, owing to the young age of a number of the participants, in addition to individual consent, parental consent was necessary. Prior to that, the research was approved by the Ethics Committees of the University of Birmingham, while in some cases the researcher had to undergo organisational research processes including obtaining a CRB check.

4.3 Data collection

The aim of interpretive research is to produce in-depth interpretations of social processes, and as such it involves a number of possible data sources. This study involves in-depth interviewing and vignettes(appendices 7 and 8), in order to explore personal motivations, experiences and values which relate to involvement and document analysis which explores the construction of young people as

participants at a policy level. Thus it aims to identify different entry points in making sense of the ways in which young people engage with processes of participation.

4.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Interpretive research is a dialogical process rooted in the concepts of care and shared governance, and as such it cannot be known in advance how it will work in particular circumstances (Denzin, 2001:5). However, it was necessary to have a sense of focus in relation to the aims of the research and a loose form of structure in the form of an interview schedule which would allow a sort of coherence to arise across individual cases and contexts. Interviews in this study aimed to explore individual biographies as they are linked to meaning making within participatory processes. They also focused on exploring individual agency and the impact of power relations as it was played out through participants' representations of their experience within the spaces for participation.

In regard to the need for a sense of focus, capturing agency as the particular composition of the ways in which actors respond agentially to the events of their environments (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) involves capturing the particular 'composition' of iterational, practical-evaluative and projective aspects of people's agentic orientations. This raises issues of resources or capitals in relation to how

agency is achieved as well a “focus on the ecology” (Biesta and Tedder, 2006:20) within which agency is achieved. Exploring the habitual or iterational through interviews involves approaching individual narratives with questions which challenge the ‘for granted’ such as:

How well adapted are the individuals to the context they find themselves in? How does personal history shape their responses to the contemporary setting? Are structural effects visible within small scale interactions?
(Reay, 1995:369).

Exploring the projective involves asking questions such as: How do participants talk about, negotiate and make commitments about their futures? And how does this affect choices and decisions at present? Is there a conflict between imagined future and reality? (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:985-991). Exploring the practical-evaluative through interviewing involves a focus on questions such as: On what basis are judgements made? What communicative means are used? How is deliberation achieved? Are decisions taken in light of broader goals and projects? Is decision making individualistic or publically and discursively made? Are emotions engaged in decision making? (Ibid.: 998-99). Thus, interviews allow for an exploration of the configuration of the above agentic orientations and give an insight in the multiplicity of ways in which individuals respond to social conditions.

In regard to maintaining a loose sense of structure, the interview guide unfolded in stages which include questions and prompts related to individuals’ decision to get

involved, experience at the time of interview and expectations in relation to participation. This resonates with May's (2001:132) 'sequential interviewing', which involves allowing people to talk about events in the way in which they have unfolded. This helped to establish some chronological understanding in regard to how involvement in projects was initiated, how it progressed, how it related to the stage at which participants found themselves at the moment of the interview and how it fitted with future plans. It also allowed the researcher to explore whether involvement was evolved in sequential paths, was related to specific life events or whether it was sporadic and circumstantial.

This does not mean, though, that all interviews followed a specific order. Because the aim was that the interview should unfold as a conversation, the order and the phrasing of questions was altered in order to "fit each individual interviewed" (Denzin, 2001:66). The role of the researcher was not only framed as a listener but also as one who shares personal experience and opinions in order to create a sense of trust in interviewees. All interviews started with the same question: "Tell me: how did you get involved?" but then the participants were free to expand on issues or stages which they deemed more important. Asking such descriptive questions enables the interview to proceed from 'exploration', where both parties are discovering how the interview will be, to 'cooperation' where each party starts knowing what to expect from the process (May, 2001:131). It was only after the participants had covered the areas they prioritised that the interviewer reflected back to confirm interpretations (Ibid.:133), and prompting was involved in order to

cover areas in the interview guide that might have been left out. This ensured a degree of coherence in the gathered data.

An interpretive interactionist research method places increased emphasis on the role of the researcher, who is seen as an actor with their own historical relation and interpretation of the context which investigates. This way, a researcher is not entering the process in an objective and distanced manner. This impacts on processes of interviewing, as the researcher needs to be aware of how their own moral values and interpretations are framing the processes of interviewing and the subsequent data. This study offers examples of how the historical relation and awareness of personal interpretations of the researcher in regard to participation were played out during the data collection stage in two ways.

Firstly, in regard to the researcher's own conceptualisations of participation, the use of vignettes offers an example of how interviewing involves an interplay between imported frames of meaning and participants' engagement with such meanings. Secondly, the researcher's historical relationship to the interpretive process was played out in this study through participants' perceptions of the researcher's identity as it was exemplified by educational status.

Vignettes: importing frames of meaning

While the interviewing aimed to offer a platform for participants to comment on their experience of participatory projects, vignettes were employed in order to provide an opportunity to comment on how they would act if presented with a similar scenario and why (Hughes, 1998; Barter and Renold, 2000). As established in previous chapters, the term ‘participation’ is a contingent one which is used interchangeably to define a variety of projects. For this reason, a discussion of participation can either become restricted on an abstract level or unfold on the basis of non-shared references between the researcher and the interviewee. The employment of vignettes aimed to overcome such problems by giving an opportunity to ground the term participation by using examples which participants could identify with, interpret according to their experience and use as a medium to reflect on their own values and practices. Using such examples, though, involves a bias of representing instances of participation aligned to the researcher’s own interpretations of how participation is organised.

Employing vignettes in a non-directive way which involves leaving “space for respondents to define the situation in their own words” (Finch, 1982 cited in Barter and Renold, 2000:309) means using vignettes as a complementary method to elicit more information on participants’ opinions and practices. Vignettes do not aim to offer a representation of reality, as there is a gulf between what people think should happen in their narrations and what really happens (Hughes, 1998). A non-directive way of using vignettes requires caution regarding the design and the dynamic of the

story and its presentation, as well as the use of a linguistic style relevant to that of the participants (Barter and Renold, 2000). For the vignettes to be realistic and to make sense to participants in each context, the names and ages of the main characters in the vignettes were adapted to reflect national standards as well as some of the participatory activities, in order to represent the typical activities of participatory spaces in each context.

The use of vignettes also poses a challenge regarding the stage at which they are introduced, the amount of necessary time, and the instruction given. Vignettes were introduced towards the end of each interview, to avoid framing the whole interview around the stories and obscuring other aspects of participation not anticipated by the researcher. The design of the vignettes for this study involved two short stories on which participants were asked to comment for an average length of time of eight to fifteen minutes (reading and discussion). Informed by participation literature which approaches involvement as a means for the empowerment of vulnerable young people, the story in the first short vignette reflected the type of young people participatory policies aspire to approach. This means young people from less privileged backgrounds, without qualifications and in a process of weighing the advantages of getting involved. In the second short vignette the main character is already involved in participatory processes and the focus shifts to practices within such projects. This vignette is looking at the balance between adult and youth input, aiming to elicit opinions on the youth-led character of youth participation, reflecting the discussion about how power relations are understood in spaces for

participation in Chapter 3. It also looks at important issues among participants by asking them to set the agenda of the events the main character is required to organise.

As becomes clear at this stage, the construction of the vignettes did not only reflect the interpretations of the researcher about participation, but also interpretations dominant in literature and participatory policy. This led to an awareness that the vignettes may elicit opinions around existing opportunities for participation, but they do not necessarily advance knowledge about participants' own perceptions of participation. To overcome this, minimal information in regard to stories was provided. This allowed for the responses to be developed around the 'it depends' (Hughes, 1998) principle. By not having extensive information, the participants had a chance to lay out the factors upon which they thought the case was based, and in that way they contextualised the cases within their own experiences.

The participants challenged the researcher's interpretations of participation within the vignettes and attempted to interpret them according to their lived experience. An example of how the participants engaged with imported frames of meaning is shown in the participants' focus on the socio-economic background of the young person described in both vignettes, rather than on issues of participation practices directly, as was initially anticipated by the researcher. Although the initial intention of the vignettes was not to discuss the lives of the described characters, but processes of participation, the participants felt that it was important to comment on

the young people's lifestyle and connect them to their own choices. Thus, the researcher's interpretations of participation were critiqued by participants in their own application of meaning, especially when they insisted that a commentary of lived experience and lifestyle was of primary importance in any discussion of participation.

Researcher's own history

In the same way that participants bring their own personal history into research processes (Denzin, 2001:49) the researcher is also historically and locally situated in such processes (Ibid.:3). Participants' perceptions of how the researcher was situated within their context and processes of participation impacted on the research processes and the quality of the produced data. This was more evident through a negotiation of an insider/outsider status.

The insider/outsider status has been played out in this study through perceptions of the researcher's educational and 'coming from abroad' status, manifested from either having been socialised in another context or through affiliation to an institution abroad. Being classified as 'coming from abroad' prohibited rapport in the cases where direct comparisons were anticipated, and thus the researcher was classified as unable to gain a sympathetic insight into participants' lived experience in both contexts. This attitude was more evident when rapport with professionals was sought than in interactions with young people. Being classified as from abroad, for example, by young people in the UK had advantages, as some of participants

felt they could openly talk about their community and the difficulties they faced within it, without feeling that they were being judged.

In regard to the researchers' affiliation to a university, the participants in Greece interpreted this on the basis of their own lived experience and assumptions about why someone makes the choice to continue with postgraduate research, and they used these assumptions to advance their arguments. For some of the participants, doing a post-graduate degree was seen as a necessary condition of competing for success or, in their words, as a "sign of the times". Others mentioned the need for an average young person to do a PhD, but this time to criticise the increased obligations that society imposes on young people. Thus, the researcher's status was linked to participants' lived experience and was used to gain approval of expressed opinions. Therefore, the researcher was positioned as 'one of them', as one who shares a similar social commentary and experience and therefore similar social class standing.

University affiliation was linked to UK participants' lived experience too. More specifically, young people who stated that they wanted to proceed to university level studies or those who were already doing a degree were more willing to take part in the interview. Actual or potential commonality of university experience seemed to create a common ground within which communication was enabled. In that way, the rapport seemed to stem from a relation that Banks (1998, in Merriam et al 2001) calls the 'adopted insider', one who, despite being socialised in a

different culture, is perceived to have endorsed the values of the context within which the research takes place. Thus, examples from this study contribute knowledge in cross-national research which challenges assumptions in regard to the insider-outsider status of the researcher and reveal that the dynamics within such processes are more complex than they might initially appear. The researcher was situated in regard to the processes under exploration through different aspects of identity which cover, but are not restricted to, national context. Perceptions of the identity of the researcher, including class standing, educational status, ability to move between two different contexts and perceptions of the research process itself highlight the role of the researcher as a locally, culturally and historically located actor in the production of the data.

4. 3.2 Document analysis

The interviews and vignettes aimed to produce interpretive accounts of individual knowledge, practices and strategies of participation. While material aspects of participation were evident within the individual interpretations, analysis of participation policy documentation can ground these interpretations within policy construction that frames the boundaries for participation. However, rather than aiming to directly represent reality, the exploration of publications is looking to map the conditions through which available resources for participation are framed. It also serves an interpretive aim to recognise the multiple existing truths about the process under investigation.

Analysis of policy discourse can show perceptions of problems or priorities and thus how appropriate interventions are framed. As young people's experience of participation is framed by policies on the national and international level, documentary analysis of the policy frameworks in both contexts gives an insight into the context within which young people are expected to develop their action. Furthermore, it enables an understanding about what perceptions of participation are prominent on a policy level, what language is used to create perceptions about the reality and the scope of participation, what knowledge about youth is promoted, and what problems are to be addressed through participation.

Participation discourses cannot be understood as separate from relations of power in a given context: "relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (Foucault, 1980). According to Lister (2010:144), social construction, as discussed in the first section of this chapter, with its preoccupation with how meanings connect to social phenomena, highlights a "cultural turn in social policy" (Clarke, 2004):

Social policies are constructed with cultural resources – knowledges, norms and identities - and they produce cultural effects, not least in the specification of the meanings, conditions and identities of citizenship ... We can explore the cultural resources they deploy, the cultural effects they aim to produce and the attempted resolutions of cultural conflicts or contradictions they try to put in place. (Clarke, 2004:37)

In this way, social policies are approached as ‘polysemic’ (Ibid.); as having the potential to take different meanings.

Owing to an array of papers and reports regarding youth participation in the UK and youth policy being dispersed across government departments, this analysis is restricted to documents which set the parameters for the application of participation across different sectors. Key documents include government papers on participation, citizenship and governance, government-sponsored committee reports, and other important reports from non-governmental players which exerted a degree of influence on official initiatives.

Similarly, in the Greek context, policies regarding youth are dispersed across different ministries. Because of a lack of general policy frameworks and reports, though, regarding both the aims of youth policies in general and youth participation in particular, the focus of this analysis shifted to particular projects within different state agencies and their documentation. The incorporated documents set the parameters for youth participation, and include key actors in participation such as national agencies, government initiatives and youth organisations, as well as published outcomes of proceedings of state-initiated projects and national laws. Websites were key in gaining access to information as there is a considerable lack of published material on the part of key players in this field.

Table 8-List of sources of information

United Kingdom	Greece	European Union
DfES (2001) Learning to Listen: Core Principles for the involvement of Children and Young people	Greek Ombudsman for the Child (0-18): Mission statement, Proceedings/Outcomes from the Teenage Advisor Programme	COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (2001) European Commission White Paper: a new impetus for European youth, Brussels
DfES (2003) Every Child Matters	Local Youth Council: Legislation	Active Youth programme
Russell Commission (2005) A national framework for youth action and engagement	General Secretary for Youth: Documentation -Website (Covering the period 1981-2011) General Secretary for Youth : (2010-11)Speeches- Mission Statements- Online Youth Consultation events	
DfES (2005) Youth Matters	National Youth Congress (ESyN): 2008-2010 mission statement, newsletters- commentaries on social issues	
DfES (2007) Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities	Teenage Parliament: Annual Reports - Outcomes of proceedings - Website	
Youth Citizenship Commission (2009) Making the connection. Building youth citizenship in the UK. Final Report of the Youth Citizenship Commission		
DfES (2010) Aiming high for youth: three years on		

A third category of publications included in this study is European Union (EU) publications which define the aims and the range of participation across European Union countries. EU publications place participation at the core of youth policies

and aspire to offer a framework which national governments follow in order to support or develop new structures for participation.

4.4 Making sense of and acting upon the world: Interpretation

The aim of interpretive research is to offer contextualised thick description and interpretation of a process. For Denzin (2001:70-89), this is achieved through a process of interpretation which involves six stages, namely: framing the research question; deconstructing prior conceptions of the process under exploration; capturing the phenomenon and obtaining instances of it; bracketing or reducing the process in its essential elements; constructing the phenomenon; and contextualising the process back in the social world.

Thus the process of interpretation starts at a very early stage, when the phenomenon under investigation, research questions and instances are defined. The previous sections have covered how instances were identified and what methods were used to produce data. Previous chapters have also described how the nature of the phenomenon under investigation, participation processes, have been deconstructed and led to the specific research design. However, a brief discussion about the use of theories in this study is necessary before proceeding to discuss the interpretation of the data. This is important because, while this study accepts a critical analysis of theoretical constructions as the first step for the interpretation of a process (Denzin, 2001), at the same time it approaches theories as a “valuable initial guide” (Walsham, 1995:76). This highlights the fact that it is necessary to

remain open to the new ideas imported by the data and a motivation to critically consider the value of the initial theories in the interpretation of the data. Without this, the process of interpretation can be characterised as a “parade of social theory” (Wolcott, 2001:76), which might not fit the messages encompassed in the individual accounts.

This study deconstructed processes of participation from a Foucauldian approach which highlights issues of power relations and governmentality. However interaction with the data revealed young people who actively engage with processes in a variety of ways, and thus elements of the existing theories had to be revised; others gained less/more prominence, while the use of additional theoretical frameworks that explore agency was considered. Walsham (1995:76) uses the metaphor of ‘scaffolding’ to describe this iterative process, within which theory is treated as a scaffold which “is removed once it has served its purpose”. Thus there is no best theory in explaining processes, but different entry points based on the reality of the research situation (Dobson, 1999).

Returning to processes of interaction with the data, when the instances of participation were identified and data were obtained the process of interpretation proceeded at the stage which Denzin (2001) calls ‘bracketing’. This stage involved dissecting participants’ interpretations into their elements, extracting them from the context in which they occurred and treating them as a text to be analysed and coded. This entailed engaging with and delving into participants’ accounts through

frequent reading in order to gain a “feel for the data” (Punch, 1998). The focus was on identifying important phrases and experiences that gave an insight into the ways in which participants engaged and conceptualised participation. As the research involved multiple participants and different contexts, the process started by reading each participant’s transcribed accounts and then progressed to other participants. During this process I found that progression from one interview transcript to the other and from the one context to the other, would offer new perspectives in understanding the previous ones. This offered an opportunity to return to previous interviews and contexts in order to explore different ways of looking into the data.

Keeping analytical memos regarding emerging patterns, overlaps, connections, puzzles, relations to research questions, personal dilemmas regarding analysis and ideas about where the study was going, was essential at this stage. For Mason (2002:5), analytical memos facilitate researcher flexibility with the data, as they involve:

thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognising the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape how you research and what you see.

This resonates with Clarke (2005:202 cited in Saldaña, 2009), when she argues that “memos are sites of conversation with ourselves about our data”. Therefore, analytic memos are not just notes but a place to “dump your brain” about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by “thinking and thus

writing and thinking even more about them” (Saldaña, 2009:32). Despite suggestions that use of different types of memo such as coding memos, theoretical memos, research questions memos is necessary in order to classify and categorise data according to their purpose, this study endorses positions which argue that memo writing has to be creative (Dey, 1993; Punch, 1998), and focused on developing propositions about relationships (Punch, 1998), rather than writing within the bounded parameters of an artificial category (Saldaña, 2009). Software designed for qualitative research was used at this stage which allowed the researcher initially to manage a large amount of transcribed data, to view it simultaneously and compare segments from interview transcriptions. However, as the processes moved towards making links between practices, expressed meanings and their context, the use of software seemed to inhibit a process of capturing the value of the segments within the contexts they emerged from.

As the research took place in two different cultural contexts, the linguistic dimension emerged as a challenge at a very early stage in the process of data analysis. Dealing with language issues was important at this stage and offers an example of how the interaction with the coded data and processes of interpretation unfolded. Language issues were closely related to the researcher’s effort to avoid imposing external frames of meaning on participants’ interpretations of their lived experience. Translation particularities do not only relate to cognitive meanings but also to functional meanings (Mangen, 1999) which impact upon the accuracy of data interpretation. It is crucial for qualitative research to understand how people use specific words and what kind of meanings words encompass in the different

settings. Treating the vocabulary as if it meant the same in both countries would carry the danger of drawing false conclusions because different cultures have different ways of categorising their experiences, and they are expressing “the same factual information in distinctly different ways in terms of wording, explicitness, amount and focus on different aspects” (Gabrielatos, 1998:23).

In regard to the interpretation of the data obtained in Greece, as the researcher is not a professional translator, the challenge was not to translate literally and not to impose Greek grammar and collocations on English and thus fall into what Mangen (1999:112) calls the “fallacy of self-fulfilling equivalence”. While it was important to produce accounts that are understandable in English, it was also crucially important that translation was doing justice to the participants and their accounts. The most challenging part of the translation was an effort to achieve ‘functional equivalence’, which involved representing lexicons of emotions, jokes, word-play, humour and references to specific political events and socio-political commentaries (Mangen, 1999). For example words such as tradition, backwardness and progress were used by the participants within a long-standing debate regarding national identity, and directly translating them without an appropriate commentary would not have conveyed the meaning expressed by the participants.

In regard to the interpretation of the data obtained in the UK, translation was not necessary; however, the interpretation was still dependent upon the researcher’s understanding of participants’ use of language. Also, the researcher’s ability as a

non-native speaker to identify and interpret signs necessary to understand jokes, word-play, humour, and “differential lexicons of emotions” (Mangen, 1999:111) was considered. For Mangen (1999), even competence in a language can be deceptive and introduces methodological problems. He alerts researchers to what he calls linguistic ‘false friends’, which consist of similar words carrying different nuances or meanings in different languages. The quality of the data produced by cross-national research has been criticised as inadequate in exploiting the “full potential of the qualitative method”, as the foreign interviewer is less directive, in a passive condition and unable to capture nuances in participants’ accounts (Ibid.:117).

In an effort to minimise the effect of the above, to deepen understanding of the participants interpretations and to proceed to the following stages of interpretation which require contextualising such knowledge, the researcher’s provisional conclusions were assessed with informed readers. This process involves native speakers reading a translated analysis of the Greek sample and inferring meanings, which the researcher can then compare with the original transcript and own understandings in order to establish whether the translation has succeeded in conveying the meanings in the participants’ interpretations. The same process was useful with the interpretation of British accounts too. A conversation with an informed reader can help the researcher to assess whether interpretation accounts for less explicit meanings in participants’ comments which would add different meaning or weight to the initial interpretations. These discussions enabled critical

thinking on the extent to which a focus on particular contextual or socio-political factors relevant to the UK context was necessary to better inform the interpretation.

Uncovering and defining the meanings within accounts which speak about engagement with processes of participation leads to the final stages of interpretation which involve ‘constructing ‘ and ‘contextualising’ these meanings. Constructing involves reclassifying and relating the meanings in order to assess how they relate to each other and how they speak about the totality of the processes under exploration. In this way, the identified elements are brought together into a totality and explored for recurring patterns. Closely related, if not inherent, to this is a process of contextualising these meanings and patterns.

Although constructing and contextualising are presented in the literature as distinct interpretive stages (Denzin, 2001), in this study they were experienced as evolving simultaneously and as intrinsic to one another. This is because identifying the experiences that define participatory processes involved locating to a degree the discovered meanings and practices in the context within which they occurred. Furthermore, the stages of interpretation did not unfold in a linear manner, but often, as propositions were re-assessed, it was necessary to revert back to constructing or bracketing in order to explore alternative connections and ways to classify elements within the interpretations of lived experience.

Such processes and interaction with the data allowed for interpretation which was performed on the basis of the researcher's experience with the data (Flyvbjerg, 2001). It also allowed the researcher to proceed to the production of thick descriptions of participants' experiences and meaning making which, instead of reporting actions and opinions, aimed to give a clear idea to the reader of the context, the intentions and the meanings which gave rise to specific strategies and practices present in the accounts of the participants.

Interpretation of the data in this study can be described as a process of going 'back and forth' with the data in order to grasp both the constituting elements and the totality of the processes present in participants' interpretations. This can be described by using Clarke's (2004) analogy when he discusses culture as a compound formation which is better explored through an analytical challenge of deconstruction and reconstruction:

Analytically, this means combining deconstruction (taking apart of the unity to reveal its elements and internal relations) and reconstruction (understanding how this particular unity is formed, structured and held together). (Clarke, 2004:36)

Grasping both unity and its structuring elements means that the analysis is not reduced to a technical exercise but produces analytical categories broad enough to relate to widely experienced daily situations, but not too abstract as to lose their contextual and sensitising aspect (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Accordingly, reconstructing practices, norms and relations within the interpretations of explored

participatory process into facets of participation in Chapter 6, “illuminates the variation on the stages and forms of the process” (Denzin, 2001:79) of meaning making within participation.

Additionally, reconstructing elements of participants’ experiences, motivation and opinions into profiles in Chapter 7 helps to gain an insight into the complexity of the elements that form their dispositions and “indicate how lived experiences alter and shape the process” (Ibid.) of participation. Furthermore, it highlights how these elements relate to each other and to the policy constructions of participation described in Chapter Five.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the research design, data collection, and interpretation processes on the basis of the aims of this study. Qualitative case studies are deemed as most appropriate to explore interactions in youth participation, as they allow a focus on power relations and interactions within spaces for participation, and the different motivations, expectations and conceptualisations of involvement which young people are likely to bring with them. Additionally, documentary analysis assists in exploring how young people’s fields of possibilities as participants are constructed on the official level.

Thus, this chapter has established a connection between the aims of the study and the methods used to obtain and interpret the data. The following chapters will provide the analysis following the order of the research questions. Chapter Five, based on document analysis, looks at the role of national policies in framing opportunities for participation in the particular contexts. Chapter Six examines how participation was enabled and enacted in the spaces explored. Chapter Seven focuses on the individual level, exploring young peoples' conceptualisations of their involvement and their sources of agency.

Rather than being focused on national contexts, Chapters 6 and 7 are more concerned with processes and individual conceptions; even though national differences are acknowledged these chapters are looking at commonalities in young people's engagement with participation processes. This does not deny the effect of the national context in influencing social action, which nevertheless is an underlining theme of the discussions, but it rather tries to avoid narrowing down young people's interpretations of their experience merely within the remits of the national context. This would limit exploration of the different ways in which they make sense of their world and of what they understand their contexts to be.

CHAPTER 5: FRAMING YOUTH PARTICIPATION WITHIN POLICY CONTEXTS

It has been established in Chapter Two that the recent interest in youth involvement is part of a wider shift regarding understandings of citizenship coupled with concerns over youth apathy, youth transitions, and an interest in upholding young people's rights. This shift is accompanied by a discourse of empowerment through active citizenship which constructs young people as active citizens and partners in decision making processes. However, approaches which frame the role of young people in terms of agency and active practice need further clarification. Active citizenship is becoming a complex concept, as it can be interpreted and enacted differently in the different national welfare contexts, according to their "established patterns of state-citizen relationship" (Johansson and Hviden, 2005:101). Therefore claims regarding the potential of youth participation to achieve empowerment through active citizenship need to be studied within the dynamic of the relationship between general discourses of governance, deliberation and empowerment and localised understandings of citizenship, democracy and youth.

This first chapter of analysis aims to identify this interplay in the two national contexts this study draws from and to set thus the context within which participatory opportunities have emerged for the interviewed participants.

Providing information about the policies that aim to structure the experience of the participants assists in better understanding individual experience and processes within the explored spaces. A brief review of developments regarding the relationship between state and citizens in the contexts of Britain and Greece will be provided before youth participation is discussed to highlight its relations with wider policy shifts in both countries. After providing this brief background I will then turn the discussion to youth participation in particular as it has emerged through the analysis of documentation. More specifically, I will be looking at how particular policy initiatives provide legitimacy for the purposes of participation in each context.

As was mentioned in the Methodology chapter, the analysis of the policies was heavily affected by the range and the degree of the frameworks for participation that had been developed and the administrative particularities in each context. Thus, in the UK, there was a range of documents available which, although not legally binding organisations, nevertheless provide guidance regarding the purposes and methods of implementing participation. Furthermore, differential policy-making across the constituent parts of the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) due to devolution reforms results in differences in the direction and provision of youth policies. This meant that this policy review focused on the English context within which this study took place.

