

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

# **Democratising Bureaucracy**

The Many Meanings of Public Participation in Social Policy  
and How to Harness Them

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## **Declaration**

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## Abstract

Calls for greater public participation in the policy process have become a commonplace in contemporary governance, advocated across the political spectrum. Part of what makes participation beguiling is that it can take many meanings. This thesis investigates those meanings and their implications for how to do participatory policy-making. It outlines an innovative new typology of four modes of public participation in social policy decisions. The four modes – labelled: knowledge transfer, collective decision-making, choice and voice, and arbitration and oversight – are each linked to different traditions in democratic and public administration theory. As such, they go beyond existing typologies of participation, which are either rooted in one, radical participatory, normative orientation, or abstracted from broader normative debates altogether. This typology is followed by an empirical study of the procedural preferences of 34 key informants involved with participation in health, housing, poverty, and social security policy in Britain. It combines a Q-method survey and qualitative interviews to provide a novel mix of quantitative and qualitative data on each person's preference. The analysis demonstrates that the preferences of the majority of study participants mirror the knowledge transfer and collective decision-making modes of participation, with significant disagreements over the objectives of participation and how much power should be afforded to the public. The rich mixture of quantitative and qualitative data also enables a deeper exploration of the nature of procedural preferences than existing studies, which have primarily employed secondary data analysis of large-scale surveys. It establishes that there are not just differences between participants but deep ambivalences within participants' preferences. The thesis then proposes a systems approach to participation in governance. It describes three functions that participation can serve in complex policy systems: effectiveness, autonomy and accountability. The four modes of participation are matched with the three functions, using examples from the English National Health Service (NHS) for further elucidation. This approach provides a framework for designing and assessing participatory policy-making that takes account of the diversity of procedural preferences.

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## Chapter 1

### Social Policy, Vanguard of Democratisation

*The Big Society is a vision of a more engaged nation, one in which we take more responsibility for ourselves and our neighbours; communities working together, not depending on remote and impersonal bureaucracies.*

Conservative Party Manifesto, 2015

*We have a shared ambition to clean up Westminster and a determination to oversee a radical redistribution of power away from Westminster and Whitehall to councils, communities and homes across the nation. Wherever possible, we want people to call the shots over the decisions that affect their lives.*

David Cameron and Nick Clegg, Coalition Programme for Government, 2010

*We will devolve more power to local authorities and local communities, giving people real power over the issues that matter most to them.*

Labour Party Manifesto, 2005

#### 1.1 Why Participation?

The vision of a more participatory politics and society is now a commonplace in the rhetoric of UK Government. Each of the last three governments have made greater opportunities to participate a feature of their offer to the electorate. Despite the Coalition Government (2010-15) presenting their commitment to redistribute power as “a turning point in the relationship between government and people – the beginning of a new chapter in our democratic history” (HM Government 2010, 4), their rhetoric is almost identical to that of the preceding administration (see above). The New Labour Government legislated for a ‘Duty to Consult’ in 1999, and later a stronger ‘Duty to Involve’ in 2009, which applied to all English councils and other local governmental bodies. Citizen participation in some form was embedded in a number of its flagship policy reforms including Sure

Start, the New Deal for Communities and the creation of NHS Foundation Trusts. Similarly, the devolved government of Scotland has made participation one of the four pillars of the 'Scottish Approach' to public services following the 2011 Christie Commission on public service reform. As the need for greater participation in the face of democratic malaise has become a shibboleth of UK politics, advocated across the political spectrum, the notion of the active, participating citizen has become an everyday feature of the landscape of governance in the UK. This notion has been used as a justification for a plethora of policy prescriptions, from the marketisation of health and education through the expansion of choice in public services, to experiments with deliberative forms of policy-making such as the National Institute of Clinical Excellence's (NICE) Citizens Council and the participatory budgeting processes that are increasingly employed by local authorities throughout England.

Interest in participation has not been confined to the UK. Indeed the UK is arguably one of the laggards in the trend towards more participatory governance. It is a defining feature of radical left-wing, Latin American governments from Brazil to Venezuela, it is advocated by the econocrats of the World Bank as a central tenet of their development programmes, and is an aspiration for radical social movements such as Occupy and Spain's 15M movement. This participatory fervour is perhaps best typified by the rise and rise of participatory budgeting. Participatory budgeting began in one Brazilian municipality, Porto Alegre, in 1989 but by 2010 had spread to almost 1500 locations across five continents (Sintomer et al. 2012), and has continued to grow since.

Participation is arguably a foundational concept of political organisation. It pertains to what Geuss (2008) has claimed is the first question that political theory should ask of real politics: who does (or is able to do) what to whom for whose benefit? Participation is about who governs, who is governed, and the relationship between the two. Accordingly, every theory of democratic governance needs a conception of the role of the citizen in the process of governing, even if, like Schumpeter (1976), it is only to restrict it to the minimal role of voting in elections. It is no surprise, therefore, to find the rise in support for more participatory politics and policy attributed to a range of very different political traditions.