In Greece I relied mostly on the documentation of specific participation initiatives because there is a paucity of official sources. Furthermore, as participation is linked to international shifts (and especially in the Greek context to a modernisation process as it is implemented through EU projects) I revised selected EU policy papers which provide the frameworks for the implementation of youth participation. As the aim was to explore discourses of how young people are constructed within these documents and how they are expected to participate, the documentation was analysed looking for discourses regarding notions of citizenship, participation and youth.

In the process of this analysis, policies were not only approached as pieces of legislation and as a set of practices but also as a “struggle for the determination of meanings” (Yanow,1996:19). Neither was there a causal perception of the effect of policies, as this would mean that policies always deliver the intended outcomes at the time of legislation. In contrast, policies are approached as carrying numerous meanings according to previous discourses or meanings at the local and international level, which may affect how they are understood and implemented in particular circumstances. Policies also can have a ‘polysemy’ (Clarke, 2004:41), which means that instead of their meanings being fixed they can change as “they embody social assumptions about the composition of people and their way of life” (Ibid: 43), which might be challenged by different social actors.

As will be shown, general and abstract perceptions of youth participation, often emerging from international discourses, have found their way to the national level where they have merged with other local discourses for which they have provided a renewed legitimacy. As the case of the English context will show, participation was linked to concerns and moral panics about young people's antisocial behaviour, while in Greece segments of the participatory discourse as it was initially legislated in the EU level often reproduced an image of youth as immature.

5.1 English context- Background information

Youth participation in England and across the UK can be understood as part of a governance shift towards renewing the relationship between state and citizen. This shift was instigated by both internal and external developments. Internal developments connect to an intent for reducing state control and the impact of ideological shifts such as the spread of neo-liberal ideas. External developments relate to the impact of policy frameworks within international organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union. These developments were marked by a shift toward markets under Conservative governments, a focus of New Labour on partnership in the delivery of services and the increased involvement of non-state actors in the development of policies through consultation and participation.

British political tradition in the post-war period has been influenced by arguments which stressed representation and a conservative notion of responsibility (Marsh et al., 2007: 52) and a Marshallian universalist conception of citizenship. A shift towards governance in the UK was reflected within public services through a favouring of markets by Conservative governments and a shift towards partnership and citizen involvement with New Labour.

When New Labour took office in 1997, they emphasised a new approach to politics, with active citizenship becoming a core principle alongside choice, voice, decentralisation and partnership between state and civil society. New Labour rejected what it regarded as the Old Left approach to social citizenship (that is, the social democracy of Titmuss and Marshall, typified by state control, high taxation and public spending) and the New Right approach with its hostility to collective forms of welfare (Dwyer, 2004:71). Activation, networks, collaboration and partnership were seen as resolving the tension created by both the dominance of the markets and hierarchical modes of governing (Clarke, 2004). Central to this approach was “a decentralised system of governance which enables citizens to engage in the decision making processes that affect their lives, and encourages governments to increase their accountability through direct mechanisms of citizen oversight” (Blair, 2000, in Jones and Gaventa, 2002:7).

Ideas of active citizens as independent and rational actors who take responsibility for their lives rather than expecting the state to support them, and who voluntarily

engage in the fighting of social exclusion, were central in Labour's policies. For Newman (2005) the New Labour conception of citizenship carries civic republican influences, manifested through a discourse of social exclusion and an aim to promote active citizenship for those experiencing social exclusion, through user and stakeholder involvement, deliberative forums and citizen panels. New Labour's focus on conditionality in the provision of welfare services revealed the influence of communitarian/civic republican discourses which privilege reciprocity and duties over rights. Neo-liberal ideas were also evident in those of its policies which approached citizens as welfare consumers. There was also a revival of discourses of the deserving-undeserving poor, with the deserving poor being re-cast as responsible and active citizens. There was a dominant idea within New Labour discourses that "opportunities can function in the place of social rights" (Morrison, 2003:273). Individuals failing to take up the opportunities are perceived as bad citizens who threaten the cohesion of society. Community is thus depicted as involving shared values which were to be confirmed through partnership. Being a good citizen thus is not defined on its own but is measured against the elements that make a bad citizen (Morrison, 2003; Clarke, 2005).

Thus, this 'hybrid' understanding of citizenship (Clarke, 2005:448) under New Labour recasts citizenship into participation in the labour and consumer markets. Therefore it seems that New Labour's commitment to participatory democracy and social inclusion contradicted a construction of citizenship which aimed to govern behaviour through indirect mechanisms such as responsabilisation, self-regulation and activation (Rose, 2000). Human activity becomes subject to professional

expertise which differentiates between normal and deviant, good and bad citizens. In this context, participation itself becomes a mechanism for the self-regulation of individuals: this is evident as a focus on promoting participation in 'low politics' despite a commitment to making the necessary steps towards creating an active citizenry that is into 'high politics' (Marsh et al., 2007:56).

In an attempt to trace the development of the different official discourses of public participation in the UK public policy, Barnes et al. (2007:7-31) identify four types of public discourses, namely the 'empowered', 'consuming', 'stakeholder' and 'responsible'. These discourses reflect liberal, communitarian or radical ideals, as have been developed in Chapter 2, and their subsequent conceptualisations of participation, and correspond with the above shifts in regard to governance.

More specifically, the 'Empowered public' discourse prioritises the needs of marginalised or disadvantaged social groups and communities. The disadvantages which are faced by communities are perceived as a result of institutionalised discrimination: the focus of analysis is on the identification of the unequal power relations between state and citizens, while any intervention seeks to empower communities in order to act towards overcoming this discrimination. Reflecting neo-liberal ideals, the 'Consuming public' discourse focuses on individuals and their experience as users of public services. Within this discourse individuals are perceived as free agents with a full capacity to exercise choice in the use of public services; with the last being facilitated within the operation of a market of goods and services. In the 'Stakeholder public' discourse, individuals have a stake in the

good governance of public affairs, either as service users, as indirect beneficiaries of services, or as taxpayers. This discourse is perceived as valuable in diverse and pluralistic societies because of its recognition of the different types of stakes or interests which individuals and groups may have in a given society.

The 'Responsible public' discourse focuses upon the responsibilities of individuals and groups in relation to others and the state and places high importance on family and civil society. It also stresses the reciprocity in the relationships between individuals and groups. Fulfilling responsibility is defined as the necessary condition for citizens to exercise the right of demanding value for their money as taxpayers both from local authorities and service providers. While defending these rights, individuals have to prove responsibility in taking care of themselves and their families and engaging in self-help.

Having discussed the recent shifts which have framed the relationship between state and citizens in the UK, I will now turn to present the data gathered through document analysis in regard to how youth participation is implemented within this context. Due to devolution processes in the countries of the UK the following section focuses on youth policies and youth participation as they apply within the English context within which this study took place.

5.2 Youth participation in England

The historical basis of youth participation in England- and arguably across the UK- can be traced back to the years between the 1940s, when the Youth Councils were established and the 1960s when ‘a commitment to youth work was secured and consolidated’ (Davies, 2009: 58). However, organised efforts to give young people more opportunities within decision making can be seen as part of the rethinking of rights in relation to the welfare state in the post war UK, the 1980s consumerism public discourse and the New Labour agenda of modernising government alongside an effort to manage the ‘problem youth’ in the 1990s. At the same time, upholding children’s rights and fulfilling legal responsibilities has been integrated into UK law as a result of the endorsement of UNCRC.

By the early 2000s the UK had witnessed a rapid growth of participatory activity, and participation became an explicit element of youth policies. Tisdall et al. (2008:350) describe how young people’s participation advocates promoted the development of mechanisms such as standards that the organisations would “judge themselves against” and “performance indicators within publicly funded programmes that require youth participation”. These developments allowed for the upsurge of skills training and toolkits for participation while the New Labour government “moved its policy agenda forward through standards and targets” (Ibid.), reflecting a general shift towards managerialism within public services.

Institutionalisation of young people's participation took place mainly through formal structures such as school councils, youth fora and youth parliaments. Currently, participation appears as a main principle in almost every policy paper regarding youth, and it has been implemented by an array of actors spanning the volunteer and private to the public sector. There is a number of government legislation promoting youth participation including *The Children Act* (2004), which provides the legal framework for the function of children and young people's services and appointed the Children's Commissioner with the responsibility to promote young people's interests. The private sector provides research, tools for implementation, evaluation and best practices. For example, the *Hear by Right* standards and *Act By Right* accredited workbook published by the National Youth Agency are also being used to plan and support the involvement of young people in local service design and delivery.

As there is a plethora of mechanisms and structures which offer youth participation programmes throughout the public, private and voluntary sectors in the UK, this review will focus mainly on essential government legislation and reports which give an insight into how youth participation has been officially envisaged and enacted.

5.2.1 Devising standards and targets

Despite this plethora of mechanisms and structures, England does not have a codified framework of 'youth policies', but youth policy is rather dispersed

throughout government departments. In 2001 the government released the paper, *Learning to Listen: Core Principles for the Involvement of Children and Young People* (DfES, 2001:1), which was designed to provide the framework on which all government departments could base their plans to increase the involvement of young people in policy and service design and delivery. This development resulted in raising the profile of youth participation within government departments and in the increasing of structures for youth participation.

In 2005 the government published its plans for youth participation in the *Youth Matters* agenda, which reinforced the government's determination to encourage community involvement and active citizenship for young people. The agenda aimed to build upon the approach of the *Every Child Matters* programme (2003), which set five outcomes:

- being healthy
- staying safe
- enjoying and achieving
- making a positive contribution
- achieving economic wellbeing (DfES, 2003:6-7)

The *Youth Matters* agenda describes its vision by highlighting three main ideas. Firstly, young people need to be encouraged to get involved and volunteer in their local communities. Secondly, young people need to engage in positive activities, through which they will achieve empowerment and therefore shape the services

they receive. Thirdly, the paper discusses the importance of better advice and information for young people in order to be able to exercise choice when they are getting involved. Therefore the three basic aims are that young people will engage in their communities through positive activities which they select after having exercised choice over existing opportunities. Furthermore, the report sets the main thematic areas for youth involvement, which include:

- Empowering young people: Things to do and places to go
- Young People as Citizens: Making a contribution
- Supporting Choices: Information, Advice and Guidance (DfES, 2005)

At the same time the scheme of Opportunity Funds was established, which aimed at giving young people the opportunity to manage and distribute resources in their communities at their own discretion. Young people were encouraged to establish their own projects with some of the suggested schemes being youth cafés, sports tournaments and neighbourhood councils.

In 2007 the Department for Children, Schools and Families published the *Aiming High for Young People Strategy*, the last strand of the Government's *Policy Review of Children and Young People*, which sets spending priorities and the aspirations of what youth services should achieve the next 10 years. The three main principles of the strategy were:

- Empowerment: genuine influence over local services through participation
- Access and inclusion: ensuring all young people have access to opportunities available to them

- Capacity and quality: raising the quality of services and building the capacity of providers (DfES, 2007:14)

Within the strategy, barriers to participation were identified mainly around personal circumstances such as lack of motivation, lack of confidence, costs and lack of awareness. Lack of adequate transport and safety were also acknowledged. One of the priorities highlighted in this report was that there would be an effort from 2008 onwards to build the capacity of third sector organisations to establish projects and provide support for young people to get involved in positive activities.

The 2010 *Aiming High for Young People – Three Years on Revision* maintains the same focus on progressive universalism in providing services for youth, which pinpoints the need for early prevention and a focus on the most disadvantaged within universal services. The policy acknowledges the need to support organisations that aim to develop active citizenship as it is described in the Youth Citizenship Commission's recommendations (2009). The establishment of the Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC) was announced in the 2008 *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, which highlighted the importance of engaging young people as citizens so that they are able to take an active part in society. The YCC argued for efforts to start education for citizenship at a very early stage in life.

The YCC's report follows a tradition of Government funded commissions that have produced reports over time and have affected the way citizenship has been incorporated into policies. The first was the *Crick Report* in 1998 (DfEE, 1998),

which argued for young people becoming involved in the democratic processes and resulted in the introduction of citizenship education in the school curriculum in England and Wales. The second was the Russell Commission (2005) which was responsible for providing a national framework for the social action and engagement of young people and the influence of which is acknowledged in the Youth Matters policy, as it instigated government's commitment to promoting youth volunteerism.

In most papers the aim of participation is the empowerment of young people. There are differences, though, regarding what this empowerment means in practical terms. For the Russell Commission (2005), young people are empowered when they have choice and they are allowed to influence the services they receive. In *Youth Matters*, young people achieve empowerment by being able to shape their services. In the *Aiming High Strategy*, empowerment comes through influencing services not only on the part of young people but also with the involvement of parents and local communities. All of the policy papers pinpoint the value of the youth opportunity fund as a scheme that hands over power to young people, for either enabling the youth-led approach (DfES, 2005) or increasing youth participation (Aiming High, 2007).

5.2.2 Citizenship notions

Overall, the abovementioned reports privilege a form of citizenship which pinpoints the value of participation in the community, educational settings and

training. Young people are expected to behave as active citizens, which is described as being eager to take advantage of the existing opportunities, willing to get involved in every stage of action and aware about the range of choice around them. All papers reflect a policy shift that seeks to reconcile the need for community participation with a consumer-led policy principle that stems from neo-liberal conceptions of citizens' roles.

The need for community participation is highlighted in most papers, where collective action is associated with inclusive and cohesive societies. Furthermore, the close relation of participation and volunteerism in the UK-wide participation discourses was confirmed when *Youth Matters* adopted a version of citizenship that pinpoints volunteerism as the main way to get involved and contribute to the community as it first appeared in the report of the Russell Commission (2005). For the report, it is important that young people have access to volunteering opportunities since:

Society as a whole will benefit as young people express themselves as active citizens. It benefits from the connections young people make when they volunteer – across classes, communities, neighbourhoods and generations. As a result society will be more cohesive (Russell Commission, 2005:6).

Simultaneously, participation is perceived as a means to improve services and increase choice. Such approaches to participation as a means to ameliorate services and decision making were central within the 'consumerism public discourse' which

developed under the Conservative governments in the 1980s and 1990s, and the New Labour agenda of modernising government (Tisdall et al., 2008; Sinclair and Franklin, 2000). This is reflected in youth participation reports through their focus on consumerist citizenship and through privileging positive activities and choice in young people's engagement within their communities. Young people are depicted as free agents who are able to exercise choice in their use of activities, in the same way that they choose services and products in free markets. Youth Matters (2005) provides considerable effort to describe the range of the activities young people should have available. The Russell Commission also introduces the term 'menu of opportunity' (2005:15) to highlight the importance of young people having access to information about the full range of opportunities available to choose from. This includes information about:

- *The range of choice available matching young people's desire to make a contribution with community needs*
- *Peer ratings of opportunities and organisations that provide them*
- *The pathways between different volunteering experiences – from one type of opportunity to another by activity, organisation or time committed*
- *The links between volunteering opportunities and different qualifications and recognition schemes*
- *peer e-mentors providing advice and information to young people around developing their own ideas for action and taking them forward within their communities (Ibid.)*

Choice and awareness of the existing opportunities still remains a basic aim in the 2010 Aim High Report, as it highlights the need for more opportunities for disadvantaged young people, especially on Friday and Saturday nights. It is worth noting, though, that none of the policies mentions structural changes that would enable participation. While disadvantage is acknowledged, the solution put forward is policies targeting vulnerable young people in order to integrate them into society, rather than enabling them to challenge societal practices that increase their vulnerability. In contrast, young people's role is to "shape what is on offer" (Youth Matters, 2005:25) rather than to open up new spaces for expression. It is only in the Youth Citizenship Commission's recommendations (2009) that young people are described as not apathetic but as lacking the conviction that they can make a difference. The commission suggested that policy makers and institutions change so as to make citizenship activities more appealing.

5.2.3 Participation and antisocial behaviour

The aim of enhancing democratic processes and community participation through youth participation appears in government reports alongside a concern about youth disengagement and increasing concerns over anti-social behaviour. As was discussed earlier, policies argue for the value of involvement into positive activities. The value of positive activities lies within the reports of their potential for inducing responsible attitudes and behaviours and are directly linked with benefits for the individual and the community.

According to the writers of the *Youth Matters* report the term ‘positive activities’ describes:

- *Cultural and recreational activities such as arts, heritage or sports events*
- *Safe and enjoyable places to ‘hang out’ or enriching and fun experiences*
- *Sports and constructive activities and volunteering such as clubs, youth groups and classes which have long term benefits for young people (DfES, 2005:63)*

There is a clear suggestion within *Youth Matters* (2005:24-25) that involvement in positive activities is linked with the management and especially prevention of young people’s antisocial behaviour. The *Aim High Strategy* adopts different language and argues that in order to achieve the five outcomes of the *Every Child Matters* policy, young people’s contribution needs to be recognised by society, therefore it is necessary that society makes a shift and starts regarding young people in positive ways rather than as problems to be solved. Despite this positive language, concerns about managing problem youth appear soon after, when the strategy suggests that participation into structured activities reduces societal anxieties over anti-social behaviour:

Empowering young people to play a full role as active citizens is essential to improving their relationship with adults in their communities. Concerns about antisocial behaviour are lower where young people are engaging positively in their local communities, for example through volunteering (Aim High, 2007:13)

Policy focuses on the developmental benefits of participation on individuals and on how engagement produces individuals who control their behaviour within projects. Young people are often constructed as solely responsible for maintaining good relationships with other age groups in the community by behaving responsibly. The ability to control the self, as it is learned within participation projects, is expected to trickle down to the different areas of activity in which they are engaged in their daily lives.

There is a clear link between antisocial behaviour and young people's rights. Young people as responsible citizens are also expected to be aware of their rights and responsibilities. They have the right to receive services but at the same time they must undertake their responsibilities towards the community. *Youth Matters* calls this "balancing opportunities with promoting young people's responsibilities" and is very explicit about its content:

We want a system in which young people have a clear expectation of the support and opportunities available to them, but also a clear understanding that these benefits are not unconditional – young people also have responsibilities... We should outline what is unacceptable and – drawing on evidence of what is practical and what works – sanctions should be used in response to any breaches. (DfES, 2005:22-23)

Similarly, the *Aiming High Strategy* in 2007 distinguishes between young people's rights and responsibilities, but this time parents and communities are also responsible for taking action to deal with problems related to young people. This

strong association of young people's rights with their responsibilities, alongside concerns about anti-social behaviour, gives rise to a stricter, punitive and less tolerant stance towards young people in all major government reports. In this way, policies construct young people as a threat and, in a way, as external actors to their communities.

5.2.4 Implementation

The mechanisms for participation in England include a variety of processes such as youth councils, shadow cabinets, youth parliaments, service specific initiatives, as well as cross-cutting issues or identity focused groups; the last two also operate within third sector organisations. The Russell Commission (2005) highlights as the most successful volunteer experiences those where young people mentor their peers on important issues, and argues for the importance of engaging young people in both the design and implementation of volunteer activities. It also recommends that a national framework needs to have a youth-led approach so as to remain flexible and responsive to young people's views. *Youth Matters* follows the recommendations of the Committee and argues for the need for a process that puts young people "at the heart" (2005:45) of any stage of volunteering, be it design, development or delivery. However, the degree to which these mechanisms are successful in creating opportunities for young people to set agendas, shape procedures and have a real impact on policies and decision making is not dealt with to a great extent within most policy papers.

While *Youth Matters* (2005:32) recognises the value of participation in less structured activities such as sporting events, time spend with friends and travelling, the *Aiming High Strategy* (2007) privileges structured activities over other forms of participation. In contrast to the Russell Commission (2005), which recommends youth-led activities as the best way to involve young people, the *Aiming High Strategy* suggests that structured activities that require a level of organisation and facilitation by adults or peers provide better outcomes. More specifically:

This means that the activity has a goal and a purpose, and some level of organisation and facilitation by a trusted adult or older peer. It can still be spontaneous and enjoyable, but there is an underlying purpose and goal. (Aiming High, 2007:21)

It further suggests that structured activities have better developmental outcomes, employing research evidence which shows that young people who had attended structured and adult supervised activities were more likely to be happy in later life, have good qualifications, be in stable relationships and have decent incomes. In contrast, the strategy argues, unstructured activities such as youth clubs were likely to attract more disadvantaged young people who were at risk of less positive outcomes in later life. Therefore, the strategy suggests it is necessary to introduce structure, organisation and supervision into more unstructured activities. These arguments reveal normative understandings of human life which is understood as involving linear transitions to adulthood and as a contractual relationship which privileges participation in the marketplace. They also relate to government agendas which approach individual well-being and development of positive skills as

prevention and investment into a positive adulthood. It also reflects developments related to managerial shifts within which the achievement of outcomes is pivotal in the implementation of projects (Clarke & Newman, 1996). Here Tisdall et al.'s (2008:350) argument that "technical rational" debates about the implementation of participation create a "false dichotomy between processes" is appropriate. This is because in "truly participative societies" young people should have the right to decide the types of approaches best suited to them.

Concluding remarks on the English context

Principles which Barnes et al. (2007) located within a 'consuming' and a 'responsible' public discourse dominate the assumptions of youth participation policies. Alongside a language of active citizenship and empowerment, youth participation discourses in England have been framed around local anxieties about youth's anti-social behaviour. Young people are constructed as both clients of services and as at risk of committing anti-social behaviour. The primary focus of the policies is to facilitate integration into society and to give young people a sense of control over their projects. Disadvantage and vulnerability is constructed as a temporary state in young people's lives which they can overcome by seeking the right opportunities through civic engagement. Despite the discourse being one of change and empowerment, and although structural barriers are often mentioned, the focus in most papers shifts onto individuals' ability to overcome disadvantage rather onto structural change.

Government policies appear to be driven by what Bessant calls “a political desire to make individuals politically active and capable of self-government” (Bessant, 2003:89). Employing a discourse of ‘youth at risk’ allows for policies that aim to govern and integrate youth, while developing mechanisms to take into account young people’s opinions might give them a sense of inclusiveness but not power.

All policies underplay the value of international perspectives and exclusively focus on local community. By not acknowledging the existence of a global context that mediates and influences youth identity and understandings of citizenship they construct youth identities in narrow local terms. Only the *Aim High Strategy* (2007) uses examples of good practice from the international community, (though focusing only on the US and Australia), and acknowledges the interest of young people in international matters by giving the example of *Making Poverty History*. While many of the ideas and the shifts of policy thinking coincide with those of international/supranational organisations, there is no explicit mention of how English and indeed UK-wide youth policies might be understood within this context.

5.3 Greek context-Background information

The development of youth participation structures in Greece can be understood within a tendency to modernise state institutions as a result of the country joining the EU in 1981. This process of ‘intended Europeanisation’ or modernisation (Ioakimidis, 2000) consisted of a strong intent from policy makers to transfer

organisational styles, policy thinking and governance patterns connected to the process of European integration in order to re-organise the national political system.

Development of Citizenship notions in Greece relates to a process which consists of a move from “pre-modern economic and political forms of organisation to post-modern without ever properly modernising or replacing its own cultural traditions with those of western European modernity” (Gropas et al., 2010:1). Accordingly, citizenship notions have been constructed through histories related to the struggle for national independence, ideological tensions (Mouzelis, 1996; Mouzelis and Pagoulatos, 2004), the restoration of democracy and a more recent process of rapid westernisation.

Dominant understandings of citizenship stem from communitarian thinking, often drawing from the civic republican tradition of antiquity, while social liberal discourses became more prevalent in the 1980s, as expressed through an increase in social spending (Guillén and Matsaganis, 2000) especially with the reforms for universal access to health and education implemented by successive Socialist governments. These universalist conceptions were short-lived because the focus of the government shifted in the mid-1990s to the economy (Mouzelis and Pagoulatos, 2004) with entry into the EMU (European Monetary Union) becoming the overriding aim (Guillén and Matsaganis, 2000, Pagoulatos, 2003).

For Wassenhoven (2008), governance discourses were introduced in the Greek context in direct and indirect ways. The direct ways include the endorsement of governance principles such as openness, accountability, participation, effectiveness and coherence through EU policies such as *Sustainability and Regional Development*, with environmental and urban regeneration projects being at their core. Indirectly, Greek governments introduced legislation regarding decentralisation and the empowerment of local authorities from 1994 onwards. More specifically, concerns about making the relationships between state and citizens 'friendlier' (Hlepas, 2010) were expressed in the 1990s through legislation which aimed to improve the quality of administrative services (decentralisation) and the provision of services such as mental health reforms. Although these changes reduced bureaucracy, they did not provide any opportunity for citizens to directly get involved in decision making, other than filling in complaints or online forums (e.g. the *Politeia* programme, 2000) .

Greece is mainly characterised by discretionary governance, which refers to policy making and governance being a matter for the state (Hagendijk and Irwin, 2006). The state employs 'experts', officials and organisations to take decisions, while interaction with the public is kept to a minimum. At times the state is forced by NGOs (Botetzagias et al., 2004) to adopt more deliberative forms of public involvement in order to minimise political costs, but these 'outbursts' of deliberative democracy do not last long, as government often retreats back to discretionary strategies, resisting efforts to initiate debates.

This focus on discretionary decision making is supported by a large part of Greek literature and research regarding governance and public policies. While the literature often accuses the political system of cultivating learned helplessness, vagueness regarding citizen duties, lack of capacity building and reinforcement of citizens' passiveness, participation is often approached as a matter of cooperative culture, as is exemplified through network development (Dimadama and Zikos, 2010) and as a learning process devoid of power relations.

Mainstream research on public policy is rather focused on criticising the lack of success in achieving the targets posed by the introduction of EU programmes which often require citizen involvement. Local conditions labelled as 'weak civil society' are interpreted as constraints to forming new forms of governance such as partnerships and community involvement (Getimis and Grigoriadou, 2004, discussing sustainable urban development). Partnerships are mostly approached as a requirement to effectively implement policies rather than as a need for the local communities.

Andreou (2006) criticises what he sees as a focus on how the country adjusts to given policies (EU driven) and a lack of analysis of local power relations. By focusing on the institutional factors that mediate exogenous influences (historical institutionalism), Andreou discusses the example of cohesion policies to highlight how existing relations of power mediate the implementation of EU policies and, most importantly, the opportunities for local communities to get involved.

Despite an increase in their resources related to the adoption of EU guidelines for cohesion, non-governmental actors are still dependent on central government. This involves a tradition of corporatism in the 1980s and 1990s within which local and regional governance institutions, civil society associations and professional organisations were selected for funding directly from central government. Recent developments such as setting up mechanisms and structures to improve managing capacity through putting technocrats in charge similarly did not alter the power imbalances within local communities, but instead reinforced centralism. In addition, by being less visible, these mechanisms minimised opportunities for local actors to become part of the processes (Andreou, 2006).

While there was a move towards a more participatory governance, in reality, the need for cooperation is not only rarely fulfilled but often resisted by the public administration and underplayed by a lack of capacity of new institutions to deliver deliberation. Furthermore, the public is still treated as immature and a threat to state authority. Recent social work research regarding the role of grassroots networks in post-natural disaster management (Pentaraki, 2011) describes a battle of interests involving affected groups demanding involvement in the design and management of post-disaster interventions and government dismissal of consultation as a threat to its legitimacy.

Despite this context, the opportunities for social groups to express their voice have increased (Ioakimidis, 2000; 2001). In 2008, Wassenhoven identified a shift towards organising grassroots movements around quality of life/environment, despite a state of relative prosperity and overwhelming consumerism. Similarly, Theoharis (2010) acknowledged through his (post-youth rioting) 2008 research, a shift among youth towards post-materialist politics which rejects association with traditional party politics.

Having set the context within which the relationship between state and citizens has unfolded in Greece I will now proceed to present the data gathered through document analysis in regard to youth participation in Greece.

5.4 Youth participation in Greece

In the absence of a specific policy or framework that guides the implementation of youth services in Greece, this analysis will focus on the major available youth participation programmes and the agencies which implement them. Since the growth of youth services, and especially of programmes aiming at increasing the participation of youth, stem from the responsibilities of the country towards larger international organisations such as the EU and the United Nations, I will attempt to illustrate how their initiatives have affected the development of specific policies for youth.

Apart from the state managed opportunities for youth participation, there are more participatory arrangements led by charities and NGOs. Political party youth organisations thrive in the universities but they have created a negative image in society of ideologically elitist groups who share the same mistrust with the parties they belong to. A growing number of young people have chosen self-organising in youth-led groups which in many cases are orientated towards issues such as the environment, activism, and human rights. These groups get their funding either through organising events, the General Secretary for Youth (GNG), the *Youth in Action* programme or other EU streams and Unesco programmes.

5.4.1 Synchronising with international practice

Involvement of young people in public affairs is traditionally understood in the Greek context as volunteerism and involvement in party politics. Ioakimidis (2000) argues that processes of modernisation or westernisation have offered opportunities for civil society to become involved in government processes which were exclusively dominated by the state until then. In that way one could argue that social groups such as youth, whose interests were marginalised within national policy making, became more visible under the pressure from Brussels. Undeniably, the Greek state was under increasing pressure to respond to EU initiatives that required legislation, development of structures and implementation of policies to deal with youth matters. According to the 2001 IARD report on European youth: “Without the pressure from Europe, the Greek government would not include

youth in its priorities” (2001:80). This effort towards modernisation is clearly reflected when the General Secretariat for Youth (GNG) discusses its objectives.

The GNG is currently the only state organisation responsible for the mainstreaming of youth policy. Its establishment in 1982 is presented within its publications as a development through which:

Greece was harmonized with the European and international practice by creating high quality independent and integrated government services for young people (GNG, 2008: n.p.)

The activities of the Secretariat throughout the 1980s and 1990s were focused on targeting young people at risk, such as the unemployed, and implementing EU projects. General areas of priority for the GNG until 2010 included: youth participation, information, leisure and entrepreneurship. From 2010 onwards these priorities, as mentioned in the inaugural speech of the new General Secretary, have been reviewed. The three main areas of policy are shifting to: (1) Unemployment and working conditions; (2) Social exclusion, integration, youth rights, participation; (3) Environment, climate change, green growth (GNG , 2010a).

While pre-2010 participation was seen as an area standing alone, in the new framework for action it is becoming less of a priority, sidelined by prospects of economic hardship and lack of social mobility for youth. Moreover, putting participation together with often competing concepts such as social exclusion, integration and rights shows a lack of clear understanding of what participation is

supposed to achieve. The publications of the GGNG offer a wider recognition of the socio-economic problems young people face. Unemployment, unsafe employment and lack of representation are often mentioned, but are not followed by proposals for structural interventions to support young people. Although young people are depicted as constrained by the structures and as unable to make the transition to adulthood, the GNG offers its sympathy and goes on to discuss the need to unleash young people's creativity.

*The imperative, in this socio-economic context, is to promote the positives, the skills, the talents and the concerns of the most creative part of Greek society. This has to happen in a framework of a new policy with the underlying philosophy: for us young people are not a problem but a **rare resource** on which we need to 'invest' (GNG, 2010: n.p; emphasis in original)*

A commitment to the most creative parts of youth reveals an interest in specific segments of the youth population, which possess substantial amounts of capital, and those who are capable of achieving, or have already achieved some success. That the GGNG declares an approach to youth as a resource rather than a risk is a positive shift, there is still, though, an understanding of youth citizenship, not as an on-going process, but as a status referring to the future. Therefore young people's participation is aligned with a version of citizenship found in the EU policies, which sees participation as preparation or investment for the creation of future responsible citizens.

In 2001 the European Commission published the “White Paper: a new impetus for European youth”, which was the first EU paper to set parameters for youth work in all European Union countries that were to implement youth policies under the method of open coordination. The White Paper for Youth was the result of consultation with young people and was coherent with the Commission’s White Paper on Governance which aimed “to open up the European Union’s decision making process to the people who will be affected by those decisions, and that includes young people” (2002:4). The paper was the result of the ‘governance’ approach in the EU and its value was seen within an approach to tackle the ‘citizenship deficit’ caused by the widening gap between young citizens of the EU and the decision making bodies at national and international level.

The Paper suggests that the best way to take young people into account is through consultation and involvement in decision making. The priorities of the paper concerning the field of youth work include participation, information and voluntary service, with participation being the most important of all. The paper employs a discourse of active citizenship that describes young people as responsible and willing to get involved in their communities in order to affect decision making. It also approaches participation as a multilayered process, which takes place not only at a local but also at an international level. In this way the citizenship envisaged for the new Europe involves a new European citizen who is aware of European issues, gets involved primarily on the community level and makes use of opportunities to take part in projects at an EU level (mainly exchanges), is responsible, expresses

opinions, affects policy making and is able to choose the form of participation he/she wishes.

The projects of GNG are synchronised with the priorities set in the White Paper, under the principle of open coordination. The national agency also supports the function of the National Institute, which implements the European programmes and especially the *Youth in Action* 2007-13 programmes. While the European Commission is responsible for the programme, managing the annual budget and setting thematic priorities, targets and criteria, it is the national agencies that have to promote and implement the programme by providing administrative services, support to applicants and evaluation. A large number of projects implemented in Greece, both in the state and voluntary sector, draw their funding through this programme. What becomes clear from this framework is that priorities are set at the top, without making it clear how specific objectives have been chosen over others, while there is limited space for national agencies to adapt them to their aims.

5.4.2 Citizenship notions

Young people are constructed in Greek official publications as citizens in the making, as beneficiaries and as being in a process of development. The existing participation initiatives are characterised by a lack of youth involvement in the design of initiatives. Efforts are often apparent in official publications regarding participation in Greece to both accommodate the rhetoric of international

organisations and speak the language of the local context. In this way, activation is often presented alongside local concerns about a need to train the youth in existing forms of political expression or, on the other hand, in reducing injustice by closing the intergenerational gap.

Active citizenship always appears in official publications and is used alongside a need for young people to mature and become responsible citizens. In most official publications revised for this analysis the term ‘active citizenship’ is often presented as the aim of the respective projects. There is not much of an effort though to explain the meaning of the concept as most of the time it is described not by what it includes but mostly by what it opposes. For example, active citizenship often appears to be important because it counteracts the development of passive and apathetic citizens. Furthermore, the language of active citizenship is introduced alongside traditional perceptions of youth as ‘un-critical’, which means not-yet-developed, emotional and immature.

Within the initiative of the Teenagers’ Parliament, participation and active citizenship are both constructed as the result of maturing and learning how the system works. Moreover the programme aims to help young people:

to enter a process of initiation to the values, practices and difficulties of democracy as a means of collective consultation and governing (Youth Parliament: n.p)

This comment on young people's level of understanding implies that active citizenship comes as a result of a progress towards maturity as exemplified by the ability to understand the system. There is a suggestion that knowing the system brings appreciation rather than opposition, because if young people know how complicated it is to mobilise government then they will accept it in its current form rather than express dissatisfaction. Thus participation is constructed as an 'initiation' to the system whose mechanisms young people have to master after a process of training. Thus the content of the term 'active citizenship' becomes devoid of its initial meaning in the international context, which involved the creation of responsabilised citizens, replacing it with one that matches a local discourse that sees democracy as an affair of the 'mature' and able to bargain for collective decision making and reproduce existing practices of government.

A local discourse which constructs young people as immature is obvious in the language used to describe the aims of the Local Youth Councils (LYC), where a discourse of active citizenship as described in the EU publications coexists with the stated need of young people to mature and learn "how to adopt a critical standpoint in everyday life in order to become accomplished citizens" (2009b:n.p). The LYCs came into operation for the first time in 1997 and were implemented within several city councils and prefectures under the auspices of the GNG. In 2006, this initiative obtained official status and responsibility for its implementation was transferred to local city councils. According to Enactment Law (3443/06), engagement with the Local Youth Councils ensures the activation of young people in common matters; it brings about the spread of democratic values and helps to bring to the fore the

needs of young people. It furthermore enables young people to get to know their local community. Being able to communicate with the elected local politicians and interact with official institutions in the local community is presented as a step towards bridging the intergenerational gap.

The GNG takes this all-encompassing rhetoric of the Ministry of Education further to add its own discourse, according to which the LYCs can also: “empower the voice of young men and women between 15 and 28 years old, invite them to get active, allow them be heard and have a say over local issues” (GNG, 2009a:n.p).

Thus, segments of an international discourse of participation are obvious when participation in LYCs is presented as performed by young people acting as active citizens, who express a clear interest in working for the improvement of their communities; ideas which are often perpetuated within EU programmes such as the *Youth in Action* programme, whose main aim is to: “promote young people’s active citizenship in general and their European citizenship in particular” (2003:4).

Local concerns are reflected when the aim of LYCs is framed within a discourse of maturing and of bringing about intergenerational justice through fair distribution of resources. This commitment to bridging the inter-generational gap is officially expressed by more recent GNG publications which have included the aim to open a public dialogue regarding justice between generations. According to its general secretary, young people face the biggest burden of the economic conditions, both because they struggle to make the transition into the labour market and

independence and because they will have to deal with the consequences of the economic state of the country in the long term. This injustice has created a “triple debt” (2010b:6) including “financial burden”, “social insurance debt” and “ecological deficit”, which jeopardise the well-being of young people.

A similar process of bringing together segments of different discourses is obvious in the official documentation of the Greek Ombudsman for Children. The Ombudsman is a development that relates to the obligations of the country deriving from the endorsement of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on January 26, 1990 (ratified in Greece as Law in 1992). This resulted in the launching of The Children’s Ombudsman, which has operated within the framework of the Greek Ombudsman since 2003. The mission of the Children’s Ombudsman is to promote the rights of children and young people (0-18 years old) as they are defined by the UNCRC; in practice this includes handling complaints, intervening to safeguard children’s rights and monitoring whether these rights are respected, endorsed and implemented in the relevant agencies.

The Ombudsman has recently taken a massive step by establishing a nationwide youth advisory body, which reflects the changing demographics of the country and whose role is to provide information about the issues that concern young people. Similarly to other agencies, the Ombudsman seems to be drawing from different discourses. For example:

By its experience the Ombudsman of the Children believes that teenagers are capable of expressing their views with maturity, creativity and

commitment when they are given the opportunity and the responsibility to participate in such processes, and to take initiatives in matters that affect them. Moreover, it has become imperative that children's and young people's voices be heard and taken into account seriously on all issues affecting their daily life, especially in the field of education. (2009:50)

As the above extract shows, there is an evident discourse of participation as the right of the young people to raise their voice, as it connects the agency with the UN. At the same time, though, alongside this discourse of young people as bearers of rights, more discourses are being incorporated in its mission statement. Firstly, it employs a discourse of active citizenship, both when teenagers are constructed as able to exercise self-regulation and when participation is represented as both an opportunity and a responsibility. Secondly, the Ombudsman's focus on education contradicts with its statement that it aims to address all issues that affect young people's lives. Despite an effort to exceed traditional perceptions of young people as immature, at the same time the Ombudsman follows another local discourse that carries the moral judgement that a teenager's place is within education. One would argue that a number of young people outside education, work or training (NEETs) are been left out of the process of making their voices heard. In this way, raising ones voice is constructed as an opportunity and responsibility for young people who have already been successfully included in educational processes.

As a last example of the understanding of the term on the national level, we can cite the National Youth Council (ESyN), which is a partnership of 59 non-governmental youth organisations which officially represents youth in national and

international processes. In their recommendations, the active citizen was presented as opposing contemporary modes of being a citizen and especially being a corrupted citizen. Phenomena of corruption in social and political life were perceived as inhibiting the creativity of the majority of the youth population and activation was pictured as the proper 'reaction' in order to reduce corruption (Esyn, 2008). In these approaches, the 'young active citizen' is depicted as a citizen of a different quality, equipped with the necessary ethics to fight corruption. The identity of this kind of young citizen is framed to revolve around a responsibility to change the country and is devoid of socio-economic background, as it assumes that any young person should and could develop this character. Thus while the 'active citizen' on an international level is assumed to be concerned with accountability at the local level, this notion is further expanded in order to include a concern with increased phenomena of misuse of public resources.

Concluding remarks on the Greek context

The story of participation in Greece is not an original and coherent one but it constitutes a range of discursive segments which aim to re-tell international discourses of participation. In the process of this effort, segments of this international discourse are lost or re-interpreted, while local discourses infuse it with a local character.

As is apparent from the above, the discourse on youth in the existing programmes for youth in Greece connects mostly with the construction of young people as

‘becoming’ or as ‘democratic citizens in formation’. All the examples of the mentioned projects showed that young people are conceptualised as immature and in the process of becoming citizens even in the cases where the projects target young people who are already adults, eligible to vote and in many cases in their late 20s. But the commonalities end here: Lack of coordination under a framework for youth policies leads to lack of purpose and direction.

Lack of interest in youth policies in general and the reliance of the government on supranational organisations that set the standards for youth participation allows for an obvious interplay between imported versions of citizenship and local discourses of engagement and youth. At the local level, young people’s relation to the authorities is defined by an increasing gap between citizens and public institutions over the last three decades which has resulted in feelings of being left out of social progress and a form of citizenship that sees civic action as an unachievable principle. At the same time, projects which originate from international organisations value individual engagement in decision making and invite young people in Greece to become involved, active and responsible citizens.

This apparent gap between the local and the international seems to be reconciled with the production of participation discourses which use segments of the international discourse, especially that of active citizenship, but at the same reveal an effort to evade disrupting existing power relations as they are expressed by local perceptions of youth as immature, as citizens in the making and as victims of previous generations. While there is a language of involvement, at the same time an

understanding of the affairs of democracy as being restricted to those able to master its rules (the ‘mature’ and ‘creative’ ones) predominates. Thus, despite a language of activation, current initiatives for participation seek to reinforce the existing order and thus continue depriving young people of agency.

Chapter Summary

As this research is not looking to directly compare the two contexts but instead to explore how participation is approached, the resources used for each context differed. Although an effort to maintain rigour was central, at the same time there were clear limitations to what was to be used in each context. In the UK, for example, decisions had to be made in order to choose from a variety of publications (as they reflect the variety of agencies involved) and to focus on the official state-driven frameworks which apply to the English context. In Greece, on the other hand, lack of publications and frameworks for action shifted the focus onto the documentation of particular projects with official status. In relation to this exploration, two major issues evolved in regard to both contexts: the first refers to a commitment to governance processes in each context and the administrative ability to promote youth participation; the second relates to discursive constructions of participation as they have been widened to incorporate local discourses.

In regard to the first point, in the English context a clear commitment was apparent in the policies to develop participative structures and frameworks as part of a wider commitment to governance processes. The focus was not on whether participation

is a desirable process but rather on ways in which to develop the capacity of structures to deliver youth participation. Youth participation frameworks reflect a context within which there is a focus on enabling citizens to develop ownership and responsibility of themselves and their communities. Willingness by the state to open up deliberation processes is coupled with an interest in controlling young people's behaviour and producing the citizens of the future. Therefore, there is a 'technical rational' approach, within which means to achieve participation are clearly pre-described and activities are clearly laid out in order to deal with the perceived barriers to youth involvement.

In Greece, approaches to youth participation appear to align with ways in which processes of governance are being introduced to the country. These processes, despite the language of modernisation, seek to maintain established power relations, with the state and its experts being at the top of the social hierarchy. There was no clear understanding of the aims of youth participation, while efforts to construct young people as active citizens appear to develop in a context within which public involvement is understood in terms of representative democracy and administration is delivered on the basis of expertise/knowledge rather than direct citizen involvement. While the case of Greece reveals power relations in regard to the relationship between citizen and state in a stark way, it also reveals hierarchical power relations within supra-national institutions. This is obvious when the apparent lack of interest in participation at the part of the Greek state is combined with its inability to contribute to the design of such policies. This ties in well with Featherstone's (1998:26) observation that Europeanisation processes have placed

national governments in the European south in a weak position, as they had limited influence on the devising of logics and organisational traits of policies and became more the 'import agents' of the new measures than their key authors.

In regard to discursive constructions of participation, a process is evident in both contexts through which the terms 'participation' and 'active citizen' have been widened to incorporate local discourses of citizenship and youth. In England, youth participation is seen as means to control anti-social behaviour, ensure social order within communities and create citizens who are informed, exercise choice and are able to take responsibility for themselves. In Greece, youth participation is seen as a way to develop future citizens who are mature, creative, understand the political system, develop an ability to communicate with power holders, and take advantage of the opportunities given to them to express their opinions. Despite the language of empowerment and recognition of the socio-economic barriers that young people are facing in both contexts, there has been no discussion regarding actions to overcome structural barriers. Young people are presented as a homogeneous group and as being alien to the networks of power relations characteristic in each context. Furthermore the scope of activation and change was framed within the boundaries of personal responsibility rather than collective action for social change.

CHAPTER 6: ENACTING PARTICIPATION

In Chapter Three I discussed how a discussion of power relations within spaces for participation can bring up the different facets (forms and aims) that participation might aspire to achieve in a given context. An approach which sees participation as the product of socially embedded discourses which are not separate from other domains of social experience allows space to recognise the potential of participation to take up multiple forms and meanings and to thus achieve either reproductive or creative outcomes. Reproductive outcomes consist of efforts to co-opt participants, restrict their voices, and condition their actions in order to promote particular agendas and to thus reproduce existing power relations. The creative outcomes of participation are evident when projects function as the arenas within which dialogue and collaboration is promoted, difference is respected and the rules of the game are negotiated. Furthermore, these spaces challenge hierarchical relations by exploring alternative practices and by giving silenced actors possibilities to influence policies.

This chapter looks at which facets of participation were prevalent in participants' accounts of the way they engage with spaces for participation and of the discourses they used to legitimise their group action. Chapter Three has also introduced an

understanding of agency as being made up of three analytical elements, namely the iterative, projective and practical-evaluative, which gives us an insight into the different ways in which social actors engage with their contexts. Therefore, this chapter also explores the type of agentic orientations promoted within the dominant facets of participation identified within the participants' accounts in regard to processes in the spaces in which they were involved. In doing so it explores roles, responsibilities, group dynamics and the range of activities in which the participants presented themselves as involved. While the analysis is based on narrative reconstructions and not observation of practices themselves, this study can still gain an insight into processes and power relations within spaces since, as was discussed in Chapter Three, a space is 'social morphology' (Lefebvre, 1991:94). Thus representations of available resources, budgets and processes through which participants can get involved can give an insight to the habitual and taken for granted natures of these spaces and inform us about the existing power interplay. Therefore to better understand how spaces for youth participation operate and what kind of action is enabled for youth, the aim of this study was to gain an insight into the daily processes of the groups which help to develop (and are sustained by) shared interpretations of 'what the group is about'.

Patterns of involvement and distribution of roles and responsibilities were affected by the particular group to which the participants belonged. For this reason a brief description of the major characteristics of the participating groups is necessary. As was discussed in the Methodology, the choice of groups included cabinets/councils

which is the main way through which participation is promoted, but at the same time I was concerned about including alternative ways of undertaking participation.

Table 9 describes the groups and aims to account for distinctions in the literature discussed in previous chapters such as issue focused vs. decision making focused, which reflect discussions on the changing nature of youth involvement (Bennet, 2007; Bang, 2005) and relation to state (formality-informality). This also reflects a discussion in Chapter 3 regarding the binary distinction between adult-led and youth-led participation. A distinction between invited (Brock et al., 2001; Cornwall, 2002; 2004b) and created (Cornwall, 2002; 2004b) spaces for participation (also discussed in Chapter 3) has proved a valuable tool for analysis. By being concerned with invitation, this analytical tool considers the interests of those involved in particular spaces, the interplay of power relations within spaces for participation and relations with formal structures that frame the principles of participation. For this reason I will be using this distinction throughout the analysis both to establish a common language in presenting the groups and in an effort to explore whether invitation can have an exploratory value regarding the outcomes of participation in this study.

While grouping the participating groups according to national context could have been an option, the researcher opted to group according to invitation. This does not deny the importance of the national context, which will be considered throughout the analysis, but highlights a conviction that invited and created spaces carry a

similar potential to accommodate for power relations in both national contexts. Finally, while professionals have been interviewed in several agencies, the table focuses only on spaces where young people were also interviewed. As this study focuses on young people's experience of participation, it is deemed appropriate to include data from professional interviews only in those cases where the impact of the relationship between professionals and young participants on the participatory outcome is considered. This is out of an interest in avoiding representing young people's experience through the lenses of the professionals.

Table 9-Description of groups involved in the study

	Invited		Created		
	Borough Youth Service (Shadow Youth Cabinet, Town Council) UK	Local Authority (Local Youth Council, Youth Info Centre) GR	Borough Youth Service (LGBT group) UK	Youth Activist group GR	Youth-led research group UK
Issue focused			√	√	√
Decision making focused	√	√			
Formal	√	√			
Informal			√	√	√
Youth-led				√	√
Adult-led	√	√	√		

6.1 The Facets of participation

Each group had its own shared interpretation about its organisational character, its uniqueness and its purpose. In order to highlight the particular discourses that the members of each group of this study shared, I will discuss how they presented their practices and how they reflected and sustained the particular constructions (statements and beliefs) about the group. Yanow (1996:193) uses the term ‘myth’ to highlight the socially constructed narratives created and believed by a group of people as they “compel emotional as well as intellectual belief, they socialize and moralize, and thereby prompt action”. Although the present study draws from this previous concept, its adoption still remains problematic in discussing shared narratives expressed by the participants in two ways. Firstly, the word ‘myth’ in itself carries connotations and a conceptual baggage which implies that shared narratives are illusions, not true, false or negative. Secondly, there is an assumption in Yanow’s interpretation of myths as being products of conflicting values because they “divert attention from a puzzling part of people’s reality ... from the conflict between members’ desires to achieve explicit agency goals and the impossibility of their doing so” (Yanow, 1996:191). While the last point might be the case in some circumstances, in other cases shared discourses may just bind groups together and establish links to wider policies; thus using this term would impose a priori meanings on the data.

In line with this point, and as this study is aiming not to offer an analysis of the groups on the basis of organisational theory but mostly to identify and explore the function of beliefs and practices which shape group identities, these will be referred to as ‘group-discourses’. More specifically the focus is on how these group-discourses function to enact a common group identity and what they tell us about power relations in specific contexts, as they exemplify through agenda setting, existing hierarchies, autonomy in relation to policy agendas, funding and dominant practices narrated by the participants.

Attending meetings was by far the most commonly referred to activity by the participants in all groups. Meetings beyond their task-oriented function included another interaction which was more symbolic and which enabled the participants to negotiate “shared interpretations of what organisational membership entail” (Lawrence and Corwin, 2003:930). Furthermore, organising events, travelling and managing projects were core to the activities, while conducting research and promoting communication with the community was also part of the activities of many groups. These activities were depicted as giving rise to and sustaining routinised interactions such as roles, responsibilities and membership rules. Their symbolic significance consisted of functioning as “interaction rituals which constitute boundaries of membership” in a group (Lawrence, 2004: 118-9) and enacted a sense of belonging or group identity.

Exploring these activities allowed the researcher to gain an insight into how young people were constructed as participants as a result of the interplay of power relations in the particular spaces in which they were active. More specifically, it allowed the researcher to look at how young people were expected to behave, what the rules of involvement were and how they were negotiated, how decision making occurred, what was to be discussed and done, how methods were used and finally the purpose of the organised actions. In exploring the range of participatory roles available to participants, emotional ties mentioned as having been developed through the regular activities and group-discourses, as well as opinions about the effectiveness of projects, the researcher was able to identify patterns which then formed three dominant facets of participation in the explored spaces.

The term facet is selected as it can accommodate for the fact that the dominant trends identified through participants' accounts appear in varying degrees and not in isolation. The dominance of a facet relates to how participants talked about the type and scope of participatory processes within the projects in which they were involved. For this reason it is possible to talk about predominant facets of participation in the explored spaces which are more or less performative, managerial or creative in focus and which promote specific forms of agency and participation. Rather than being mutually exclusive, the facets appear to different degrees within spaces, since the focus within a particular project might shift from the one facet to the other as the activities alternate. Furthermore, one facet might encompass elements of the others; for example, the creative facet may necessitate first the ability to perform, while the managerial facet might provide the financial

means which sustain a creative focus. In the same way that power relations are not static, similarly facets are not fixed points that are easily retrievable in every instant of youth participation. The aim that the use of facets serves in this study is to rather identify which facet predominates and what this tells us about relations, processes and the potential of participation within the given spaces, than to identify the best type of participation.

The coming sections will initially provide a description of these facets and then, as a response to claims regarding the empowering potential of participation, the discussion will turn to locating the origin of these facets. In doing so, the internal and external conditions of the explored spaces are identified which appear in the accounts of the participants to set the boundaries for action and give rise to these facets.

6.1.1 The performative facet of participation

When this facet of participation was predominant there was a focus on the daily/weekly performance of the groups and the meeting of specific targets, while participation itself was understood as involving personal development and organisation of events. Participants were preoccupied with issues regarding roles within the groups, respect of hierarchy, attendance and development of teamwork skills.

Regarding individual development, participants listed skills they had gained through their involvement such as public speaking, organisational skills and overcoming shyness when communicating with people. Participants would spend a large part of the interview discussing the profits they had personally gained through their involvement. Members of the invited group in the UK, for example, would list travelling, vouchers, free lunches and meeting different people. The same group was involved in organising an array of events such as youth awards, public meetings to enable dialogue with the community, sports events and Christmas celebrations. With the exception of Christmas events, which the local youth did not attend, the majority of activities were presented by the participants as very successful and enjoyable.

The invited group in Greece similarly expressed an understanding of participation as attending meetings. Organising events was also mentioned but their activity was mainly framed around attending meetings, as they lacked the resources to organise the range of events they wanted to. They were critical of leisure events because they seemed to them to be an outdated way of performing participation as they thought they failed to attract young people. Moreover, the events they mentioned attending were often very formal and organised within either the city council or existing political structures. For example, at the time of the interview the council was involved in an initiative of the local ministry regarding the environment and in particular the pollution of the city harbour.

Specific and well-defined roles and a focus on hierarchy and teamwork were dominant in the accounts focused on group performance. On a daily or routinised basis, the participants who were active in invited groups in both the UK and Greece had clearly defined roles, and they described their individual activity as directly linked to their official role within a group. The groups were organised around the central role of Chair in the UK and President in Greece, who held principal responsibility for the communication between the youth council and the relevant political structures in each context. The UK participants would refer to duties which included roles such as chair, vice-chair or secretary. In Greece the invited group was developed to mirror the structures of the local city council, and their areas of activity were strictly related to those of the city council, namely education, environment, culture, sports, entertainment and charitable activities. The participants stated that they were happy with the structure of their groups and pinpointed that reflecting the structure of the general organisations they were part of made their actions more focused, reflected their context and allowed them to coordinate with their host organisation.

While created groups were less preoccupied with roles, for the members of the invited groups having a clear distribution seemed to be essential. A major part of the interviews with the members of the UK invited group for example revolved around roles and other members' level of commitment. Keeping up with group-related responsibilities appeared to be a source of tension, as the participants

complained about other members who did not respond adequately to their obligations. This involved issues of time management and of balancing responsibilities especially those related to school. The participants in this group often expressed emotional intensity as they described themselves feeling irritated on specific occasions when other participants failed to maintain a similar 'common focus of attention' (Lawrence and Corwin, 2003:930) to their own. Commitment and dedication were stressed as essential elements for participation, while young people in the group who did not behave accordingly were depicted as exercising a conscious choice and, as James concluded, if they decide not to take up the opportunities given to them, "they could just stay home relaxing and do other things". For Robin, failing to respond to individual duties had consequences for the process of deliberation:

I mean for a few weeks we haven't had a chair because she had a lot of time off but this itself is affecting the rest of the group, people aren't coming in and people are sending apologies and people are not bothering whatsoever because the meeting is not going according to plan (Robin, Invited space)

At the same time Robin expressed respect for rules and hierarchy as he made clear that, despite his disagreement with the Chair, he was not willing to take over her role, although he was perfectly capable of doing it. In addition to tensions regarding the different degrees of commitment in the group, participants also mentioned tensions deriving from the fact that as a diverse group they have different ideas about issues or about methods to achieve specific targets.

Despite expressing these feelings, the participants repressed any discussion of this as conflict, but rather structured it as a normal process of exercising democratic principles. Admitting it as a conflict would entail resolution for “the reformulation or adaptation of rules and norms” (Barnes et al., 2007: 61). Instead the participants framed it as a democratic process which included “com[ing] back to that issue ... that is changing minds and mind sets ... changing your view because you didn’t know this [other ideas] before” (Jas, Invited space). The group exhibited an understanding of ‘democracy’ which involved members compromising by following the suggestions of the majority, irrelevant of their individual positions. This was expected to occur through processes of changing individual dispositions to fit to a group consensus rather than changing group functions. In reconstructing these events as an exercise of democratic practices, similarly to any democratically managed modern organisation, and by incorporating this into the general group-discourse of efficiency, the participants avoided acknowledging disagreement and possibly disturbing the consensus in their projects.

In groups with a focus on the performative aspect of participation, young people would state that the aim of their action was to help other young people and give them voice, but were unable to make the connections as to how their involvement was contributing to the general aims of their host organisation, and in extreme cases were not aware of the aim of the project. In the case of a created group in the UK, at the time of interview the group was organising focus groups to discuss a

specific piece of new government legislation on youth. It was impossible to identify this piece of legislation, as none of the members was able to recall it; for example the only thing Janice could say about it was that the government implies with this new law “that the young people are not responsible”. Nadine was involved in interviewing young people in her community about their responses to this proposed legislation, writing an article on the responses she gathered, and she was planning to get involved in the launching of a website for further research on this issue.

In more extreme cases, the participants responded that their engagement with specific topics was instigated by the suggestions of youth workers and not their particular interest in the topic. In others, although participants recalled having being involved in application processes, they were not aware of how they obtained their budget and were not involved in its management. In one distinctive case, one participant, Brian, responded that he did not care much about the activities as he felt he was forced to attend by another service from which he was getting support for his learning difficulties. He knew he was there for the accreditation but he did not care, as he only wanted to find a job. These extreme cases give indications of a facet of participation that exceeds the performative and borders the ‘absent’.

Furthermore the groups concerned with their daily interactions and with meeting their targets expressed less motivation in actively establishing and continually promoting communication with young people within their community. The invited

group in Greece, for example, expressed a conviction that elections offered the best opportunity to communicate with their pool, alongside websites and online polls which facilitated a relationship and kept the elected members informed about youth in the community. For the members of this group, it was down to young person's responsibility to activate, and seek a relationship with the elected members or find an appropriate project to get involved in. Invited groups in both the UK and Greece suggested that projects like theirs are open to other young people and they would support anyone who came and asked for their help.

In conclusion, when the performative facet of participation is more dominant, the groups expressed an interest in daily routinised activities and did not exhibit a clear understanding of the scope of their involvement. They were more able to articulate the profits they gained on an individual level, but were not clear about how their activity links to wider social action. Conflict was not acknowledged or dealt with, while roles and responsibilities were approached as rigid and non-renegotiable.

6.1.2 The managerial facet of participation

When the managerial facet of participation was more dominant, participation was understood as involving management of opportunities and accountability towards the funding body. Although there was an acknowledgement that identifying and managing opportunities requires skills, a discussion of how individuals achieve this status was lacking. In the UK, the participants argued that skill development is part

of participation itself, while in Greece it was presented as individual achievement (part of the reflexive biography) which benefited the group.

The value of such skills was predominantly highlighted within groups which either managed funding as part of their official relationship with the state or perceived their groups as responsible for supporting other young people in their community. The created youth group in Greece, for example, materialised this commitment towards other young people through facilitating processes of involvement in a EU project which involved information and consultation to identify the right programme, help with applications for young people who wanted to attend EU projects and did not know how to go about it, as well as evaluation processes after a project was concluded. This opening of access to EU programmes required that some members of the group kept up to date with developments on the EU level and that they were able to translate this knowledge into experience in directly bidding for funding from the EU to cover the expenses involved. For the participants from this group this process of dealing with EU establishments was described as 'specialisation' (Alexandros, Created space), while the member responsible for this activity had galvanised this experience into an emerging professional identity in the EU context, that of 'consultant-trainer of youth on EU youth projects'. The need to be constantly kept up-to-date regarding institutional changes and to deliver the best possible information was approached by the members of this group as representing accountability, strictly related to their group-discourse which was constructed upon an interest in offering opportunities to other young people.

Similarly the members of the invited group in the UK, when they discussed the allocation of the Youth Opportunities Fund scheme, approached it as transfer of state power towards youth and expressed their pride regarding their responsibility for allocating the money. This allocation was presented, though, as accompanied by management challenges:

They are sending stuff, lots of rubbish basically ... like they want a trip to Alton Towers ... and that seems just a bit ridiculous ... it's not a good piece of work ... it's got to be rewarding. If it was a group saying that, I don't know ... say a disabled group and they've never been to Alton Towers in their life and they were to get something out of it, which seems beneficial. But if they were a group of young people coming through and say 'we've been to Alton Towers before but we want another trip' it seems ridiculous. I wouldn't bother ... all of us ... everyone has his own moral high ground about what it is ... we come to a conclusion eventually
(Robin, Invited space)

The above quote shows that young people were confident in their role and that there was sense of freedom to exercise agency. It also indicates that young people have some space to exercise discretion when they allocate money and that they employ their personal judgement and values when evaluating which projects and groups deserve to be supported. The language involved aimed at presenting them as active agents rather than implementers/executors of top-down projects. Indeed, it

could be said that the participants presented themselves as having to deal with a challenge to behave like managers, and to exercise a calculus in order to establish priorities between different groups of young people.

A discussion by the participants of the appropriateness of money allocation did not only reflect concerns over the management of the budget but also concerns about accountability and dealing with organisational objectives. This relates to an effort to claim the uniqueness of their project in terms of successfully implementing a government initiated policy. There was no effort/willingness to discuss the purpose and philosophy of the programme in general, as it was taken for granted that this is “helpful for young people” and that “all young people have access” (Robin/ Jas). By choosing to answer my question about equal access to the programme with instances of adults taking advantage of the programme to support activities which did not benefit young people, they avoided opening a discussion about the effectiveness of the goals of the programme regarding equal opportunities. Such a discussion would have undermined a group-discourse of uniqueness regarding representativeness and a perception of the group’s special relation to decision making bodies as it was expressed through adopting a managerial role. This tendency could be understood in the UK within the new managerialism shift which “denotes a wider set of concerns with how to best achieve, measure and control organisational performance” whose normative power “is deployed in the setting of rationing criteria and the establishment of priorities” (Clarke and Newman, 1997: 64).

While in Greece, normative power is often expressed through what Clarke and Newman (1997) call a bureaucratic and paternalistic organisational regime with scattered efforts to introduce 'New Public Management' (Philippidou et al., 2005), nevertheless this managerial language was obvious in the narratives of participants, often alongside a criticism of bureaucratic-professional expertise. This was very clear when participants criticised the lack of youth work as a profession in the national context, and put forward their suggestions for the future. In most cases the participants expressed the opinion that people working in youth projects need to have managerial skills rather formal education, thus contrasting expertise of professionals by degree/knowledge with that of professionals by skill. The managerial skills mentioned included the ability to organise a space for participation, to advertise to raise a project's profile, making the project look attractive to young people and also defining aims and targets for activities through consultation. This was described in contrast to state-run participation establishments which were depicted as run by professionals who, while they had the power deriving from their qualifications and position in the state mechanisms, were unable to properly organise participation. These "office-type people", as Alexandros (Created space) described them, were perceived as unable to understand the needs of contemporary youth and as unwilling to leave the comfort of their role in order to practice consultation in the community and provide alternative means for the organisation of projects. Similarly, Michalis believed that for activities to be

responsive to ‘post-modern youth experience’ they need to be youth-orientated as would be exemplified through research:

You need to work in marketing terms [in English originally]... we need to employ researchers [in English originally] to find out about youth interests, organised study [in English originally] ... with questionnaires with data both statistics and qualitative (Michalis, Created space)

Therefore, alongside a ‘business-like’ performativity (Clarke and Newman, 1997:58), youth providers were envisaged to be flexible, able to develop incentives, formulate perceptions of significance and be depoliticised, which means non-partisan. By choosing a managerial discourse, the Greek created group reaffirmed a group-discourse of uniqueness which relates to adopting innovative practices, with the latter meaning being related to international shifts regarding governance and participation in contrast to old traditional methods at the national level which are based within hierarchy and bureaucratic roles. While this group-discourse legitimises the order of existing supranational institutions (the EU) it is in contrast with that vested in local institutions. This may explain why a managerial discourse was very dominant in the created group in Greece rather than the official ones which were operating within state structures.

In conclusion, when the managerial facet of participation was dominant, the aims of policy-derived projects were not critically reflected. Participants were more concerned with identifying new opportunities and making use of skills and knowledge in order to best implement projects.

6.1.3 The creative facet of participation

Fewer instances in the projects explored in this study revealed a creative facet of participation compared to the performative and managerial ones. When the creative facet of participation was more dominant, the focus shifted on fostering positive relationships within the project, networks between similar projects and connections with the community. Furthermore, a conscious effort was mentioned to develop processes which would allow participants to reflect upon their own contribution and the dynamics of their groups, to discuss the aim of their projects and to constantly re-negotiate roles and responsibilities.

When the focus was on creativity, the participants presented their projects as 'safe havens' within which they could be themselves and communicate in pleasurable ways. The members of the invited group in the UK, for example, presented their group as a safe haven regarding ethnicity, as they, for the first time, feel that they can communicate with people from different ethnic backgrounds and overcome racial misunderstandings dominant in their educational environments. Another example from a created group, this time, in the UK, highlights the creative facet of participation in regard to identity, when the members of the LGBT group presented their group as a safe space where they could safely explore their identity, communicate with like-minded people

and embark upon a collective attempt to challenge societal stereotypes on LGBT matters.

Created groups often highlighted the processes through which they reaffirmed their values as a group. While they recognised the existence of leading members, they also pinpointed their efforts to establish equal relationships. The members of the created groups in the UK presented their participation as dependent upon the maintenance of such relations of respect. In the created group in Greece, decision making was not presented as a rational process of calculation affected by policy objectives, but mostly as a creative practice, or as “ideogenesis” (Michalis), during which members expressed ideas and all together decided whether they want to expand on them as a group. In created groups in the UK and Greece, the focus was on cultivating relationships between the different members of the group rather on accomplishing responsibilities deriving from roles. This thus communicated a message to the members that they were settings which promoted reflection, non-hierarchical relations and equality, enacting a group-discourse of a democratically led and process orientated setting.

The groups which were focused on relationships were also interested in fostering relations with the community. Created groups in UK and Greece were active in constantly looking for new members, and all the events they organised were approached as a way to increase both their visibility and their opportunities

to attract new members and foster networks. This attitude is in stark contrast to the attitude of invited groups which perceived communication as instigated from community members.

The creative facet was also evident in efforts to maintain independence from the funding agency through either applying their own judgement or adapting their own aims and incorporating them with those of the funder. Actions that were described in the managerial facet, such as administering funding to and enabling access for other young people, involve some creative elements too. For example, while there was a clear effort by the created group in Greece to legitimise the aims of their actions by being part of the wider EU projects, at the same time they attempted to maintain a distance from the sponsor and a sense of independence. Members of the group expressed a conviction that, rather than being restricted by the EU project's thematic areas, they made use of the ambiguity of its policies (as it was expressed through a wide range of themes) by adapting group interests into the existing thematic areas of the funding body, or, in Alexandros' words by producing "a convincing application". This could be seen as part of a practice of the group to maintain a distance from official structures, which also expressed through a choice to not register in the official register of civil society organisations.

In the UK, the invited group, in general, perceived the ability to administer money as a form of empowerment, but at the same time they seemed to exercise a degree of control by stating that they often applied their own judgement in allocating the

Fund's money. This could be read as a way to resist the way in which policy messages and priorities are communicated, through drawing from group-discourses that frame perceptions of what is a meaningful activity to invest in.

6.2 Locating the origin of the facets

The above facets of participation reveal a context within which a facet of participation predominates which focuses on the implementation of given policy initiatives. This reveals also an emphasis upon the iterative element of agentic orientation which draws from the “habitual, un-reflected and mostly unproblematic patterns” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:975) of behaviour and is expressed through the ability to draw on already acquired skills to carry on daily activities, or an ability to act as a quick learner of the rules of the game. This poses challenges regarding the empowering potential of participation.

The interplay of power relations and promotion of specific configurations of agentic orientations was conditioned both by external conditions and also processes within the spaces themselves. This section will explore three areas in which this interplay occurs, including the impact of policy requirements, the ability of young people to engage with power holders and the community and finally prominent discourses of youth within the explored spaces.

6.2.1 Policy impact

As the discussion of the dominant facets of participation in this study have already suggested, policy requirements regarding funding allocation, thematic areas for action and demand for managerial roles had an impact on the type of participation implemented within these spaces. The influence of policy requirements also became obvious when the participants discussed issues regarding the priorities and purposes of group action. On a discursive level, the majority of the groups argued that they operated in relative autonomy, as the choice of activities was aligned to their interests and a product of experience and consultation with other youth.

In Greece, both youth groups legitimised their activities by either being funded by the EU (created group) or by being part of the local government. The created group argued that they prioritise on the basis of their experience, especially past successes and failures and “a tradition of organising specific events every year” (Phaethon); at the same time they admitted that their funding applications “relate to a degree with the issues that the EU prioritises” (Michalis) which range “from cultural to social” (Alexandros). While the created group consciously strived to strike a balance between interests and policy impact, the invited group, by presenting an understanding of participation as exclusively occurring within the boundaries of existing formal institutions, offered an example of how policies and their reception by specific individuals may restrict the process of deliberation in confined and exclusive areas.

In the UK, a similar pattern regarding the choice of thematic areas for action was apparent, especially within the invited group. When the members of the invited space in the UK, described how they came to identify and prioritise their activities:

We've got a manifesto ... the manifesto actually lists the main issues that affect young people within [the local community]. We have now three groups which work on three issues that have been selected from the manifesto. As our main three issues we've got bullying, 'something to do somewhere to go' which is like youth centres and youth facilities, and travel and transport and that's just covering travel charges and how much we pay on the bus. (Robin, Invited space)

Robin expresses his conviction that the manifesto topic is a result of systematic and meticulous consultation with the young people in the community. Despite the main issues of the manifesto corresponding with the thematic areas prioritised in the *Youth Matters* policy, the participants insisted that the choice of topics was the result of consultation with the youth in local groups and youth clubs. Furthermore, when the same group discussed the allocation of the *Youth Fund* project, there was a consensus among all the members interviewed that they defined their funding criteria on the basis of the utmost benefit among applicant groups. However, when the questions became more specific, asking for clarification on how the priorities were set, it was made clear that the requirements had to meet the agenda of the *Every Child Matters* policy which

sets the parameters for children's and youth services. In that sense, in order to be financially rewarded the projects should ensure that they promote one or more *Every Child Matters* policy priorities, namely staying safe, being healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and finally achieve economic well-being.

The influence of policies appeared not only through funding conditions but additionally through a discussion regarding the 'purpose' of the activities occurring within projects. The discussion of event organisation and travelling give examples of how the idea of purpose was used in order to shape perceptions of what was possible within the projects and the way in which these were communicated to young people. As the accounts of youth workers were indicative of this, I will draw on this occasion from the interviews with professionals as well. When travelling was discussed with the professionals from the invited group in the UK, opportunities to travel were presented as a way of exercising the youth-led method where young people had an input in the design of the trip together with the youth workers. Vijay (peer educator) for example thinks that organising trips:

It's totally young person-led, that's what we are trying to do, and then obviously we can't just go somewhere there has to be a purpose for going there, in London we went to the Houses of Parliament because the group has to do with politics, we also ... because obviously it's good to have fun as well, we went to Madam Tussaud's

In the above quote we see a tension between meeting policy requirements which demand both a youth-led practice and the achievement of purpose and fun. The youth worker lays out clearly that every activity undertaken by the group needs to be linked to the agenda and overall purpose of the project. Similarly, in the created space in the UK, the organisation would often arrange meetings to discuss the planning of activities with young people. Members were allowed to take the initiative to plan and choose methodologies and tools to conduct research on specific youth matters, but at the same time the staff made it clear that the organisation was interested in specific areas of research or ‘core priorities’ (Marta, Philip, created space) related to human rights, youth justice and equality issues, because:

We wouldn't necessarily look at health because it's not something we have expertise. Because what we try not to do is just to snatch just because we can, it has to fit in with what our confidences are and also what our mission is. (Philip)

This focus on core activities reflects managerial practices as they have been introduced in youth work and which dictate what is essential through “mimicking the business idea of being focused” and shedding activities that do not “contribute to the primary goal” (Clarke and Newman, 1997: 78), as this creates commitment, motivation and a sense of ownership among staff . Similarly, a youth worker in Greece describes the attitude on the basis of which he coordinates a group of vulnerable young people:

I am trying to keep this place attractive for the kids but at the same time to offer a bit more. I mean to have a purpose, not only to gather for a coffee and chat ... which is important ... but to do more significant work, to examine and change behaviours. I mean to find a balance between attractiveness and outcomes. (Dimitris, Invited space)

Similar considerations about ‘purpose’ were expressed within other Greek groups too and especially within those which were involved in EU projects, which were usually very descriptive regarding the aims, means and expected outcomes of the activities. Participants’ eagerness to assert the existence of purpose and justify their activities relates to policy rhetoric at both UK and EU level (as described in Chapter 5), which stresses the importance of involvement in positive activities and frames an understanding of participation as meaningful only when it is coupled with ‘purposeful’ actions and outcomes.

The above examples highlight how policies and organisations shape the boundaries for action or fields of possibilities within participation by defining thematic areas and linking them to funding requirements. Furthermore, constructing notions/discourses of purpose gives a message of what is to be included in and what is to be excluded from participation. Being able to respond to these demands, though, can be a complicated process, during which participation principles such as promotion of youth creativity and voice, as well as youth involvement in all stages of agenda setting, might become sidelined by an effort to produce outcomes.

Furthermore, for young people themselves, meeting these requirements involves the ability to engage with policies as well as the possession of relevant skills and managerial attitudes. This raises the question of whether all young people have the capacity and the willingness to lead such processes. Differential degrees of such an ability were apparent in the explored spaces, when participants acknowledged influential members whose skills were vital in the function of the groups. The following section, which discusses the ability of the young people of this study to engage in partnership, further elaborates on this idea.

6.2.2 Ability to engage in participatory processes

The ability of young people to enter into and sustain a dialogue with power holders and community was presented to be undermined by both a lack of interest on the part of power holders and community and a lack of skills on the part of the young people themselves. Because of the nature of their projects, the invited groups focused mostly on their efforts to establish a relationship with officials, while the created groups discussed the reactions of the community in their efforts to become visible. It was through a discussion of these processes that the participants would openly express a sense of frustration in regard to the effectiveness of participation. In the UK, the invited group referred to speed dating-like meetings with politicians, panels, public debates and scrutiny panels. They mentioned how formality and use of language contributed to these feelings:

It's just tokenism ... and when we go to meetings with them, say ... a scrutiny panel meeting ... so much jargon that young people haven't got a clue what they are on about 'the JFC has spoken to the PU about' ... what the hell you talk about? They don't break it down easily for us, some young people haven't got the confidence to ask them. (James, Invited space)

Similar to James' comments, it was suggested in many accounts that the formal character of consultation processes, with their norms of communication and use of language, intimidated a number of young people from getting involved. This was presented as having an impact on the deliberative potential of the processes in which the participants were involved. In this way it could be argued that restriction of opportunity to engage in dialogue and consultation due to lack of communication skills impacted on the ability of young people to produce approaches emerging from their own frames of reference. This also ties in well with the skills of young people to respond to policy requirements discussed above and highlights the impact of these processes on claims for empowerment within the spaces explored. Furthermore, participants who were not involved in deliberative processes mentioned how the requirement for particular modes of communication within participation, such as filling in forms and communicating with funding bodies using the appropriate language, would deter them from engaging with participatory processes.

As was mentioned in Chapter 3, seeing participation as a space which is not independent of other domains of social life poses challenges regarding institutional cultures of exclusion, including society's readiness to recognise an active role for youth. Often during the interviews the participants commented on community reception of their efforts to increase their visibility. These comments usually described a lack of interest on the part of the community. One of the most characteristic examples comes from the created groups in the UK, where members of the LGBT group recalled instances of representing their group through public events. William described how a public exhibition was a very negative experience, as members of the public did not appreciate their efforts and when they expressed an interest, this left him feeling undervalued because:

People go straight to youth workers to ask what's going on with the group, they overlook us completely, they blank us, it's as if we are not there, we are not important to them, they only want to speak to an authority speaker.

In this comment, William reveals a host of issues. Firstly he reveals his perception of society as being preoccupied with authority and status. Secondly, he gives an insight of how adult communities deny young people the opportunity to represent themselves, preferring to hear about them through the lenses of other adults. And thirdly he reveals his own powerlessness in relation to both the community and the youth workers who are perceived as 'authority speakers' and thus as holders of a more valuable discourse. William's powerlessness in regard to youth workers brings the attention to other factors which seemed to frame boundaries for action within the explored projects. These regard the existence of hierarchical power

relations and discourses of youth which mediate perceptions of young people's ability to achieve targets.

6.2.3 Hierarchical relations and discourses of youth

Hierarchical relations and discourses of youth as in need of support and as incapable of rational thinking appeared to exist within the explored spaces. These discourses appeared in the form of scepticism regarding the capacity of young people to act in line with the stated requirements, young people's ability to understand the projects themselves, and their willingness for long-term commitment. Although these ideas were expressed by some young people themselves, they were overwhelmingly present in youth workers' narratives.

There was a uniformity regarding use of partnership language in all spaces where both youth workers and young participants were interviewed. Although conflict (albeit re-branded as democracy, as discussed earlier) was mentioned in some groups, there was no indication that this has been dealt with. Both workers and young people rather described their relationships in positive terms. Relationships of trust, friendship and support from youth workers have been often mentioned by the participants as contributing to positive group dynamics and a common emotional mood. Language was used to undermine the existence of relations of power and to flatten hierarchies, with "we" often being used to indicate that young people and

staff were partners that negotiated processes, with young people presented as retaining a lead in decision making.

Despite this language of partnership and trust in the ‘youth-led model’, the professionals often undermined this alleged ability of young people to develop their own actions. This was achieved mostly through a perception of themselves as holders of knowledge and skills which young people lacked. Martha’s comment, a youth worker in a created group, highlights these perceptions:

If you ask them what the process is that they are going through sometimes they can’t even put a name on it ... we have a bit of a struggle trying to get them to understand the theory behind it.

This comment summarises a similar stance by all youth workers in both countries, expressed through comments regarding young people’s ability to concentrate, set targets and achieve outcomes. Accordingly, the role of youth workers within group processes was understood as intervening to reaffirm a sense of purpose and to remind of the particular targets, in order to prevent young people from ‘getting lost’. It is worth noting that these comments revolved mainly around young people’s performance rather than the existence of opportunities for young people to develop their own discourses as a first stage of participatory processes.

Thus, it can be argued that a uniformity in the use of partnership and youth-led discourses aimed to mask hierarchical relations. In reality, there was a tendency of youth workers to act as power holders who possess the necessary knowledge for successful participation. This is a tendency which can be understood within the current policy context within which, as discussed earlier, there is increased pressure to achieve aims and targets and evidence outcomes. Thus, a discourse of partnership is in accord with official participation policy discourses which construct young people as active agents within the participation processes. In this way, uniformity in use of the youth-led discourse reveals efforts from the professionals to demonstrate success in achieving policy goals, while young people avoided being identified as passive recipients of policies. This finding, though, raises questions in regard to the empowering potential of spaces for participation, as it seems that hierarchical relations and discourses which construct youth as immature or in need of support remain unchallenged.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has looked at discourses and practices within spaces of participation as they were reflected in individual interviews, in order to explore the range of participation practised and the agency involved. The action of young people was described as being conditioned by policy agendas which set the boundaries of what was possible and acceptable within spaces, through funding requirements, notions of purpose and prioritisation of thematic areas.

The identified three facets reveal contexts within which participation mainly promotes an iterative agentic orientation which focuses on handling issues arising in the moment. The participation identified in the explored spaces mostly encouraged an agentic orientation which focused on the here and now and which was about managing projects and getting by. Such practices required young people to mostly draw from their own acquired skills and dispositions (*habitus*) in order to adequately respond. Young people were expected either to have the necessary skills (or at least a considerable amount of competence) before they enter these projects or to possess an aptitude for developing themselves quickly upon their entrance into a project. Thus, developing an adequate feel for the game was necessary condition for success within projects. This was evident through efforts to meet the managerial demands of their projects, which in practical terms involved the development of skills and experience, understanding of the rules of decision making and procedures, and the ability to represent.

Constructive aspects of participation, as discussed in Chapter 3, involve participants being able to contribute to dialogue, negotiation of the rules of the game and recognition of difference. As this chapter has shown, while young people were involved in consultation processes and developed strong ties within their groups, empowerment was more evident at a rhetorical rather a practical level. This is supported by a lack of examples where the participants presented themselves as engaged in action to challenge structural constraints.

In addition there was apparently a consensus within groups which aimed to minimise the importance of hierarchical relations and conflict, whereas difference and lived experience, as they are reflected in family status, ethnic background and gender, was largely underplayed. Furthermore, the examples provided in this chapter show that the ability of young people to promote their aims was impacted by their limited ability to engage in dialogue with officials, and often their lack of skills to do so. Deliberative processes were described by the participants as being top-down, whereby politicians, community and other stakeholders would engage with young people in participatory spaces only to the degree to which they were willing to do so.

In this way, the type of participation promoted within the explored spaces was principally concerned with the development of leadership for those already involved or capable of mastering the rules of the game. This focus coincides with discourses described in Chapter 2 of 'participation as positive youth development'. The creative facets of participation apparent within these case studies seemed to have been developed, not within the scope of the projects themselves, but rather as a peripheral and even unintended consequence. They were mostly part of participants' effort to re-interpret the messages communicated from policies through applying their own justification and values to them, as well as through an interest in maintaining a degree of independence from funding bodies.

Therefore, and regardless of policy norms which promoted particular configurations of agency and types of 'active citizen', there were indications in this

study of young people's efforts to mediate policies and infuse participation with their own meanings. Thus, the next chapter will turn to an exploration of this individual meaning-making in regard to the scope of participation and to the type of desired social change.

CHAPTER 7: MAKING SENSE OF PARTICIPATION AND THE WORLD

In the previous chapter it was discussed how participatory processes occurred in the spaces which are examined in this study. As was shown, participation appeared in a number of different dominant facets and as such was described as performative, managerial or creative in its focus. Despite policies promoting a specific element of agency that related to the habitual and taken-for-granted, there were indications that the participants attempted to enrich their participatory repertoire through focusing on the creative aspects of participation.

This chapter will move from the processes happening within spaces towards discussing the frames of meaning, that informed participants' practices, motivation to participate, and expectations from their involvement as well as the way these frames of meaning were linked by the participants to their living environments. As was discussed in Chapter Three, spaces for participation are animated by actors with their own social histories, aspirations and understandings of their world which are supported and give rise to elements of agency. This chapter looks at how these particular social histories, aspirations and understandings of the world are revealed through individual meaning-making regarding the scope of participation.

During the analysis, important patterns were identified concerning participants' meaning-making, worldviews and dispositions which defined the value and purpose of participation. One important consideration in identifying these dimensions was choosing which aspects of the accounts required description, since various aspects of participants' experiences were possibly relevant to this study. Different lines of analysis were possible at this stage. For example, a focus on elements of identity such as gender, sexuality, class background and ethnicity would have raised a number of different possibilities and opened up alternative insights into participants' accounts.

The importance of identity in negotiating transitions (Thompson et al., 2002; 2004) and developing a sense of belonging (Thompson, 2007) is recognised in this study. However, rather than being the focus of enquiry, belonging and traits of identity were seen mostly within the frame of this study as dimensions which mediated motivation to participation within particular historical contexts. Identities are often mediated through particular contexts since the locations –be it nation, city, neighbourhood, the local or the global- people identify with and establish connections with others, are important markers of identity (Hopkins, 2010). In this way a line of enquiry focusing upon these identifications and connections would have offered alternative insights in regard to how the participants negotiated their spaces (discursive spaces and places of activity). However, as a small qualitative research poses restrictions with regard to where the focus of the analysis is placed, I had to remain tightly focused on the aim of this study and the research questions which aimed at exploring how processes of participation are conceptualised and

experienced by young people. Alternative readings of this data involve focusing in future on how participants' interpretations speak about: (a) the ways in which identity is communicated and transitions to adulthood are negotiated through participation; (b) how different spaces act as sites of social relations, which mediate particular types or different scales of participation.

The objective during the analysis was to identify important trends among participants, in regard to how involvement was conceptualised. Thus participants' accounts about their motivation, values, and citizenship -as expressed through their stance toward the community and the political- were pivotal. Since the participants did not express uniform conceptualisations of participation, the different dimensions were synthesised into profiles which aim to offer an insight into the complexity of the elements that form different approaches to participation; thus three profiles emerged, namely, professionals, visionaries and adventurers. The dimensions which constitute the profiles were developed as a result of the analysis of the accounts of the participants themselves at an initial stage and a review of the literature, as it was guided by the aim of the research to explore processes of meaning-making within participation and the major theoretical debates in the area of participation.

After patterns were identified and a story line emerged it became clear that not all participants expressed identical ideas of what participation is about. The analytical challenge at this stage was to define a story line which illustrated effectively the impact of these different viewpoints. Thus, decisions had to be made with regard to

how such different patterns are approached and presented. The guiding question at this stage of the analysis was: what difference do the different viewpoints, motivations and values make in regard to chosen courses of action within participation and what type of agency do they give rise to?

As it was discussed in the Methodology chapter the process of interpretation involved grasping both the unity and the structuring elements of the processes present in participants' interpretations. This meant that the categories which formed the dimensions of the profiles -devised during the 'structuring' and 'contextualising' (Denzin, 2001) stages of interpretation- had to be broad enough to relate to widely experienced daily situations, but not too abstract as to lose their contextual focus (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Structuring elements or categories identified at an initial stage involved: 'self-development'; 'contribution to the community'; 'changing youth image'; 'being socially constructive'; 'gaining power'; 'bringing about change'; 'exercising citizenship'; 'feeling valued'; 'being recognised'; 'engaging with the political' and 'right to have a voice'. While such categories described parts of the experience they were too narrow to captivate the whole phenomenon: how processes of participation were negotiated. More specifically, they did not allow the researcher to make the links about how such elements relate to one another, to lived experience and to wider political and economic activities which structure opportunities. For example, how did 'self-development' relate to 'engaging with the political' or how did 'being recognised' through participation relate to educational and employment opportunities within one's context?

Thus , exploring how the categories related to one another and rearranging them by deciding which ones needed to become more prevalent and which ones needed to either be integrated within others or develop into new categories allowed the researcher to make the patterns more explicit and to provide the analytic versions of the story. The relationships between the different structuring elements in the data were teased out on the basis of the following questions:

- (a) What was the motivation to participate (why did they get involved and what does it mean)?
- (b) How motivation to participate related to particular values as well as to perceptions of the role of participation in the context within which one's experience unfolds?
- (c) How in turn such understandings and strategies in relation to the purpose of participation give rise to and support a particular sense of ability to influence one's context through participation?

Accordingly the profiles of the participants do not aim to provide a list of opinions neither do they merely aim at describing the separate traits of participants' attitudes to participation but at highlighting the links and the relations between these traits; how these produce particular meanings and motivate particular types of involvement. The language used to describe the profiles stems directly from the terms the participants used to describe themselves. This is consistent with the youth-centred character of this study and with the effort of the researcher to avoid imposing meanings and to remain as 'true' as possible to the ways the participants

interpreted their experience. Table 10 highlights the profiles and summarises their constitutive dimensions. More specifically:

Motivation and Values: When it came to participants' motivation it was clear that general patterns revealing either communitarian or individual focus enabled an interest in involvement in the first place. Similarly, the participants were able to make explicit links between the values they held, such as responsibility, fun and creativity, and the ways these led them to choose a particular type of participation.

Purpose: The purpose of participation revealed how young people deal with the specific positioning in which they find themselves and how participation might be used as a way to alter or promote these positions. Thus their attitude to participation was expressed through different strategies, according to the 'targets' (Norris, 2003) they sought to influence and the type of change they wanted to achieve.

Power relations: Important trends were identified concerning the way participants were making sense of and articulating existing power relations within their contexts. Understandings of power were clearly linked with participants' commentaries on their contexts, their position within them and the purpose of participation. The general patterns included participants' perceptions of their involvement as a way to make use of the existing opportunities to work towards adapting to the system, promoting their group causes within it , or resisting the system.

Agency: agency refers to how the above dimensions of meaning making functioned as resources through which the participants affirmed or re-affirmed a sense of direction regarding involvement and lifestyle. It involves ways in which the above values, dispositions, knowledge and conceptualisations of power were linked to participants' sense of the self as social actor and a perceived ability (Lister, 1997) to both give direction to one's life-course and influence the conditions which shape the context for action (Bauman, 2000).

Table 10-Participants' approaches to participation

	Visionaries	Professionals	Adventurers
Motivation & Values	Strong Communitarian stance Creativity	Privileged individuals give back to community Responsibility	Individual/group issue-driven/cause orientated Fun
Purpose of Participation	Socially constructive behaviour - Extend networks and change social standing	Do the right thing - Take advantage of existing opportunities	Making the right choice - Developing identity
Understanding of Power/ strategies	Critique of the system	Within the system	Go along with the system
Agency	Alternative discourses of community - Differentiating with dominant discourses	Representation - Ability to navigate power	Ability to explore- Find the right group

As was discussed in the methodology, developing the profiles allowed for a deeper interaction with the data than would be possible by discussing them only on the basis of the particular dimensions. The conceptualisation of participation in terms of profiles as analytical constructs yielded the full range of responses and enabled an exploration of the repertoires of participation. Thus, profiles are used as a form of ideal types (Weber, 1904/1949), conceptual tools, or as benchmarks for identifying commonalities and differences in participants' accounts. These types are not mutually exclusive: rather than describing degrees of membership in each type for each individual they mostly portray the dispositions which these participants privileged among others in their accounts. The aim of the profiles is to both accommodate for the best depiction of participants' dispositions as they privileged them among others and to retain an interest in the research aim to explore meaning-making within processes of participation while retaining a grasp of the social conditions which give rise to such meaning.

Apart from focusing on participants' representations of their selves I was also interested in how they constructed others. Participants' accounts were approached as 'narratives of experience' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) through which they used examples and stories to construct the self, their group (we), young people in general and their community (others). The way they told stories about the others revealed both perceptions of themselves and constructions of their associations and the 'other' from which they distinguished themselves. These constructions put the decision to become active in context and offered a useful means of exploring the meaning of participation.

In addition to the above discursive constructs, I also took into account the way participants expressed emotions, as they can be perceived as “intelligent responses to objective circumstances” (Sayer, 2009:2) and as a commentary on the social conditions participants experienced in their everyday life, and thus reveal motivations behind the decision to act in one specific way rather than another.

The remainder of this chapter will focus now on the profiles and describe them in detail.

7.1. The Professionals

The professionals valued participation that takes place within existing political structures, hierarchical relations and clear processes. Having fun was important, but it was often presented alongside an ability to act in a ‘professional’ manner . Professionalism was defined as being punctual, attending group meetings, getting things done, having a collaborative spirit and effective division of responsibilities. This profile was equally represented in both countries and included mostly members from the invited groups. The British professionals had long history of involvement with the youth service or were approached through their schools and youth clubs. In Greece they had experience of involvement in party politics and at the time of the interview they were involved in a number of organisations.

Table 11-Composite profile of a professional:

Andrew, a university student, was 21 years old at the time of the interview. He is the vice-chair of his group and he has extended experience with the youth service. He became a member of his local youth club when he was 15 years old and since then he has taken up several roles in different groups which represent young people. Alongside the group I approached him through, he was also a member of several community groups. He has a family tradition of community involvement and he states that this has influenced his decision to get involved. He stated that working with the cabinet was demanding but it was also rewarding since it involved travelling opportunities, vouchers and an opportunity to develop skills such as self-confidence.

7.1.1 Professionals' Motivation and Values

Commitment towards community featured in the narratives of the professionals when they described the motivation behind their involvement. Professionals' responses regarding community represented a spectrum of opinion. For some, commitment towards the community stemmed from their own privileged position and their interest in giving back, while others were interested in cultivating a common sense of belonging. Manpreet was passionate about the importance of a shared sense of community:

I can change something, people's lives actually, aspects of the community and that gives the passion to do something about it. And I think the more people in that mind frame and more youth groups ... because I think there is social segregation, I mean a young group here, one group there ... but

people if, they do interact with each other it allows cohesion. I think people need youth clubs like this (Manpreet, Invited space)

Manpreet places participation within the discourse of a community cohesion agenda which advocates for the need to help “micro-communities to gel or mesh into an integrated whole” (Home Office, 2001:70) through “greater participation and involvement in civic life from all sectors of the community” (Home Office, 2002: 14). As a member of an ethnic community he draws on his experience to describe both the potential of participation to increase cohesion within a community and his motivation to get involved.

Decision making and raising youth voice were equally valued by professionals. There was a common belief among professionals that the often representative nature of their role and their access to decision making processes allowed them to ‘raise a voice’ in the name of the youth in their communities. Professionals in both countries, especially those within invited groups, expressed pride regarding their involvement, on the grounds of formality, importance and power:

This is the first time that is developed a policy for the representation of youth on the local government. Young people are able from now on to take decisions for their city, they have a role recognised by institutions and with legal significance, I mean it is not only consultation like other youth NGOs (Stefanos, Invited space)

As this suggests, professionals draw their sense of pride from their ability to navigate institutions and negotiate power through decision making alongside an increased sense of recognition. Similarly, in the UK, Robin:

I found out about the youth cabinet when I was in the parliament. There was a lot of talk then about what the youth cabinet were and about what they did and that the youth parliament were there to support the youth cabinet, all kinds of support ... So ... 'well if the youth cabinet were a bit more important I wanna be a part of that, and that's what I wanna do'
(Robin, Invited space)

Robin, as Stefanos, illustrates a common belief among professionals that specific forms of participation are more important than others, on the basis of their connection to decision making structures. He also reveals how a place in a group can be strategically pursued through the estimation of privileges, power and hierarchical position within the structures of government.

7.1.2 The purpose of participation

While professionals gained a sense of agency by being organically linked to decision making processes, at the same time they expressed a key consideration of exhibiting appropriate behaviour within their communities. Central in professionals' narratives was a discussion of their communities and especially other young people. The discussions with the professionals revealed that they were

aware of discourses known in the literature as youth ‘at risk’, youth ‘as risk’ (Hughes, 2010) or youth as ‘posing a risk’ (Kemshall, 2008:21). Indeed, in the UK, professionals used expressions such as ‘hoodies’ ‘yobs’ and ‘hooligans’ to describe how the media represents youth in general. For Jas, the constant repetition of stories in the media regarding negative behaviour by young people establishes a misleading perception of how young people are, increases fear of youth and has negative effects on individual young people as, “at some point it becomes very depressing” (Jas, Invited space).

Nevertheless, it was important for professionals to link a discussion of youth image in society to the work they were doing in their groups. They discussed the role of the media in establishing images of youth ‘at risk’, to highlight the negative impact of this selective reporting of unconstructive behaviours: “they don’t talk about those young people who make a significant impact” (Manpreet, Invited group). Similarly the professionals in Greece discussed the media focus on destructive behaviours such as rioting: “what I hear the last 6 years in the news, about what is youth does not represent who I am ... for a month youth was [presented as] burning Athens ... but this is not me” (Pavlos, Invited group). The professionals felt this to be unfair to them, as they perceived themselves to be a positive part of the youth population with a substantial contribution to the community which was not recognised because of bad press. This focus on negative behaviours, professionals argued, undervalued their efforts to contribute to their communities in a positive way.

While the professionals in the UK discussed issues in their communities regarding fear of crime and lack of mobility, none of them mentioned examples of them being affected. An absence of reference to the structural factors that might prohibit young people in the community from participating was also notable. Similarly, the Greek professionals did not concentrate on structural issues that might affect the experience of young people. While they recognised the difficulties young people face in terms of studies and employment, they developed a discourse about the need for youth to catch up with developments in society. Professionals in both contexts rather presented themselves as working against anti-social behaviour. Especially in the UK, the professional members of the Invited group argued that their main aim was to “get youngsters off the streets” (Jas, Invite space). The example of an ex-gang member who became a regular attendant of their events was cited as a sign of the importance of participation in doing the right thing. For Manpreet and Robin(Invited space), members of the same group, the milestone for their participation would be to create a “super youth club” in their area which would distract local youth from anti-social behaviour.

Therefore, it could be argued that professionals presented their involvement in projects as an opportunity to construct a positive image for themselves and to differentiate from dominant discourses that construct youth ‘as/at risk’. Participation was presented as part of a socially constructive life stance and was constructed in contrast to the behaviour of other youth in their communities. Table 12 summarises professionals’ representations of themselves in contrast to other youth from whom they differentiated themselves:

Table 12-Professionals’ perceptions of themselves and other young people

<i>Other Young people</i>	<i>We</i>
Hang around	Bring about change
Get involved in socially destructive behaviour	Are responsible
Do not appreciate	Know how to handle situations
Look for easy solutions	Are the voice of young people
Are not ‘flexible’	Fight
Shift responsibility to the government	Are the future
Don’t want to work hard	Adjust to the demands of ‘the times’

Table 12 presents a summary of such views expressed throughout the interviews and especially when the participants were invited to comment on the vignettes. When the UK professionals for example, discussed Vignette 1, in which a young person is out of work and education and hesitant to participate, they described her as ‘non appreciative’:

A lot of young people find themselves out of education, why would you want to do so much hard work in school whereas it’s easier to hang around with your mates and especially in the UK, they know they v got benefit system, you hardly go homeless? (Jas, Invited group)

This highlights how participation in many professional accounts was framed within individual responsibility and self-regulation, often alongside underclass representations. In similar ways, the professionals in Greece developed a

discussion of their faith in market principles and criticised other young peoples' responses to the changing socioeconomic conditions:

Things are getting harder because of the economic conditions just I think that unfortunately young people are looking for easy solutions, but it shouldn't be like that, I mean we all need qualifications to do what we really want. I understand things are not easy but to accuse the governments or politics and not doing anything ... it's not enough
(Melina, Invited space)

Melina reflected a common perception among professionals in Greece which constructed young people as individuals who can act as a free and rational actors, able to make good use of available opportunities and display 'flexibility' regarding the demands of free market. Negotiating success according to these accounts was down to practising individual responsibility rather than on structures of opportunity. Professionals employed a discourse which rather suggested that the majority of young people were unaffected by structured inequalities, such as class, gender, ethnicity and social networks, that impact on socio-economic opportunities. Professionals presented themselves as responsible and self-regulated citizens who were aware of the need to 'fight' for improvement and unafraid to respond to the demands of society and adapt to "harder times" (Daphne, Invited space).

7.1.3 Professionals' understanding of power

As was discussed before, the professionals gained a strong sense of importance from the representative character of their involvement. As will be shown in this section, this sense was reinforced by their position in the government networks that allowed them to interact with power holders. Although they developed a critique of power holders' attitudes, the professionals perceived themselves as part of the political system.

The professionals in both contexts had experience of interacting with power figures as part of their projects and spent a large part of their interviews discussing these experiences. While they recognised that there was progress regarding their ability to hold power, they adopted their own, and particular, discourse of exclusion within representative mechanisms, since they argued that they had "more power [than in the past] but not impact yet" (Robin, Invited space). In Greece, this exclusion discourse revolved around lack of funding and the gaps in laws which prohibit those younger than 18 years old from managing funding. Although they stressed that their role within participation was party politics neutral (regardless of their previous involvement in political parties), they often admitted that ideological differences between them and local politicians impacted on their opportunities to secure funding or initiate actions.

In the UK, the professionals spent a considerable amount of time discussing local councillors, as they understood their relationship with them as one of cooperation and coordination. The often representative status of their role allowed them to describe themselves as being on a similar standing as the councillors and as shapers of their communities. This conviction led to frustration and a discourse of exclusion when they realised that power holders did not share the same understanding, but rather constructed their relationship on hierarchical terms. For example, James described his meeting with his local MP and how she, instead of listening to what he had to say, tried to convince him that her party offered the right solutions on the issues they discussed. For him this was translated as a sign of politicians not being interested in young people and made him feel angry: “I wanna slap them [politicians] (Laughing)” (James, Invited space).

This inability to function as their role prescribed and “have an impact” was for Robin also an indication of politicians not being ‘interested’ in participatory arrangements. They described how the meetings with MPs gave them the impression that the processes were mobilised not by interest in young people but from politicians’ obligations imposed by policies: “They are really kind of tokenistic with us, they talk to us to tick a box” (Robin, Invited space).

Professionals’ critique in both contexts was focused on the way processes worked rather on the system itself. Participants did not express their dissatisfaction about

the way participation programmes are organised, or about participatory arrangements and the way they reflected the general political system. Instead, they focused on individual behaviours of politicians, even providing names in the UK, who did not work hard enough to make participatory arrangements function the way policies presumed. In no case did participants mention that policies might have to be altered in order to work properly. What is more, the UK professionals cited examples of young people who had developed the necessary skills to cope with the perceived lack of attention by the MPs. For example, a member of the Invited group retrieved the phone numbers of particular MPs who he kept calling until they paid attention to his requests. For the participants this strategy was admirable and successful because “he pushed that barrier” and “he speaks to them now” (James, Invited space).

Professionals’ difficulty in thinking beyond pre-ascribed opportunities was illustrated by their difficulty to think outside existing arrangements for participation. For example, when professionals were asked about future arrangements for participation, the responses in both contexts revolved around being respected by politicians and, in the UK, having a Youth Mayor project. Despite their attempts to criticise the political system in Greece, the participants perceived themselves as part of this system and advocated for the need for older politicians to step down and allow the young to enter existing political structures. There was no apparent habitus in either context that evaluated the structural impediments and the constraints to participation, but instead there was an effort to

make the most out of it or, as was expressed by James (Invite space), “we are here to learn and start our political careers”.

7.1.4 Professionals’ sources of agency

Based on the data presented in the previous sections this section will discuss the factors that gave professionals a sense of agency and control over their participation. Professionals’ sense of agency was reinforced by a belief that they were the part of the youth population which achieves impact because they have exercised self-regulation. By representing themselves as having made the right choice they aimed to distinguish themselves from destructive behaviours.

Professionals’ perception of themselves as being representative, and thus part of the existing political system, and their concentration on enacting an equal relation with politicians reveal a necessary form of agency in participation consisting of developing “a feel for the game” (Greener, 2002:692). The element of agency that seemed to be important among professionals was that of the iterative and habitual, which allows the retrieval of well-rehearsed schemas of behaviour based on knowledge and skills in order to deal with the here and now.

The projective element was also apparent when they exhibited a clear ability to think of how participation at present would enable them to build their future

careers. Thus projectivity is not involved to bring about social change but to help the self achieve a future aspiration, a process which is more likely to result in the reproduction of existing structures of representation (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Evaluations and deliberation at present seemed to be the result of an ability to use knowledge and skills habitually acquired and valuable within current participation, and also an ability to assess how participation can assist future successful careers. Therefore the loyalty of the professionals towards policies and power holders did not imply a lack of agency or passivity within participation, but a form of agency that was concerned with coping and developing a sense of what was necessary to build up strategies which would allow them to “make out” or “play the system” (Hoggett, 2001:50).

7.2 The Visionaries

Visionaries expressed an interest in changing public attitudes towards youth and participation. Visionaries often used words such as “envisage”, “imagine”, and “I dream” and expressed a vision that through their action they would contribute to a future society where volunteerism and informal learning would be appreciated. This type of participant tends to coincide with the members of the created group in Greece and with aspects of the discourses developed by the members of the created groups in the UK. For this reason the analysis in this section draws mostly from the examples provided by the Greek context.

The majority of the Greek visionaries perceived themselves as pioneers of a future society within which young people are taken into account as equal partners and have access to structures through which they can make their voice heard. Simultaneously, they focused on the existing opportunities and argued that their role involved increasing awareness about involvement opportunities. Their ability to function on an abstract level of ideas may initially portray them as romantics, but throughout the interviews they exhibited clear examples of being strategic in working towards the achievement of their targets. Beyond influencing social attitudes, visionaries were also interested in affecting policy making. Visionaries were very keen on giving information about their lives and values, and at the same time they approached their participation in this study itself as part of a process of spreading their message. As a result of this, and in an effort to accommodate the

wide range of information they provided, the presentation of this profile is slightly longer in comparison to the other profiles in this chapter.

Table 13-Composite profile of a visionary

Aris was 25 years old at the time of the interview. He describes himself as energetic and passionate about the potential of creative arts as a means of expression for youth. He states that his involvement with youth projects occurred as a result of his “failure” to get a place at university. His long-term involvement in youth projects has allowed him to travel extensively, live abroad for years and work with people with similar interests. He expressed strong communitarian beliefs and argues that participation is about learning, co-existing and respecting others. He admits that there is a family tradition of public involvement but reveals that his family does not express approval for his involvement as it is seen outside the remit of having a ‘proper’ job.

7.2.1 Visionaries’ Motivation and Values

The visionaries took up a strong communitarian stance and often mentioned that they were driven to participate by their willingness to offer services to their communities. The language they employed was distinctly communitarian in origin, privileging the advantages of common efforts for advancing communal affairs. Their discussions were mainly focused on how relations are fostered and maintained within a given society. Often they exhibited a broader understanding of community that exceeded beyond the local or city level to a wider state level. Michalis was passionate about participation being a means to promote the public good:

I mean the mentality is ‘if I am ok, then I don’t care[about others]’ which means you don’t make a step further ... and this is necessary(!) when we talk about participation in common matters, I mean to give a small part of yourself for the common good. (Michalis, Created space)

Michalis’ opinion reflects a clear tendency among all visionaries to express solidaristic motivation and a concern “with the self-centred and excessive individualism that undermines the commitment to something beyond the self, let alone the public good” (Arthur, 2006:6). Visionaries’ opinions evoked communitarian perceptions that the community is threatened by “selfishness on the part of individuals and ineptitude on the part of bureaucratic governments” (Frazer, 1999:38). Their involvement was understood as a result of the state failure to provide services for the community, and thus the aim of their actions was framed as “filling the gap” (Alexandros, Created space).

The State in these accounts was described as having to be organised around communal bonds of mutual obligation (Greener, 2002: 256) and shared interests. The state’s role was understood as building institutions in the local community to promote relationships and a sense of common good. Visionaries discussed a form of political action within which intermediate institutions such as schools, voluntary groups and neighbourhoods were encouraged to facilitate the relationship between state and individuals. Schools and the educational system had a prominent position within visionaries’ discussions, as participation was seen as an extension of the educational system. In many accounts it was argued that education for citizenship and participation projects needed to focus on developing a dialectical relationship among different segments of society. According to these accounts, education is not

only about training but, when linked with participatory projects can bring together different experiences and help to create common spaces connecting citizens. School was seen as an intermediate institution that should be encouraged to deliver education for a form of citizenship that privileges both humanitarian values and deliberative democracy.

In line with these views, Phaethon expressed his disappointment over the way school functioned in this context:

School is currently focused on producing experts. We (the group) talk about a school that produces capable people in society- honest, sincere, cooperative, people concerned with peace, non-violence, co-existence, solidarity ... proper democracy like deliberative democracy ... I mean active citizens, but you don't get this in the school. (Phaethon, Created space)

This focus on education for citizenship and the values Phaethon advocates sit well within communitarian thinking, which seeks to identify the core values which would constitute a good society. Here Phaethon reflects visionaries' accounts which often were bound up with ideas of solidarity, tolerance and co-existence; ideas seen as "corrective of the ... cult of the individual" (Arthur, 2006:3). The purpose of school was seen as to prepare young people for membership in inclusive and tolerant communities rather than moving to technical and less personalised methods, as they thought was the case of the Greek educational system. The role of school was also discussed among UK visionaries such as Nadine, who expressed the conviction that the failure of

school to create a sense of belonging and purpose in her community resulted in very low interest and attendance on the part of young people. In the accounts of UK visionaries, school was described as being divorced from the daily experience of young people in the community and the 'real needs' of young people which were usually described as a need to feel safe, valued and having the opportunity to find employment within their own communities.

A strong communitarian stance was also expressed when the Greek visionaries discussed the need for a sense of purpose and common direction for Greek society. Activities such as youth participation projects were seen as enabling a dialogue towards a common vision and a sense of purpose. For Alexandros, young people in his community:

Need a vision ... something to follow. Is this going to be through a policy, a person or a group of people? I don't know. Something young people will trust. I believe on a vision in the society ... We can't all agree but we need a common vision as a society. (Alexandros, Created space)

Alexandros, who expressed opinions that fit both a visionary and an adventurer (see the next section) type of participation, seemed to be at ease with the idea of individuals acting as leaders. He describes a form of communitarian citizenship within which citizens have a common idea of what is significant, decide together what is best, and allocate power to elites in order to advance such common values (Tam, 1998).

There was also a conviction in visionaries' accounts that enlarging people's experience through projects helps to build inclusive communities, as this experience can be transformed into positive values and attitudes. This resonates with Etzioni's (1995:113) conviction that 'experiential learning' is an important element of civic education, and with a communitarian stance that experiential learning is the basis of active citizenship (Arthur, 1998). In Greek visionaries' accounts this type of learning appears as 'informal learning' and is in line with their experience of taking part in EU projects. All of the visionaries were passionate about the value of informal learning and were disappointed that informal education in Greece was not recognised, with employers either not being informed about it or not giving it enough consideration.

7.2.2 The Purpose of Participation

This vision of a different society described in the previous section was strongly linked in Greece with a criticism of the current socio-economic conditions and the relationships within society. For visionaries, the value of their decision to get involved was highlighted through a differentiation from dominant discourses of success, perceived values of individualism and dominant attitudes among youth. Employment, independence and success in education were prominent concepts when visionaries discussed their experience and position within their socio-political contexts. Visionaries criticised dominant discourses of success and forms of citizenship based on employment status. They criticised lack of independence and lack of opportunities for youth to exercise choice in shaping their futures. Marina,

for example, thought that young people in the country felt as though they were not being included in society because:

They don't have space to choose what they will study, what they will do later in life, even the simple things ... whether they will become adults and leave their [parental] homes. (Marina, Created space)

For Marina, independence was understood as one's ability to make decisions in life regardless of family and societal expectations. Similarly, all of the visionaries spent a considerable part of the interview discussing how lack of independence was experienced, and both education and the employment market were central in their discussions. Regarding education, the majority of them went through typical processes for any Greek young person, including compulsory schooling and private tutoring in order to have a hope of success in the ferociously competitive process for access to a university. Some of them did not negotiate transition to higher education in a way that was perceived as successful by society. For example, those who did study attended less prestigious disciplines or followed courses associated with their artistic interests. In most accounts a linkage was drawn between the educational system, progress to higher education and unemployment, to highlight the lack of opportunities for independent individual choices. Katerina's statement summarises this process:

It's this system in which we live ... it's the way it is structured ... I mean you have to pass the exams for the University, you must (!) get a place at the University, you must (!) serve your military service, you must(!) find a

job but to find a job you must (!) have a masters and a PhD ... I mean this is stressful for youth. (Katerina, Created space)

Katerina was 23 at the time of the interview and had just decided to make a career shift and, instead of relying on her degree, do the job she enjoyed, a shift which was presented as a “small revolution”. Her example is quite rare in the Greek context, where employment market conditions force the majority of degree holders to pursue career paths strictly related to their degrees. Katerina’s description of the interplay of these demands as the ‘system’ reflected a common tendency amongst the visionaries in Greece to use this word as an ‘umbrella term’ to highlight lack of independence. Indeed visionaries used the word ‘system’ in their effort to criticise perceptions of success and the factors that affect young people’s transitions. For example, Phaethon kept referring to it as “the amorphous monster we deal with”, while for Marina young people felt “hemmed in by the system”. For visionaries, the impact of the ‘system’ was felt through their effort to acquire cultural capital and become successful.

Achieving qualifications was presented by visionaries as central part of the experience of young people in their effort to negotiate the ‘system’. However, achieving qualifications was not presented as leading smoothly to a further stage of acquiring wealth and symbolic capital through paid employment. The reality, visionaries argued, was that successful transitions to education were followed by barriers to entering the employment market and inability to become socially mobile. Furthermore, even when entry to the labour market is achieved, working

conditions do not correspond to expectations and skills. Therefore, they described dominant versions of success in their community within which finding a job was not only a means for economic independence but also a way to enjoy respectable citizenship. Having experienced the barriers in achieving such transitions, visionaries felt that the 'system' excluded young people through an "employment-centred model of citizenship" (Smith et al., 2005:439).

In addition to lack of independence within the Greek context, the visionaries also criticised lack of symbolic capital as exemplified by respect and recognition. Respect was highlighted by visionaries in regard to how they were perceived and treated within their community. Participants often described themselves and other young people as being constructed as immature and unable to behave responsibly. Gaining respect and recognition was important for the participants, as lack of it had practical effects on their interactions within services, as Phaethon highlights:

In your contact with public agencies ... because young people are differently dressed, speak differently ... they don't treat you with respect. If you want to open a new business, they don't treat you with the seriousness they should ... they just don't take you into account ... in banks for example with loans ... they can't imagine that a 25 year old like you can establish a company. (Phaethon, Created space)

Lack of recognition was also highlighted through the absence of services for youth. Visionaries described how the lack of translated youth work terms in Greek reveals low interest in youth in society. For them, the development of youth work in the

country would be a sign of the recognition of youth. For other participants, lack of translation in Greek of the term ‘youth work’ was not only a sign of the low symbolic capital of youth, but also an example of the backwardness of the country concerning the mentality around youth involvement. The sense of lacking in progress was expressed also when general attitudes to volunteerism, informal learning and participation were discussed:

We are stuck, we don't have tradition of volunteerism ... for us [Greeks] volunteerism is that a young man will do his military service, that's how society is seeing it. There is no tradition of participation as it is in ... let's say Belgium. (Michalis, Created space)

In the above quotation, Michalis draws the conclusion that the country is in an inferior stage regarding involvement through a comparison to European countries which are perceived to have achieved advanced stage of volunteerism. By using the word “stuck” he describes the country as being stagnant and fixed into a specific frame of understanding public involvement.

These opinions correspond to a well-established attitude in Greek society that constructs EU and the western European societies as more advanced and as a point for comparison about the developmental stage that the country needs to achieve. Indeed, similarly to Greek professionals, visionaries described practices regarding kinship and citizenship as “backward”, traditional and opposed to a wanted Europeanisation. Kinship relations, often identified with favouritism, were

presented as a barrier towards equality, while a perceived individualisation of society was presented as an impediment to an ethic of participation.

Visionaries' rejection of individualism can be understood in line with the communitarian language they employed to describe their motivation. It is worth noting, though, that they often attributed elements to traditional society such as emphasis on achievement and individualism, which in literature are classified as characteristics of modernity as it is linked to developments in advanced market economies (see Triandis et al., 1988; Triandis, 1995; Sagy et al., 2001). In this way, individualism was seen by the participants as a result of traditional kinship relations rather than an effect of modernity. That the participants regardless identify behaviours in Greek society that are usually associated with modernity as traditional shows how they are in an ongoing process of negotiating notions of modernity, tradition and progress. Thus, participation did not only give the visionaries an opportunity to criticise dominant discourses; it also allowed them to identify with a participative lifestyle which they perceived as modern.

7.2.3 Visionaries' Understanding of Power

As has been described above, the visionaries developed a critique of dominant discourses and practices of success and rejected perceived prevalent social values in an effort to gain a sense of control of their involvement. In addition to this effort, the visionaries developed a discourse of opposition and differentiation to the

current dominant political system and presented their involvement as representing alternative and creative political action.

Visionaries in the UK expressed their mistrust of government, since “they do what they want to do and that affects us” (Nadine, Created space), and framed their action around exercising control and reducing the ability of the government to shape agendas without taking into account young people’s opinions. For Nina it was important to control these processes because:

They [government] try to find a way that everyone should do everything what they say ... to make life much better for other people around young people. Because for them young people is the main cause of crime and such things. (Nina, Created space)

Here, she expressed a common critique among visionaries that governments justify non-friendliness to youth policies by creating a discourse of youth as irresponsible. One way to read this opinion would be as a reaction to processes of governmentality that restrict young people’s capacities for action.

In Greece, the visionaries made a clear distinction between traditional ways of participation in politics and their engagement in projects. They stressed the fact that their involvement was part of a conscious decision to respond to the socio-political changes they observed in their environments. For example, Phaethon distinguished the action of his group from that of political parties:

What we are doing is political act ... all these years ... we believe that we offer to the city we take part in the social change ... small or larger social change it doesn't matter ... we are contributing. I mean we feel active(!) in this group. We reject the political parties, this is not active participation. (Phaethon, Created space)

Others, while still distinguishing between forms of participation, did not place them in a hierarchy but rather defended their chosen form of participation and argued for the validity of equal status for the different ways of getting involved. Michalis, for example, was critical of EU policy which prioritises participation within local authorities:

The young person which takes part in a self-organised theatre group performs a political act, this is political participation, I mean the message is that: 'I want in my space, where I live and experience things, to have such cultural activities, such kind of spaces'. This is a political message. I mean political participation of going to the local youth council to say my opinion is good but it's not the only way. (Michalis, Created space)

Similar to Michalis, other visionaries felt the need to justify their choice to be involved in non-formal structures and criticised a lack of flexibility by formal institutions that leads to low recognition of less formal forms of participation. For the visionaries, their involvement was understood not only as a conscious choice but further as an expression of active and responsible citizenship. For Alexandros (Created space), active citizenship was understood as young people being able to take decisions for themselves and being 'self-organised', which meant organising

themselves in groups with minimal adult input. Phaethon was passionate about the importance of active citizenship and he kept referring to it throughout the interview; when asked to elaborate on it, he gave his own version of an active citizen:

Like myself (laughing) Well ... I imagine the active citizens as being to affect their personal life ... then improve the people around us, our neighbourhoods, then our city and keeps going like that and reaches Europe and the World we live in. I think active citizen means that you really can be part of the developments ... through collectivities, groups ... there are many ways to do that. I don't consider active citizens those who are involved in party politics ... they are not leading actors in progress ... because political parties are power. (Phaethon, Created space)

Phaethon argues that young people becoming leaders in their communities involves a responsibility to take up opportunities for community involvement. Therefore, the right to representation ceases being simply a right, but becomes a responsibility for young people to seize opportunities and spread their argument into their communities. Unless young people become active, stop expecting their communities to express an interest in them and take matters into their own hands, Phaethon argues they will keep being excluded and constructed as irresponsible by the rest of society.

Visionaries were aware, though, that not all young people in the community share their opinions and definitely not their willingness for involvement. There was a

great deal of commonality in visionaries' accounts about the way other people responded to their responsibilities as active citizens. In order to highlight their opinions, they mostly discussed youth protests and youth attitudes to leisure. Table 14 summarises the opinions that the visionaries expressed regarding their own attitude in contrast to that of other young people:

Table 14- Visionaries' perceptions of themselves and other young people

<i>Other Young people</i>	<i>We</i>
Have a passive attitude	Act /Make a difference
Are not creative	Are creative
Have not realised	Have realised
Expect others to do things for them	Are productive
Are not productive	Feel active
Waste their time	Have a vision
Have no message	Are responsible

While they expressed a sympathetic position about the difficulties that contemporary youth faced, and they positioned themselves in the same frame of experience, at the same time they expressed disappointment about other youth not being activated as they were. Katerina discussed the attitudes of young people, giving the examples of her friends and family:

I mean they are not doing something wrong but they don't realise. It's a passive approach, they expect others to do things for them. I think this has to change ... there is an increase in the number of young people who

*spend their time without being productive, creative ... which I don't judge,
I don't say it's tragic but I envision young people in a different way.*

(Katerina, Created space)

For Katerina it was puzzling that while her friends see her involvement in positive terms, at the same time they opt for non-participation and they rather “prefer to spend their time in cafeterias”. Explanations that involved social structures were attempted, but she concluded that other young people’s attitudes occurred mostly through personal decision-making and individual approaches to volunteerism rather than solely through the effect of factors beyond their control. Similarly, Michalis argues that young people in the country are not making use of the existing opportunities for participation, whereas they focus all their energy into unproductive ways of involvement such as protests. He felt that the protests were inefficient:

There was no action for (!) something, for some idea ... it was mostly reaction to an existing situation which was unsatisfactory. Youth participation though is action to achieve something. It's necessary to get active through organisations and projects to make a difference. The one [participating] doesn't exclude the other [protesting]. But I see that they massively protested and reacted while I don't see corresponding action through organisations, common matters and collectiveness. (Michalis,

Created space)

Michalis’ opinion that protest is a less efficient way to proclaim your opinions compared to getting involved in participatory projects evokes concerns within the

literature that participative democracy de-legitimises traditional forms of social struggle such as campaigning and protesting (Barnes et al., 2007) .

7.2.4 Visionaries' source of agency

In conclusion it could be argued that visionaries gained a strong sense of agency deriving from their vision of an alternative society and their willingness to work towards this. For visionaries, their sense of agency and the value of their decision to get involved was highlighted through a differentiation from dominant discourses of success, perceived values of individualism and dominant attitudes among youth. Visionaries' ethic of participation and active citizenship allowed them to address other citizens as self-interested individuals who realise their wants through a focus on their own targets. Visionaries thus framed non-participation as an unproductive and backward choice for self-interested individuals.

In a first reading, visionaries' description regarding the processes that shape the opportunities of youth in their communities resonate with Hoggett's (2001) and Greener's (2002) "reflexive, agent as object agency" which refers to agency that is constrained because the otherwise reflexive and willing to engage agent "is unable to impose him/herself upon their surroundings" (2002:695). In this case the habitus of the agents reached a degree of agency that is reflexive, aware of the constraints and the networks they are in but prohibited by existing power relations to act. In that way, visionaries could be perceived as aware of the complexity of power

relations in society and their status but as lacking the right type of capital(s) to affect their field.

However, the visionaries did not present themselves as passive actors within their environments. While they recognised that lack of ability to affect society applies to youth in general, they positioned themselves as more active social actors. Marina, for example, describes youth as having realised that they are hemmed in by the system and as being engaged in an effort to “un-trap themselves” (Marina, Created space). Similarly Alexandros (Created space) argues that, just because society is so conservative and restraining, young people form groups and partnerships “are trying to do something with their means ... to resist to that”. Furthermore, visionaries presented themselves as forming ‘couplings’ (Jessop, 1996; Greener, 2002) with other individuals and groups in their communities which shared similar opinions in order to change their position. Despite a rejection of individualism they endorsed discourses of participative democracy, creativity and pursuit of new ideas which, one could argue, require a degree of individual freedom. Visionaries depicted their choices as the workings of agents who are independent, unconventional, break traditions, initiate actions; agents who, in other words, are able to exercise individuality.

Therefore, the visionaries followed a strategy that allowed them to criticise dominant discourses and reject individualism and tradition, and thus reaffirmed a sense of agency and control over their lives. In this context, participation seemed to

be a strategy through which the participants attempted to extend their networks, exercise influence and access the necessary capitals in order to alter their standing in society. It could be argued that a dominance of the projective element of agency compensates for frustration felt following the realisation that their particular dispositions are not socially valued and are inadequate to provide them with opportunities for social mobility. Participation thus acts as a terrain that allows to think about the future, “about where they want to go”, about “manoeuvrability in reaction to existing structures” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:985) and to accordingly frame and present their decision-making.

7.3 The Adventurers

Adventurers were mobilised through personal concerns on specific issues, they were cause-orientated and valued the ability to explore the most suitable forms of participation in the community. Adventurers, similar to professionals, were concerned with making the right choice and exhibiting socially constructive behaviour, but they were unwilling to compromise their independence and flexibility in choosing the project that fitted their needs the best.

Adventurers privileged in their accounts the fun they gained through participation, and they were interested in developing themselves. Peer relations, trust and a network sustained mainly through friendship have been highlighted by adventurers as salient. Furthermore, lack of concrete structure and formal rules, absence of hierarchy and regulations was referred to as main characteristics of their groups that contributed to strong emotional bonds and sustained their willingness to remain involved. While all participants in this study expressed similar feelings about their groups, it was only the adventurers who placed paramount importance on them. This type of participation includes members of several groups such as the created spaces in the UK and aspects of the accounts of members of the created space in Greece. As the majority, though, of the participants included in this type draw their experience from the UK context, the analysis draws mostly on examples from this context.

Table 15-Composite profile of an adventurer

Mark is a male of White-British background, 19 years old at the time of the interview and he wants to be a writer. He got to know about the group at the local college when the Opportunities Officer introduced the group. He is very happy with his group as it provides for him a safe space where he experiences a sense of belonging compared to other groups he has been part of. He argues that finding the right group is very important and he hopes that organised activity can change the negative stereotypes around youth.

7.3.1 Adventurers' Motivation and Values

Adventurers developed a markedly weaker communitarian discourse compared to other types of participants and they attempted to situate their motivation to participation within their personal values and willingness to work towards a specific cause than out of a sense of duty. The adventurers valued highly the opportunity to explore existing opportunities for participation and the ability to choose the appropriate one. They believed that different young people fit into different settings of participation and argued that it is important that a young person tries new things and finds the right group in the community with which to get involved. When Nigel commented on Vignette 1 he suggested that the main character needs to find an appropriate group in the community. According to him, this process of finding the right group is important because:

Just to open her options. I mean seeing same people and doing same things every day gets boring and repetitive but joining a group like this she would be able to see new people and do new things ... Maybe she

should to try to get to know different groups around the area and then she might be able to decide which one exactly she wants to be. (Nigel, Created space)

Furthermore, participation within adventurers' accounts was constructed as meaningful only when it met the requirements of satisfaction, excitement, adventure and opening the horizon of experience and acquaintances. Thus, being able to explore and choose the right one among available groups allowed adventurers to retain a sense of control over their activity. Nonetheless, what was the right group for them? Adventurers valued as the 'right group' the one within which they felt accepted, where they had the opportunity to form positive peer relations and to achieve change at a local level.

Adventurers predominantly described their motivation and activity around advancing awareness about the issues they deemed important. Likewise, they did not wish to share power or become part of governance institutions but they were more interested in bringing about change through raising awareness. Large scale political influence was left to professionals and the respective organisations which were perceived to have the knowledge and the resources to translate their work into policy recommendations. Indeed, adventurers expressed preference for political action in everyday activities within the community and willingness to achieve "small, profound change through their daily interactions, rather than shift grand narratives" (Vromen and Collin, 2010:100).

Although references to political ideology were absent, this does not mean that they did not present their drive to participation as stemming from personal belief systems which, one could argue, borders on ideology. There was a degree of commonality in adventurers' accounts regarding their values and belief systems. They stated that alongside fun-seeking and experience they wanted to "make a change where you are living"(e.g. Nigel, Alan, Meg). Sophie (Created space), for example, who also made that last comment, was involved because she had strong beliefs on homophobia and wanted to make her community a better place for LGBT people, while Derek and Nadine were involved because they believed that young people should have a voice in the matters "affecting living environments" (Created space).

Adventurers' political disposition was expressed through daily activities such as volunteering, doing research, analysing research data and writing research reports. For example, Sophie would often write for local magazines and Alan and Nigel (Created space) would get involved with arts projects. Interacting and developing relationships with other youth groups in the community was also presented by the adventurers as one of the most important aspects of their work. Being able to come together, interact and sometimes organise events with like-minded people was presented by the adventurers as a process that made them feel part of a community of common interests and values.

In line with feeling accepted and included, adventurers described that feeling recognised and valued was also of upmost importance to them. Nina (Created space), for example, offered an example of her attempt to volunteer in a charity shop, an experience which left her feeling non-valued. As Nina explained, she volunteered in a charity shop because she wanted to gain experience and interact with people from different backgrounds. She was disappointed to realise that the days she could not go to the shop, “people there, they wouldn’t kind of like call to check what’s happening”. For Nina, that was a clear indication that her effort was not appreciated: “You want to feel valued, you want to feel that what you are doing is recognized...they pay attention to you”. Nina also gave this example to highlight her contentment with the communication and emotional bonds she developed in the youth group, elements that motivated her to remain involved.

Up to now it has been shown that adventurers draw a sense of uniqueness from being able to exercise choice, and to identify suitable groups within which they can develop strong emotional ties. As will be discussed in the next section, while it was important for the adventurers to enhance their opportunity to exercise choice, they were also concerned that their efforts were socially recognised.

7.3.2 The Purpose of Participation

Similarly to professionals, the adventurers presented themselves as capable of constructing different selves compared to prevalent perceptions about youth in community and to images presented in the media. The discussions revealed that adventurers were aware of discourses that constructed youth as inclined to socially destructive behaviour, or 'at risk' (Kemshall, 2008:21) and aware of how they were expected to behave. Throughout their discussions, the adventurers presented themselves as able to identify and avoid risky or socially unacceptable behaviours such as "hanging around and causing problems" (Alan, Nigel, Nadine, Created space). In most accounts, participation was presented as the opposite of anti-social behaviour and resonated with what Kemshall (Ibid:30) calls making the "right choice about risk".

A discussion of youth representations within the media was employed by the participants to highlight how young people are identified with risk. They used expressions such as 'stereotyping' and 'labelling' to highlight that the media have a negative impact on how youth is represented. In contrast to professionals, who thought this representation to be unfair to them, the Adventurers argued that this was unfair to all young people, as many of them resorted to hanging around, not by choice, but mostly due to lack of places to go and activities to undertake within their communities. Lack of leisure opportunities and limited facilities such as cinemas and sports establishments was referred to as a major cause of anti-social behaviour.

In adventurers' accounts the interests of the community and those of young people were often presented as conflicting. According to these descriptions, young people wanted to use public spaces but their communities, often affected by discourses of youth at risk, were unwilling to tolerate young people occupying public space without a purpose. This resonates with the literature that argues that the youth at risk approach has blurred the lines between difficulties that stem from social problems and those directly linked to crime, and for Muncie (1999, in Kemshall 2008:23) this has resulted in an 'institutionalised intolerance' around issues regarding youth.

It is worth noting that adventurers never gave examples of themselves hanging around their communities; on the contrary, they stressed that they preferred organised activities and were proud that their groups were a constructive way of getting involved: "it gives us something to do as well as having fun, it saves us from walking in the streets" (Alan, Created space). Thus, participants argued, precisely because they were involved in projects, they avoided being involved in non-constructive action. Therefore, it could be argued that involvement in projects gave them the opportunity to construct a positive image and to differentiate themselves from dominant discourses that construct youth as/at risk. In this effort, participation was presented by the adventurer-members of the LGBT- created group as part of a conscious choice following an assessment of both its advantages and disadvantages. More specifically, in their discussions, the members of the LGBT group described a lack of a sense of safety within their community which forced them to devise coping strategies such as changing venues periodically to

avoid danger. In that sense, while participation in this group gave them the opportunity to advance their aims in formal fora, on a daily basis it was represented as a risky choice. Despite these dangers, the participants presented their involvement as the only worthwhile alternative within their community, as it was in line with their personal value system, and expressed pride about acting in a socially constructive way.

Furthermore, an understanding of participation as a means to affirm a socially constructive form of agency was obvious when they discussed the vignettes and especially in their comments on the lack of participation by the young person described in Vignette 1.

She needs to give herself into the right direction, she seems a very laid back person and she doesn't want to do much but she says she wants more opportunities and experiences and you aint gonna do that until you do something with yourself. She needs to get more info for what's going on out there. (Nigel, Created space)

Nigel here reflects a prominent suggestion in adventurers' accounts that society offers opportunities to individuals. Lack of education and lack of willingness to participate was attributed to individual responsibility. A responsible citizen in adventurers' descriptions needs to get active, look for and make the best use of the available opportunities in the community and take responsibility for their own life. Notably absent in adventurers' discussions was a reference to structural barriers

that might prohibit young people from making the right choices. Table 16 shows how the Adventurers perceived themselves in contrast to other young people:

Table 16-Adventurers’ perceptions of themselves and other young people

<i>Other Young people</i>	<i>We</i>
Need to try new things	Try new things/ meet new people
Need to put themselves out there more	Have made our minds up
Are laid back	Get involved
Sit around doing nothing	Are at the right direction
Need to do something with themselves	Make a change
Need to get their lives on track	Act

In representing ‘others’ as “laid back” and having a need to “put themselves together”, the adventurers reveal a construction of the self, consisting in both having a purpose and being actively involved. Consequently, within adventurers’ arguments, participation was depicted as an act of responsible citizenship which orientates young people towards the right direction of being active, involved, and eager to explore opportunities. As seen previously, the value of being persistent in finding the right kind of involvement is confirmed. Therefore, participation is not depicted just as a pastime but as an adventure, shaping identity through acquiring experience and discovering interests.

7.3.3 Adventurers' understanding of Power

Adventurers did not spend a considerable amount of time discussing the political system and when they did it was neither to express 'oppositional' nor 'apathetic' identity to the system or the authorities (Li and Marsh, 2008), but they rather focused on advancing their group cause within governance networks. Those adventurers who had some experience of interaction with local councillors narrated stories of how power holders treated them when they tried to organise public events. They expressed a sense of exclusion stemming from negative stances by councillors. They passionately highlighted this by employing a recent to the time of interview example when they organised an arts exhibition and the councillors intervened to alter the content of this exhibition as it was deemed that it could offend the public's moral sensibilities. For the participants, this imposition of discourses and norms regarding nudity was received as a violation of their freedom and as lack of respect by politicians.

Criticism, though, did not automatically signal a culture of opposition: on the contrary the authorities still remained important to adventurers and they still sought their support. For example Meg wanted the government to "understand the group a bit better because they don't understand why they are giving us the money at the moment" (Meg, Created space). The idea of producing interest representation appeared in adventurers' accounts but was of lowest importance compared with a focus on issue promotion. For example, in a comparison with other youth groups in the community the members of the LGBT group made it clear that it was not within

their role to pursue large scale community work since there are other groups with the skills to do so:

The shadow youth cabinet is about making [local community] a better place, they are also specialised, they help young people, they help young people in care ... and disabilities, and there are some other groups, they are all specialist groups. (Meg, Created space)

This reflects a tendency among adventurers to differentiate themselves from roles within the governance networks that required ‘expertise’. Although they did not perceive their groups as ‘specialised’ or as integral parts of the governance processes, some adventurers could still see a role for them within it, or as Alan imaginatively expressed:

I think we are almost an extra, personally, because I am doing performing arts, I think of it as a big performance, as the government being a big performance and then extras on the scene. (Alan, Created space)

Alan placed his group within a broad perception of governance where specialised and less specialised groups cooperate. He seems to be confident with the idea that his group does not have a protagonist role, but functions on a complementary level. Identifying his group as “an extra” reflects a general trend among the adventurers whereby they did not express any desire to share power. Such a distance was seen as a way to retain control over the pace and the degree of their involvement in governance and at the same time to seek cooperation when this was deemed necessary to advance the aims of the group.

7.3.4 Adventurers' source of agency

Participation in adventurers' accounts is not depicted just as a pastime, but as part of young people's adventure towards shaping their identity through acquiring experience and discovering interests. Adventurers valued their independence and wanted a flexible relationship with the networks of governance. This political disposition also allowed for cooperation, mainly when this was deemed necessary to advance the aims of the group. This resonates with Bang's (2005) analysis of the political disposition of issue-orientated social actors, in that they pursue their aims without or "with the system, if need be" (Bang, 2005:169). Similar to visionaries, the adventurers presented themselves as forming 'couplings' (Jessop, 1996; Greener, 2002) with other individuals and groups in their communities that shared similar opinions. The focus on communicative processes resonates with the practical-evaluative element of agency which is about making choices through deliberation with others (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:994).

Therefore, the adventurers followed a strategy that allowed them to choose the forms of participation they deemed appropriate and to retain a control over their involvement, in terms of both time and commitment, and thus reaffirmed a sense of agency and control over their lifestyles. Participation appeared as a strategy to reconcile a need to be socially active and an interest in reaffirming identity.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored participants' discursive constructions regarding the meaning of their involvement within the specific social structures in which their experience unfolds. Participation proved to be an integral part of social experience and a strategy to express individual identity. For participants, narrating their participation as part of their identity allowed them to express agency and control over their lifestyle. Lack of uniformity in the expressed notions of participation, citizenship and motivations across participants revealed a multiplicity of ways in which young people of this sample discursively engaged with participation and wished to use opportunities within participatory spaces. For some of them, participation was an opportunity to draw from existing repertoires (the habitual) in order to adjust to participatory spaces; for others participation was a way to reaffirm identity or to extend their repertoires in order to change their social standing.

The professionals adopted a pragmatic approach to participation which was seen as a responsibility to do the right thing and a strategy to develop themselves and navigate the opportunities offered by the system. The visionaries, on the other hand, were focused on forming couplings and devising strategies which would allow them deal with the barriers they faced within their socio-cultural context. Participation was approached as a choice which allowed them to criticise dominant discourses of success and to think about and work towards future aspirations. The adventurers engaged in the spaces in an effort to reconcile the pleasurable and

social action. Although concerned with being seen as a positive part of the youth population, they equally valued independence and opportunities to exercise choice. Participation itself was seen by the adventurers as a way to develop and reaffirm identity.

Participants emerged through their narratives as social actors with their own social histories and shared understandings of the world as they were exemplified through particular perceptions of contexts, living environments, experience of education, future aspirations and perceptions of relationships with others. These histories and understandings were supported from and gave rise to particular elements of agency. Thus, the profiles devised by the different approaches the participants expressed give an insight into the diversity of dispositions in participants' accounts towards participation and the variety of resources which reaffirmed agency within participation processes. In this way, decision to participate is placed in context and the scope of participation takes on a different meaning each time, according to the particular social histories and understandings which the participants expressed.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This aim of this study was to explore how young people engaged with processes of participation. In doing so, it set out to explore how young people conceptualise participation, how they represent their experience within particular spaces and how this experience and these conceptualisations relate to participation policies.

This study is aligned with recent calls within research for a better understanding of young people's experience within participatory structures. Indeed, limited information about how young people engage with their contexts and the domination of policy assumptions about apathetic and disengaged young people in late modernity has motivated an increasing interest in research which reveals young people's lived experience and conceptualisations of the socio-political.

8.1 Youth participation as a shifting terrain

An increased interest in young people's participation is coming with an increased awareness that there is a lack of clarity in regard to its practices and meanings. Chapter Two has established that participation in general, and youth participation in particular, unfolds upon a shifting terrain of different meanings, interests and perceptions of citizenship. When youth participation is approached as 'positive

youth development', it functions as a means to integrate young people into the community. Participatory projects which draw from this discourse focus on the development of personal skills, self-control and promotion of youth leadership. Youth participation which is seen as the exercise of 'active citizenship in a risk society' approaches volunteerism and participation in the employment market as the essential characteristics of a 'good citizen'. An approach to youth participation as the 'right to have voice in decision making' on matters that affect young people's lives retains an interest in protecting young people but at the same time recognises a value in youth as a life stage on its own. Raising youth voices is expected to result in raising youth status in regard to adults.

This last approach links to the increased influence of constructionist and interpretive traditions which have highlighted the socially constructed nature of youth and pinpointed how power inequalities marginalise young people.

This marked an increased interest across disciplines in exploring young people's political roles, identities, and perceptions. This involves an interest within politics on how young people express their political identities (e.g. O'Toole et al., 2003; Marsh et al., 2007), and an interest within social policy and youth studies on how young people conceptualise citizenship (e.g. Lister et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2002; Wood, 2009); how they experience public involvement (e.g. Barnes et al., 2004; Barnes, 2007) and participation (e.g. Matthews and Limb, 2003). Within political geography and development studies there is a shift to investigating the socio-spatial

dimensions of public involvement. Development studies contribute knowledge in regard to how spaces for participation are constructed and mediated by power relations (e.g. Cornwall, 2002; Cornwall and Coelho, 2007) while social geography (e.g. Mathews, 2001; Skelton and Valentine, 2003; Gallagher, 2006; Hopkins 2010; Mannion, 2010) focuses on how young people's spaces of participation 'come into being' and on the "relations that make them possible" (Mannion, 2010:332). The aim of this study is to provide an account of how young people engaged with and made meaning of participatory processes within specific contexts. As such, following an interdisciplinary approach that draws from all these perspectives was necessary in order to gain different entry points into these processes.

Although participation is seen as a means of empowerment, there is growing uneasiness in the above disciplines in regard to practices within participatory projects. There is limited information on how processes within such projects unfold (Gaventa, 2004) as well as on how these processes may vary in different political systems (Tisdall et al., 2008). Current constructions of young people as participants within policies construct them as rational social actors, able to make independent use of such spaces (Mannion, 2010). Chapter Three has, however, established that, rather than being independent agents, young people engage with their environments in a dialectical manner, and bring their own social histories into participatory processes. Thus, a spatial perspective which sees projects as materially and discursively constructed spaces allows consideration of the interplay of such individual histories and the social conditions which shape such spaces for participation. This leads to an acknowledgement that micro-practices and

interactions within spaces are framed and mediated by power relations, contexts and young people themselves as social actors. Consequently, in exploring participation processes, an analytical focus is necessary, which looks at how participatory opportunities frame the boundaries for action and on how young people may wish to engage with such opportunities. In regard to the above, this study is guided by questions which looked at how young people engage with processes of participation in specific contexts.

8.2 Findings

The section sets out to present the findings of this study under three interconnected themes. Firstly, participants' *experience* of participatory processes within spaces will be discussed. Secondly, participants' *conceptualisations* of participation and themselves as participants will be explored. And thirdly, the *interplay between policies and individuals* as it emerges from these experiences and conceptualisations will be teased out. These three areas will be discussed in regard to what they mean to the participants of this study and in relation to what they represent for other areas of research which explore similar processes.

8.2.1 Representations of experience within spaces of participation

The participants identified a number of processes, discourses, communication modes and outcomes which were essential in the function of their projects. These processes are summarised by three facets: the performative, the managerial and the

creative. Rather than being ideal and successive forms of participation, these facets portray the experience of participation as it was interpreted by the participants. They give an insight into the function of spaces and the conditions that gave rise to specific priorities, roles and practices.

The performative facet reveals instances where the focus within spaces reflected a shift to organisational matters, hierarchy, roles and responsibilities. A predominance of the performative facet of participation coincides with a demand within projects for an agentic element which relates to the ability to draw from skills and knowledge acquired in the past in order to respond to present circumstances. Thus, young people were expected to either command organisational skills, linguistic competence and public speaking abilities upon their entrance to the space or to possess specific dispositions - an intuitive grasp of the rules of the game and quick learning.

Similarly, a managerial facet was characterised by a focus on skills. Skills in this facet were not restricted to the habitual and taken for granted, but the focus was placed on a constant effort to keep up with identifying and taking advantage of opportunities (e.g. funding, being involved in projects). Necessary expertise within a managerial facet of participation involved the ability to speak the language of targets, outcomes and evaluation. It also involved identifying and managing relevant projects, maintaining a sense of purpose, and an ability to communicate with funding organisations as well as understanding of and commitment to the values of such organisations.

Patterns of interaction within these facets, as they were presented by the participants, principally promoted a form of participation described in Chapter Two as 'positive youth development'. When managerial and performative forms of participation were dominant, the focus shifted onto promoting leadership for those already involved or capable of mastering the rules of the game. While there was a language which pinpointed the 'youth-led' character of practice, young people were positioned as apprentices (Matthews, 2001), who were making use of opportunities to learn from adults, develop skills and improve their behaviour. Control of processes, funding, techniques and tools defined what was to be included and what was to be excluded. The participants, for example, were allowed to choose methods, tools, type of events, destination of trips and cooperation with the groups they preferred. However, they were not expected to change the rules of the game through choosing activities which were outside the interests of the organisation. Furthermore, in spaces where the above facets were predominant, discursive practices which flatten difference, conflict and hierarchical relations defined what discourse was more important, while lived experience, as it relates to family status, gender and ethnic background, was in general downplayed.

Furthermore, resources and budgets and the priorities of the projects were represented as directly linked to polices and funding bodies, thus giving indications that the meaning of participation was framed by discourses and mechanisms outside the explored spaces. In addition, notions of 'purpose' in regard to what consisted appropriate activity within spaces served as discursive constructions

which legitimised policy discourses of participation. Thus the fields of possibilities (Hayward, 1998) within the explored spaces were framed around a type of participation which was about performing and managing existing opportunities. This signifies a ‘consumerist approach’ (Cockburn, 2010:312) to participation and citizenship, within which young people are expected to exercise ‘choice’ among offered services.

Participants’ representations revealed requirements for skills and appropriate modes of communication to both manage projects and to interact within representative structures which resonates with existing criticisms within participation. Tisdall et al. (2008), for example, argue that a centrality of representation and voice excludes those young people who lack the ability to use formal modes of communication. Similarly, Nairn et al. (2006) argue that it is usually the case that advantaged young people have access to participatory processes, while McGinley and Grieve (2010:258) argue that participation functions as “validation of those already capable of being involved”.

It could be argued at this point that processes within the explored spaces were defined by institutional practices and discourses which constructed young people as participants who ‘populate’ rather than ‘create’ such spaces. Alongside this, there was an emerging - albeit infrequent - creative facet of participation within the accounts of the participants. The creative facet involves a focus on building relations and developing reflexivity, both in regard to processes within groups and

in the aims of action. The creative facet was mostly apparent in participants' efforts to re-interpret the messages communicated from policies through applying their own justification and values to them, as well as through an interest in maintaining a degree of independence from funding bodies. Therefore, despite policy-derived practices and norms promoting a specific type of agency, there were signs of young people's attempts to invest participation with meanings which related to personal experience.

8.2.2 Conceptualisations of participation

Although literature and policy definitions of participation were revised, the research design was constructed in a way that meant that the participants were able to give their own meanings of what participation means to them. This was part of a deliberate attempt by the researcher to avoid imposing personal or policy interpretations of the term 'participation' during the interview. In this way, the study allowed participants to give their own meanings and define participation according to their experience.

The participants negotiated participatory processes through a variety of meanings, thus revealing multiple 'voices' rather than a unified youth 'voice'. Analysis in Chapter Seven revealed such plurality in participants' narratives regarding the meaning of participation. The social histories that the participants brought with them were explored through representations of lived experience, motivations,

relationships with others and aspirations. As there was no uniformity regarding these narratives, participants' approaches to participation were brought together into three dominant profiles: the professionals, the visionaries and the adventurers. Identification of profiles represents the language which the participants used to describe their involvement. Furthermore the profiles are not mutually exclusive; they rather describe those orientations that the participants privileged in their accounts among others. The profiles extend understandings of the ways in which young people conceptualise their involvement. At the same time they highlight how these particular orientations towards participation relate to lived experience within particular contexts.

The profiles will be discussed here in two ways. Firstly, the profiles identified in this study will be discussed in regard to relevant literature which identifies a shift towards individualised forms of involvement among youth. Secondly, the interconnection between participants' interpretations of participation and their perceptions of their role within particular contexts will be highlighted.

Participation and citizenship

The profiles identified in this study resonate with and extend current understandings in the literature in relation to the range of ways in which young people conceptualise their involvement.

For Bennet (2007), young people's engagement can be understood through a 'generational perspective' which highlights how young people exhibit different

understandings of citizenship in comparison to older generations. Changes in citizen roles are described by two distinct types of citizenship, the traditional 'dutiful' citizen and the emerging youth experience of the 'self-actualising' citizen (Ibid.:63). While elements of the self-actualising citizen, such as favouring of loose networks and mistrust of media and politicians, were evident in this study, there was not a marked shift towards such forms of citizenship. For example, elements associated with the traditional 'dutiful' citizen, such as being informed about government issues and voting, were still important for the participants. Therefore such a model of a 'divided citizenry' was represented up to a degree in this study but does not fully account for the complex understandings expressed by the participants. For example, the professionals' perception of their role as integral in the function of government and their sense of agency which stems from the ability to make good use of existing opportunities convey mostly a dutiful perception of citizenship.

The professionals tended to privilege official status, group work, getting things done and a form of agency which is about making use of existing opportunities in order to achieve personal advancement. As the majority of the professionals were involved in formal structures, they gained a sense of agency from being able to represent other young people and by being able to navigate the political system. The professionals fit well with Bang's (2005) 'expert' citizens, in that they privilege negotiation and cooperation with existing power holders in order to exercise influence. Furthermore, the professionals, similar to expert citizens, perceived themselves as part of the system rather than external actors to it (Ibid.:

164). However, rather than being concerned with developing networks with interest groups, as Bang's expert citizens, the professionals in this study saw themselves as being 'appointed' and 'representative'. As such, there was no acknowledged need to extend their networking to establish relationships with other groups in the community. When they were asked, for example, about how they communicate with the youth they represented and other groups in the community, they responded that they did not approach them but they were willing to support those who asked for their help.

Visionaries expressed a clear attitude towards extending their networks, both within the community and within policy networks. Aspects of visionary accounts resemble Juris and Pleyers' (2009) emerging identity of 'alter-activism', which involves a focus on both local lived experience and global connectedness. Despite a strong criticism of the existing social conditions, the visionaries did not see themselves as constrained or apathetic, but they revealed a perception of themselves as competent social actors who created their own opportunities for involvement. These possibilities for action were sustained by a dominant projective thinking around transformation which involved visions of a future society within which citizens share a common sense of purpose and young people are respected and valued. Thus, participation allowed them to express a degree of flexibility in regard to surrounding social structures and to act in the 'here and now' in regard to their imagined futures. Participation was presented by visionaries as a strategy to extend their networks in the community, affect policies when possible and as a way to gain the necessary capitals that would allow them to advance their social

standing. Their localised orientation was revealed through a strong communitarian discourse which criticised a lack of community bonds. In line with this, they developed a discourse which privileged deliberative democracy, direct action, informal learning and creativity, while at the same time they rejected tradition and its conventions.

However, there is a distinct difference between the visionaries and Juris and Pleyers' (2009) alter-activists. While alter-activists were identified to be building upon the political tradition of the New Left, the visionaries in this study were explicit in their rejection of political affiliation with any side of the political spectrum and criticised political involvement as an expression of existing power relations. This mistrust of political parties, media and political processes brings visionaries closer to Bennet's (2007) self-actualising citizens. Visionaries perceived themselves in opposition to surrounding structures and especially the political system, from which they wanted to maintain a clear distance. Again, though, visionaries' tendency to openly reject self-actualising expressions of citizenship such as consumerism and a sense of individual purpose suggests caution in relation to proposing a direct correspondence between visionaries and self-actualising citizenship.

The adventurers shared a similar interest to visionaries in organising networks within the community. Involvement for adventurers occurred on the basis of personal interest in specific issues. They valued the ability to identify and choose

the projects they perceived as more appropriate to their needs. This profile shares many similarities with Bang's (2005) 'everyday makers' in that they preferred small scale activity rather than directly getting involved in representative mechanisms. Furthermore, they did not express feelings of opposition or belonging in regard to the existing political system. Decision making for the adventurers was focused on the present demands arising within their projects, privileging a practical-evaluative aspect of agency (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) which involves deliberation through communication processes with others. Therefore, participation for adventurers was seen as a means that allowed them to form relationships in spaces they deemed suitable and to maintain a control over their lifestyle.

While Bang (2005) recognises little influence for ideology in everyday makers' choices, the adventurers expressed strong beliefs in regard to institutions and social organisation. Although they did not wish to change the system, at the same time they maintained a critical standpoint and argued that it was significant that they were recognised, respected and supported by political structures. Furthermore, a lack of willingness to assume representative roles did not lead to a perception of themselves as outside the networks of governance. On the contrary, being peripheral or an 'extra' to the 'performance of governance' allowed the adventurers to maintain control over their involvement, and at the same time confirmed a participatory self-image.

The adventurer profile challenges policy standpoints which assess participation in regard to outcomes and techniques. It also challenges literature which sees participation as meaningful only when it delivers transformative outcomes. A discussion about how the experience of being involved was important on its own was present in the accounts of all of the participants, but the adventurers placed paramount importance on it. Indeed, the adventurers explained how their engagement was based on their interpretations of opportunities to develop relations, and networks at the 'here and now', rather on assessment of ideal outcomes or representativeness. Thus in this case it becomes clear that it is not the status of the project that motivates involvement, but the quality of the experience. This is an important finding, as it is often neglected within discussions of participation. For example, as the discourses of youth participation showed in Chapter Two, the focus of the discussion lies in the potential of projects to deliver integration, skills or rights. In none of these discourses is adequately acknowledged that young people might want to be involved for the experience, and that involvement may predominantly focus on forming relationships, indulging in fun activities and exploring/extending identity.

Participation and context

Utilising case studies in different contexts was expected to have an effect on the collected data. It was expected that locating the individual histories in particular contexts would show that participants' representations were 'active' (Biesta and Tedder, 2006:19) in historical and institutional contexts which promote or facilitate specific demands for deliberative action. However, the participants approached

such contexts and formed interpretations and strategies of participation in different ways. Participants' expectations of participation were mediated by their 'conscious capacity' (Lister, 1997:38) or their beliefs about how they can act as agents within their contexts. Interpretations of such capacity were closely tied to how the participants represented their lived experience within their contexts.

There is a direct link established between participants' perceptions of participation with their understandings of their context. For example both professionals and adventurers approached participation as an opportunity to do the right thing and enact upon a perception of the self as part of a socially constructive aspect of youth. They distinguished themselves from parts of the youth population which were perceived as apathetic and at risk of antisocial behaviour. Privileging socially acceptable behaviour resonates with a versions of citizenship which Lister et al. (2003) identified as the 'respectable economic model', which reflects perceptions of citizenship as based on employment and contribution to community. There was a conviction in these accounts that their contexts offer young people the necessary opportunities to achieve their goals. Professionals' comfortable and taken for granted relationship with the system, which resembles what Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:127) call "like fish in water", reveals a habitus which equipped them with a sense of security, belonging and purpose within a given socio-cultural system and allowed them to deal with demands within participation such as linguistic competence.

The visionaries approached participation as an alternative social engagement which allows them to criticise and reject dominant discourses of success and citizenship. In contrast to the professionals, who focused on processes, the visionaries adopted a more existential approach to participation which involved linking their decisions to get involved with their values and worldview, recognising at the same time the impact of their emotions on such decision making.

The visionaries criticised dominant discourses of success and ways to behave as a citizen, revealing discontent with their surrounding social structures. These criticisms related to the barriers they faced at an institutional level due to insufficient skills. The visionaries felt that their context was systematically depriving young people from opportunities for social mobility through increased educational demands and employment market barriers. This realisation, in conjunction with a perception of themselves as pioneers, meant that they adopted alternative ways of engaging with their context consisting in a focus on the future conditions in which they imagined themselves living. This involved “reconstructing temporal perspectives” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:1006) and thinking or rehearsing alternative scenarios for the future. In this way, engaging within their projects allowed the visionaries to distance themselves from their context, discuss and imagine alternative futures, overcome the blockages they experienced, and construct a perception of themselves as capable to act.

These efforts to extend repertoires dominant in visionaries' accounts highlights the impact of socio-historical change within the particular national contexts on lived experience. There was a dominant future orientation in all of the profiles in the Greek context. Social change appeared in participants' accounts through their effort to negotiate notions of old and new, traditional and modern. A rejection of the local as 'backward' and 'individualistic' and an embrace of the international as 'modern' and 'progressive' were apparent in all of the Greek accounts. Social experience was described in a language which resonates with what Swidler (1986, cited in Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) calls 'unsettled times'. The social conditions present at the time of the interview were problematic for the Greek participants, who spent part of the interview discussing events of youth rioting, economic conditions, unemployment and perceived decline of social relationships and conventions. Such conditions were experienced as unpredictable and unstable; agency which was based on past knowledge and skills was described as insufficient to navigate them through such conditions. Thus, participation, which was more linked with a form of agency that focuses on the future to either imagine a better society (visionaries, adventurers) or discuss institutional change (professionals), highlights contradictions between present conditions and one's imagined future.

In contrast, the participants in the UK represented their experience within more stable or 'settled' (Ibid) social conditions. For example, going to college, achieving qualifications and finding a job were presented as relatively unproblematic processes when they discussed their lives. The participants expressed a conviction that skills learned through participation would help them in the future. Participatory

opportunities were presented as part of a general context which affords ‘choice’ to each individual. There was a more clear conviction within the UK participants that they were aware of the rules of the game and that they maintained a degree of manoeuvrability about how these rules were to be adopted or mediated at present. In this way, participation was more linked with a form of agency which was concerned with dealing with situations arising within the present in order to achieve impact (professionals) and nurture identity (adventurers, visionaries).

It has to be noted here that despite differences in understandings of their contexts, the participants expressed many similarities in their use of participatory strategies, which allowed for the profiles to be developed across the national contexts. Particular values and strategies that the young people associated with participation were prevalent enough to suggest that they constitute a common understanding of what participation is meant to be and which understanding connected individuals across contexts.

8.2.3 The interplay between individual histories and policy agendas

This section focuses on identifying the different assumptions or ‘modes of truth’ (Denzin, 2001: 47) held by the different actors involved in the participatory processes explored in this study. A general pattern identified in this study consists of a gap between the way policies construct young people as participants and the way young people perceive their involvement. The facets have shown that young people were expected to populate spaces for participation while the profiles of the

participants reveal a multiplicity of individual conceptualisations and attitudes towards participation.

Participants' orientations in regard to participation are in stark contrast with the discursive constructions of youth and citizenship revealed through the exploration of the policy documents. A document analysis of the policies for youth participation in UK and Greece in Chapter Five aimed to reveal how the boundaries/possibilities of youth participation are constructed on the official level. Policy documentation was revised in regard to discourses of citizenship, youth and participation. Participation policies in both contexts appeared to carry a polysemy (Clarke, 2004) reflected in an effort to bring together international approaches to participation and local discourses of involvement and youth. Thus, participation in the UK aims to deal with anti-social behaviour and to promote informed and responsible citizens. In Greece participation is seen as a means of promoting 'active', 'mature' and 'creative' citizens.

Despite the different discourses invested in participation, the overall aim in both contexts appeared to be the sustaining of existing structures and relations of power. Young people as participants are constructed in both contexts as a homogeneous group, as independent of power relations and as outside community networks. The explored publications describe young people as individuals who possess the capacity and willingness to become involved, thus constructing a lack of involvement as the product of apathetic and indifferent young people.

The effects of participatory discourses were evident in the ways in which the participants engaged with them and chose to identify with or extend them. There is evidence that young people in this study engaged with the official concepts of 'participation' and 'active citizenship'. Similar to a trend identified within the policies in Chapter Five, in most participant accounts the terms of participation and volunteerism were used interchangeably. A focus on responsibilities rather than rights in both contexts reveals an endorsement of discourses which construct citizenship on the basis of one's ability to take care of the self.

Engagement with official discourses is highlighted in the examples offered in Chapter Seven, when participants often presented themselves as 'responsible citizens' and identified participation with 'doing the right thing', 'avoiding risk', and 'contributing to community'. This resonates with the main principles of a participation discourse identified in Chapter Two as 'active citizenship in a risk society', which is prominent within the revised UK and EU participation policy frameworks. The examples offered in Chapter Six showed how policy frameworks appeared in participants' accounts through notions of purpose, demands for specific skills and promotion of specific agendas. Such a dominant policy focus on outcomes and techniques downplays what Mannion (2010) and Percy-Smith (2006) call the 'relational' character of participation. The profiles, and especially that of the adventurers, demonstrate that often policy meaning-making does not fit the meaning-making of the recipients who policies aim to reach.

There is little evidence within this study to suggest that the participants had an influence on the setting of agendas. The example of the thematic areas on which projects had to focus in order to receive funding is indicative of a lack of opportunity for young people to define the direction of the projects in which they were involved. Indeed, in all of the projects, the focus of the activity was in accordance to the priorities set by the respective funders.

There was evidence which also suggested that the participants sought to widen policy concepts to incorporate their lived experiences. For example, they often linked participation with aspects of their lived experience, which policy frameworks frequently neglect. Participants in the UK talked about issues of concern in their daily life such as the need for respect, being equal members of their communities, segregation, safety, mobility and educational inequalities sparked by increases in university tuition fees. Similarly, in Greece they talked about unemployment, lack of social mobility for youth, living conditions within cities and increasing poverty. In this way participants did not only see themselves as responsible and active but they additionally represented themselves as informed and fully engaged members of their communities, as able to form relationships within and across projects, as independent and inventive actors who placed principal importance on identity; all of which elements are absent within policy papers.

As the findings of this study indicate, rather than being a homogeneous group, young people come to animate spaces for participation, not under an interest in enacting a particular policy, but in regard to their own conceptualisations and lived experience. Policies, however, neglect issues such as lived experience and the value that young people place on the experience of involvement. The spaces explored in this study operated within policy discourses which are concerned with reproducing the existing order. This becomes more obvious through a restriction of the scope of participation within a discourse of governance (Chapter 2) which - although it varies in dominance within the explored national contexts - constructs young people as responsabilised and self-disciplined. The impact of a focus on the active citizen and 'well-behaved' (Ackerman, 2004) forms of involvement was particularly obvious in the concerns expressed by the participants regarding their effort to avoid anti-social behaviour in the UK and by denouncing protest in Greece.

The findings of this study in regard to participants' concerns about requirements for managerial skills and specific modes of communication within projects build upon existing research which highlights that current structures involve adult-mimicking (Cairns, 2006; Tisdall et al., 2008; Turkie, 2010) processes which rather exclude the majority of young people. In addition, they indicate that the interplay between individuals and policies favouring specific agendas and excluding non-official discourses resonates with concerns within the literature that participation has lost its transformatory edge (Cooke and Cothari, 2001; Cleaver, 2001). However, when discussing the potential of participatory processes, a focus on

transformation is not sufficient, although this is undoubtedly a critical element. This brings the discussion on to how spaces for participation can indeed be seen as arenas within which a degree of youth empowerment is achieved. The next section will discuss how the findings of this study inform such a discussion.

8.3 Spaces of participation as arenas for youth empowerment?

Observations regarding the gap between policy initiatives and participants' conceptualisations and lived experience raise questions regarding the potential of spaces of youth participation to act as the middle ground within which individual histories and structures interact to enable a move towards youth empowerment. In order to elaborate further on this issue this section will now turn to examine how the data of this study informs such a discussion. Rather than being determined by or independent from the processes, the participants of this study emerged as actors who engaged with existing opportunities and utilised them the way which they thought best fitted their interests. This section will argue that the empowering potential of spaces lies in their ability to incorporate an understanding of young people as relational social actors and a willingness to involve them as co-initiators of the participatory agenda.

However, reflections in regard to such matters are confined within the restrictions posed by the limitations of this study. This study is limited in regard to sample size and profile. As was discussed in the methodology, the sample involved the

members of the explored groups who were most popular, self-confident and willing to talk. Inability to avoid this selection method might have had an impact on the data selected, as less dominant voices in the projects might have not been heard. This awareness, though, does not delimit the data acquired, as one could argue that they present 'successful' cases of involvement.

This research is also limited by having provided a snapshot of participants' orientations at a specific point in time. Longitudinal research could have given an insight into how the participants sustained or altered their perceptions and strategies under the influence of changing social structures, life course events and changes within spaces such as availability of resources. However, the aim of the research was set to provide an exploratory account of how individuals engage with processes of participation in particular contexts, rather than focusing on the impact of transitions on engagement. As such, there is no suggestion in this study that particular choices in regard to involvement are linked to particular life events and stages. Furthermore, another limitation involves a lack of exploration about gender differences in regard to opportunities and patterns of involvement, as there was no way to ensure equal representation of both female and male participants within the explored spaces. Despite these limitations, this study allows thinking about the empowering potential of spaces of participation.

Current approaches within participation locate the empowering potential of participation in its ability to 'carve out new spaces of control' (Kothari, 2001:150),

include silenced voices, challenge hierarchical relations, redefine expertise, legitimise new discourses and reveal power relations (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001; Barnes et al., 2007). Thus, current critiques of participation are constructed on the basis of failure to deliver empowerment through change and transformation (Cleaver, 2001).

Seeing the data through analytical lenses informed by such understandings allows us to identify power relations within spaces. Caution is necessary, though, so as not to focus the enquiry around the negative effects of power, but also to consider its productive manifestations (Kesby, 2005; Gallagher, 2008). Focusing on power relations as a means of oppression would mean looking at the data to identify how processes restrict participants and reproduce power relations. As this study approaches participation as a process and not a possession or a stage at which the participants are meant to have arrived, it also aims to identify constructive aspects of participation in the data. Such aspects may not necessarily or directly lead to transformation or marked change, but they can give an indication of the possibilities of spaces for involvement to offer opportunities to resist dominating practices.

When the data is seen through an understanding of power as oppression, then a conclusion is reached that the participants were determined by the processes. Patterns of interaction within the explored spaces of this study were connected with a form of participation ‘as positive youth development’ (Chapter Two) and with

development of leadership for those already involved or capable of mastering the rules of the game. The participants achieved personal satisfaction and a sense of belonging, but there were no examples of them achieving changes towards challenging wider forces which affected their or other young people's opportunities. As discussed in Chapter Three, constructive facets of participation appear when participants are able to rehearse new schemas (Kesby, 2005) and contribute to dialogue, where difference is respected and the rules of the game are negotiated (Barnes, 2007).

The spaces explored in this study placed more emphasis on the reproduction of existing structures, while the capacity for individual or collective action for young participants was bounded within specific parameters of involvement set by governance discourses. The examples provided in Chapter Six showed that ability to engage in dialogue with officials, lack of confidence to do so, as well as lack of interest by both politicians and the adult community in the perspectives of youth, affected the ability of the participants to pursue their agendas through a 'bottom-up' process. This does not mean that all 'top-down' approaches are necessarily flawed, or that only 'bottom up' approaches count as participation. The very use of such expressions reinforces binaries of participation which stem from zero-sum understandings of power, as previously discussed in Chapter Three. It rather means that involvement was presented by the participants as a 'one-way' process, whereby the rules of the game were set by the officials, which process failed to combine the strengths offered by all of the stakeholders.

At this point a conclusion might be established that the participants were determined by the processes. However, the data of this study suggests additional readings of participants' engagement with participatory processes. These readings emanate from the multiplicity of participants' orientations towards involvement and their accounts in relation to creative forms of participation. If empowering action is seen as one that involves habit, awareness about the scope of involvement as well as capacity to imaginatively experience the world and construct alternative realities (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Biesta and Tedder, 2006) then different entry points are opened into the data.

The participants of this study appeared, indeed, to be constrained within the boundaries of habitual action promoted by the dominant rules within participation. Nevertheless, habitual action is not necessarily passive, as it can be triggered by an active decision to choose among existing repertoires (as there was more than one way to play the game within projects), which involves attention and decision-making. Furthermore, the creative facets of participation apparent within these examples give an indication of how spaces for participation can function as 'safe havens' for young people. These spaces provided an opportunity for the participants to come together, to imagine and create a sense of possibility at a discursive level, and even to take action to enlarge the scope of their orientations. Narrations of how involvement in different groups made participants feel valueless and less active gave examples about how different spaces can enable particular elements of agency. It also gave an insight into how young people exercise agency

by looking for the group that best fits their own interests. This indicates that, rather than being a homogeneous group, young people come to animate spaces for participation, not under an interest of enacting a particular policy, but in regard to their expectations and with an interest in extending their dispositions and re-asserting their identity.

A focus on the relational and ‘affectual’ (Taylor, 2011:782) aspects of experience implies possibilities for empowerment, as it can be read in young people’s effort to re-interpret, adapt the use of, and even resist, existing opportunities for participation. Thus, the participants made creative use of what was available, in ways that they thought were relevant to them and thus exercised a degree of power. Consequently, change in this study primarily occurred through a focus on processes and relationships and through making participation relevant to one’s lived experience.

A similar discussion applies when exploring power relations within particular types of spaces. Initial readings of the processes within the explored spaces may lead to a conclusion that empowerment is impossible within official or invited spaces. Performative facets of participation, for example, with their focus on habitual elements of agency, roles, responsibilities and respect for hierarchy, were more dominant in this study within spaces which came into existence through local authority invitation or adult initiatives. In spaces which were developed by young people themselves or where young people had at least an input at the initial stage,

the focus shifted to the formation of relationships, friendships, group dynamics, expression of emotions, identity formation and on keeping a critical distance from policies. Reflexivity and awareness of the scope of activity was more obvious in places where young people were actively involved in the development of space. However, caution is needed, since such a conclusion would reinforce binaries which prohibit thinking about ways in which official discourses can be more responsive to unofficial discourses and to young people's social histories.

Assumptions that non-related to government or created spaces are free of oppressive power relations, and thus automatically achieve higher degrees of agency and deliberation, are challenged through this study. This is because, while looking at processes within groups through invitation gave a valuable insight into their dynamics, invitation did not always account for the type of agency promoted within such spaces. There were many direct and indirect ways through which official agendas affected practices within spaces, such as funding requirements and frameworks for action as well as definitions of purpose and of participation itself. For example, while some of the created spaces developed by young people themselves maintained a group-discourse of independence, in reality their liability towards projects and other stakeholders affected the type of deliberation achieved. Securing administrative and financial support often defined the direction of activities within these spaces and the type of facilitated agency. Furthermore, while the literature identifies a shift towards individualistic and cause-orientated participation (see Chapter Three), the data of this study resonates with that of

Marsh et al. (2007), which confirms that government and official structures were still perceived by young people as shaping their life chances.

The above arguments suggest that, rather than rejecting altogether the potential of invited structures, the focus needs to shift to exploring ways in which to instil new norms and practices into them and to extend the boundaries of participation. What is necessary is that the language and practice of participation is reclaimed and disentangled by discourses which aim to develop the 'active citizen'. This indicates that there is still potential within invited spaces, given that conditions such as allowing space for the negotiation of different agendas are met. This study suggests that the empowering potential of participation lies within a recognition of the value of both created and invited spaces. The results of this study suggest that both types of spaces need to address (to a varying degree) the tensions arising from the stark contrast identified between the multiplicity of personal views, values, and strategies regarding participation and policy responses.

8. 4 Concluding Remarks

This study has argued that empowerment through participation comes through a recognition of the variety of young people's lived experience and the relational character of their involvement. The data presented in this study show that official discourses of participation fail to take into account the different ways in which young people engage with their environments. Practices within spaces for participation and revision of official documents reveal an aim to nurture uniform

active citizens who populate spaces for participation without an ability to define the nature of the projects. This contradicts the variety with which young people represented themselves and their lived experiences.

The multiplicity of orientations to participation expressed in this study encourages thinking which highlights the need for participatory projects to open up their understandings of youth lives. Such an understanding involves young people as actors who are engaged in forming relationships and are connected with their communities. Important here is Philo and Smith's (2003:111) comment that young people's experience should not be redefined solely in regard to the personal and localised, an approach which "blinkers against the macro-politics of the (adult) public sphere", but we should establish connections between the micro and the macro. As the results of this study show, albeit through its limited sample, understanding the multiplicity of orientations can assist in making connections between the macro and the local, as it involves locating orientations in the contexts within which they have arisen.

The insights provided through this thesis suggest a future research direction which can potentially focus upon exploring how processes and models of practice can be developed which incorporate the variety of youth experience and create conditions which allow young people to become co-initiators of participatory activities. The orientations expressed by young participants themselves point to a need to open up the range of participation to account for the different forms and degrees to which

young people may want to get involved. They pinpoint a focus on the relational aspect of the involvement, the primary importance of the experience of involvement in itself, and the availability of space to express and nurture identity. Drawing from its limitations, this study suggests that further research can make the links with how markers of identity such as gender and life-course events impact on processes of participation.

Regarding the national contexts of this study, changes have occurred in both countries since the initiation of this study. Both countries have recently witnessed youth rioting and increasing youth unemployment. Furthermore, political change in the UK is likely to affect the focus of youth work, while the financial crisis in the in Greece is very likely to affect the lived experience of young people. Despite this, the results of this study can still inform knowledge in regard to the two contexts.

The introduction of the Big Society policy in the UK and the welfare budget cuts indicate a decrease in opportunities for youth participation and a focus on more localised forms of involvement. The launch of the Big Society initiative by the Coalition government in 2010 does not explicitly refer to youth participation apart from the establishment of the National Youth Service for 16 year olds. Its core principles, though, such as giving local communities more power and encouraging people to be more active in their communities, indicate that the ownership, purpose and funding of youth participation projects will be reconfigured (McCabe, 2011). Therefore, youth participation is expected to shift towards projects that involve

young people in identifying and solving problems within their communities by undertaking voluntary action (Moxon, 2010).

Such a conditioning of the environment around localised and responsibilised forms of engagement neglects the effect of broader structural forces, localises the lives of young people and disconnects them from wider societal processes. This might affect how young people perceive themselves as participants; as this study has demonstrated, young people value the existence of a wide range of opportunities for participation and conceptualise their role as citizens to unfold in many different domains, including both the national and the local.

In Greece, the recent economic crisis has resulted in a decrease in the few opportunities for participation, as the priorities of National Youth Agency have already reconfigured around supporting young people who face acute disadvantage. Discourses in current struggles between different social groups for the acquisition or maintenance of political power portray young people as an unnecessary financial burden, and as victims of previous generations, and thus as external societal actors with limited say in decision making. This study has already demonstrated a strong disapproval of formal discourses and lack of willingness to identify with power holders. Given a trend towards the intensification of oppositional modes of engagement in the country, the future of youth participation in Greece seems to lie within young people's own networks rather than within constructed forms of participation as they are promoted within policies.

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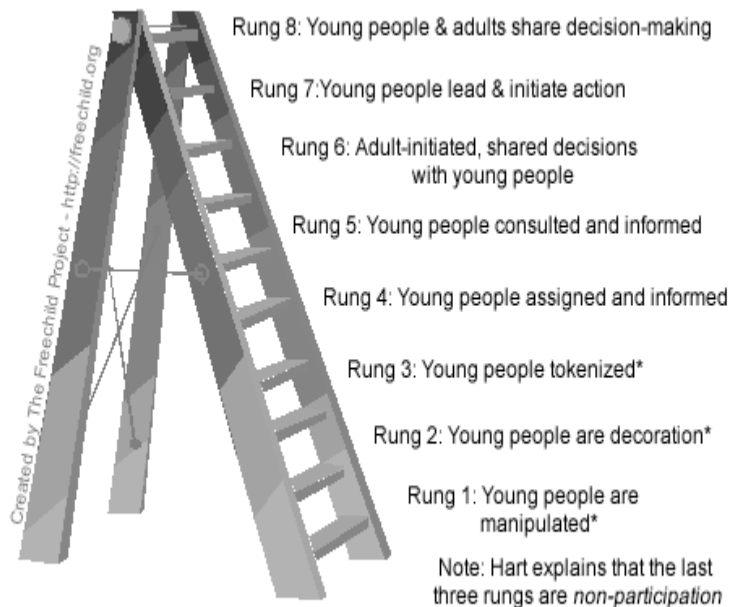
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APPENDICES

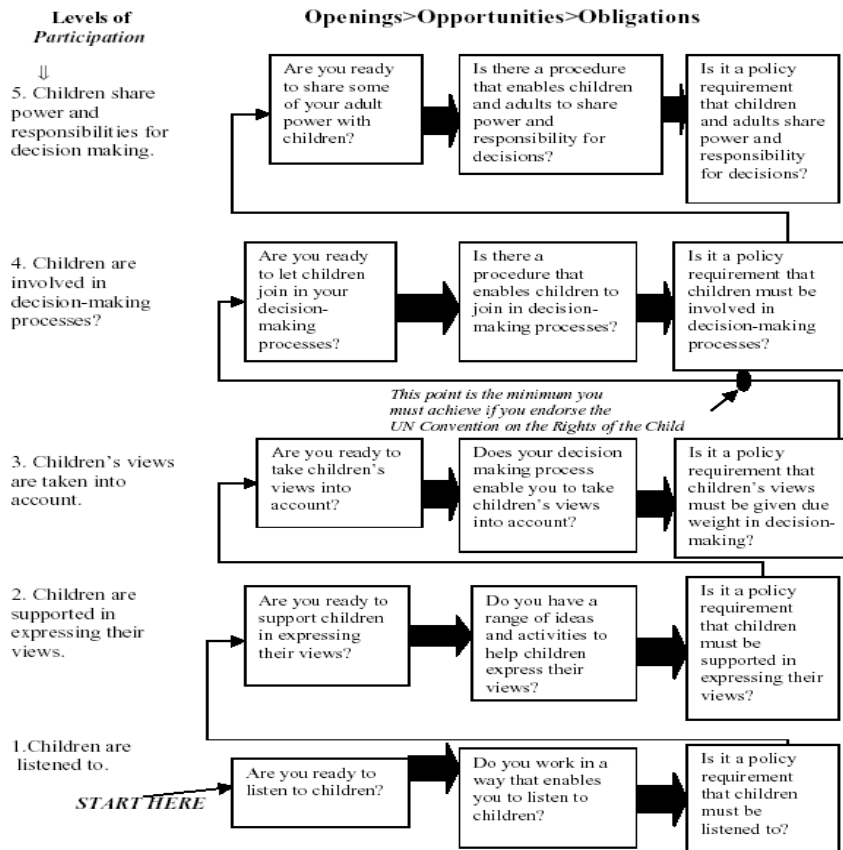
Appendix 1. Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation

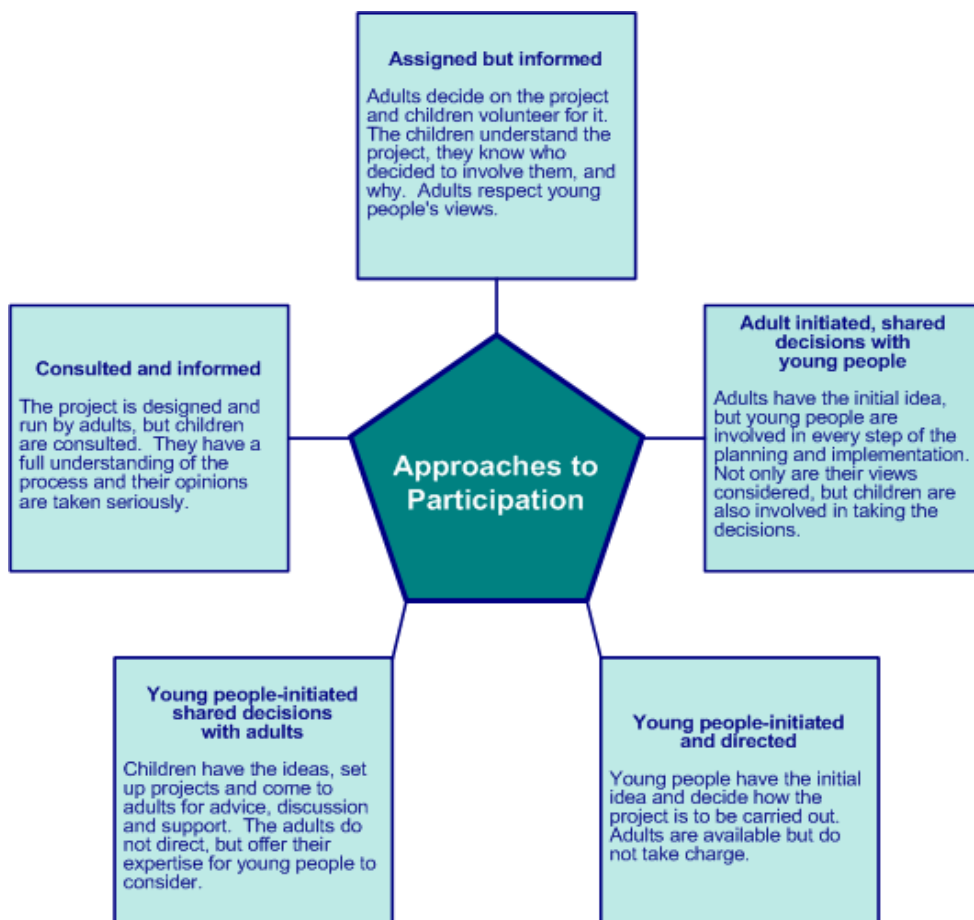


Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Appendix 2 Shier's model for youth participation



Appendix 3 Treseder's Model of youth participation



Source: Empowering children & young people training manual: promoting involvement in decision making (Save the Children). Phil Treseder, 1997

Appendix 4 Participant Information
Leaflet

***Young people's
experiences of
Participation.
Examples from the
UK and Greece.***

***Essential Information
for Participants***

➤ **What is the Study about?**

The study is looking at young people's and professional's views and experience of participatory projects. More specifically, it is looking at how the agenda of participatory projects is developed and how it can better represent youth's needs.

➤ **What are the Benefits of Participating in the Study?**

This study aims to give young people the opportunity to speak about their experience and expectations of taking part in youth participation projects. It should allow better policies and practices for you as a participant and for other young people in general.

➤ **What will I Have to Do?**

To take part in an interview of approximately 50 minutes. During the interview you can opt to not answer some of the questions without having to give a reason. You can also take a break anytime you wish to.

➤ **What if I do not want my name to be used? How is my personal data going to be used?**

The study is anonymous. You can, if you wish, choose a pseudonym to be used whenever your opinion is mentioned.

➤ **What Happens to the Information?**

The data you provide will be stored electronically with password and encoded where possible, and any written documents used in the research process will be stored in locked storage at the University.

The results will definitely be published as part of a PhD thesis, and may be published elsewhere in future.

➤ **Will Any of this Research Affect My Receipt of Services?**

The research will not affect the services you receive, as it is an independent study.

➤ **What Happens if I don't Want to Carry on with the Study?**

You can withdraw at any point during the interview without having to give a reason. You can also withdraw after the interview is conducted. In that case please notify me as soon as possible and preferably no later than 2 weeks after the interview is conducted.

➤ **What if I have any Concerns or wish to make a Complaint?**

If you have a problem or complaint you can speak to your agency. They can, if you wish, put you in contact with the researcher or her supervisors.

Contact Details:

Maria Tsekoura

IASS, University of Birmingham

Edgbaston, B15 2TT

Birmingham

Email:

Tel: +.....

Appendix 5 Consent form for 18-25 years olds-Professionals



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Participant's Consent Form (18-25 years olds-Professionals)

Project Title:

Researcher's Name:

Researcher's Contact Details:

I confirm that I have read and understood the 'Essential Information for Participants' Leaflet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. YES/NO

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. YES/NO

I agree to take part in the above study. YES/NO

I agree that the interviews can be digitally recorded. YES/NO

----- ---/---/---

Name of Young Person	Date of Birth	Signature
Date		

Appendix 6 Consent form for under 18 years old participants



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Consent Form(Under 18 years old)

Project Title:

Researcher's Name:

Researcher's Contact Details:

I confirm that I have read and understood the 'Essential Information for Participants' Leaflet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. YES/NO

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. YES/NO

I agree to take part in the above study. YES/NO

I agree that the interviews can be digitally recorded. YES/NO

Please ensure that your **Parent/ Carer** also reads and signs below.

I have read the terms above and agree with them in full. YES/NO

I give permission for my son/daughter to take part in this stage of the research, and any further stages as set out in the 'Essential Information for Participants' Leaflet. YES/NO

----- ---/------/------ ----- -----

Name of Young Person Date of Birth Signature Date

----- ----- -----
Name of Parent/ Guardian Signature Date

Appendix 7 Vignette 1



Vignette 1-Helen

Helen is 16 years old, she lives with her mother, her 2 sisters and her mother's partner, she is currently not in education nor training but is looking for a job. She hasn't really decided yet how to go on with her life, *'I didn't do well at school, and my GCSE results were pretty poor'*. Helen spends most of her time at home watching TV or with friends. They don't really have a specific place to meet up, sometimes they go out to the stores but because they don't have so much money to spend they don't always enjoy going there *'hanging around shops is ok for them who have got bit of money behind them'*. When the weather is fine they gather in the square, chilling and watching people passing.

She and her friends are really bored of this, *'it is the same everyday...'* they would like to do something different but they don't know what. *'There need to be more opportunities, things to do...somewhere to chat...to get new experiences...something worth leaving the TV for... there is a local youth centre but my friends say that it's like baby-sitting service... I personally think that the set-up there is pretty unclear... nobody knows what's going on... I think it's all sport or art but I have no specific talents...there is nothing that interests me there...'*

Appendix 8 Vignette 2



Vignette 2- Emma

Emma is 16 years old, she lives with her mother and her two brothers, and she is currently not in education nor training but is looking for a job. She hasn't really decided yet how to go on with her life *'there are many things I would like to do in the future... maybe studying...maybe finding a good job...getting some money first to stand on my own feet'*. Although she'd heard of the term 'youth participation' she'd never really took much notice of it until quite recently when she was prompted by a friend to take part in a youth group organized by her local youth centre as a part of a project seeking to represent the views of youth and to involve them in local decision making. *'At the beginning'*, she recalls: *'we didn't spend much time doing anything other than discussing things... playing games...once taking part in a community recycling project... things generally described by the centre as 'engagement' or 'activation'*. She likes taking part in the group and meeting other people but sometimes she did feel a bit bored.

One day she and her group were asked to take part in a youth-adult partnership: *'they asked from us to organize a day event that would help the adults to understand young people and their needs for participation. I immediately asked the youth worker to explain what she exactly meant with participation...what she wanted us to include... but she said we were free to decide what was to be included in this event...things that we think are important to most young people...things we need...we want them to know about us ...or things we want to do in future... how we can do something in the community for example...'*.