The rise in initiatives for citizen participation has occurred concurrently with the deliberative 'turn' or 'revival' in democratic theory (Dryzek 2000; Elster 1998). Some of the most important political theorists of the last decades, such as John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas, have described themselves as deliberative democrats, and focused their attention on legitimate processes for political decision-making. Habermas' contention that

the legitimate settling of political questions depends upon the complete and equal inclusion of all affected parties in institutionalised practices of rational public debate (Habermas 1992, 448–49) has held particular sway over notions of citizen participation. Wainright (2003) also notes the influence of a longer tradition of participatory democracy that grew out of the radical social movements of the Sixties and Seventies and has since been promulgated by the ‘participatory left’. Given that broad citizen participation is the kernel of participatory and deliberative forms of democracy, it is little surprise to find a radical democratic agenda at the heart of the canon in this field. Arnstein's (1969) influential ladder of citizen participation, for instance, categorises forms of participation with the eye of a radical democratic activist and Fung describes his proposals for 'empowered participation' as “a third path of reform that takes its inspiration from the traditions of civic engagement and participatory democracy rather than public-management techniques or competitive markets” (2004, 9).

The alternative paths to participation, noted by Fung, and often advocated more from the right of the political spectrum, have also had their influence on the increase in participatory policy-making. The legitimacy of decision-making by elite bureaucracies was eroded by the neo-liberal challenge to the democratic socialism that animated many of the architects of the welfare state (Le Grand 2003). New Public Management has frequently been cited as a driver of increased consumer participation in policy organisations (Parkinson 2004; Papadopoulos and Warin 2007; R. Rowe and Shepherd 2002). In addition, there has been a revival in Conservative localism that Ryder (2015) traces back to Nozick's libertarian vision for a localist utopia and Wainright (2003) credits to communitarianism, with its focus on community self-reliance.

These different approaches to and understandings of participation are not limited to theoretical debates amongst academics. They are prevalent in real world politics and can be observed in the different phraseology of the manifesto extracts at the beginning of this chapter. The earliest extract, from the Labour manifesto, employs the trope of people power and draws on ideas of a more participatory democracy. The Coalition similarly employ the people power trope but couch this in a more populist anti-politics. The most recent Conservative manifesto takes a wholly different approach and promotes the communitarian idea that citizens need to take responsibility for their communities. The notion of redistributing power has vanished. A number of studies have also noted the variety of influences on how participation has been practiced, for instance: Martin (2008) identifies *democratic* and *technocratic* rationales behind participation; Parkinson (2004)

draws attention to the competition between *new public management* and *deliberative democratic* imperatives driving deliberative reforms; Papadopoulos and Warin (2007) also note the influence of new public management and various radical democratic ideas, as well as adding a third influence with the notion of a collaborative *governance* approach to participatory policy; Abelson *et al.* (2003) refer to the governance approach, the deliberative democratic approach and a *neo-liberal, consumerist* influence; and Barnes, Newman and Sullivan (2007) outline four official discourses of the public – *consumer, empowered, responsible, stakeholder* – as well as pressure for inclusive democracy from outside the state.

The breadth of the advocates for public participation, the precipitating ideological influences, and its policy applications, point to the tension behind the apparent consensus in favour of citizen participation. Compare, for instance, the empowered self-interest of the neo-liberal, consumer-citizen with the other-oriented, reasoning-citizen of deliberative democracy and it is clear that, while both philosophies may be animated by a notion of the participating citizen, they are different, seemingly incompatible, notions. Participation – like justice, liberty, or fairness – is a polysemous concept that can be constructed in multiple ways. Edelman wrote close to forty years ago of participation's "symbolic potency and semantic hollowness" (1977, 120), yet; compared with other similarly slippery terms like liberty, there have been few attempts to systematically examine the many ways we fill the semantic void when we use the term participation. The studies detailed above have primarily noted the different influences on participation in an *ad hoc* fashion, as a tangential component of their broader study. The variability between the different studies points to the limitations of their conceptual categorisations. It is not difficult to use one of the studies to unpick the categorisations of the others. Papadopoulos and Warin's (2007) elaboration of the different types of participation entailed by participatory and deliberative democratic principles undermines the notion that there is a single, unified democratic impulse driving public participation in the policy process. Likewise, the presentation by Barnes, Newman and Sullivan (2007) of four official discourses of participation questions the extent to which there is a single, coherent 'governance' perspective, or administrative perspective, within state institutions.

There has also been a tendency from a radical democratic perspective to engage in a project of classifying what is 'authentic participation' according to the principles of participatory democracy, whilst discounting those forms of participation that do not fit with these normative precepts as not quite legitimate, even a betrayal of the true principles

of participation. Pearce, for instance, posits the idea of *participatory democracy*, “based on principles of popular sovereignty and direct involvement of all citizens, including and especially the poorest, in decision making”, in contrast to its debased form of *participatory governance*, with its “appropriation by mainstream institutions of discourses and concepts (among them participation) expressing emancipatory hopes and turning them into new ‘tyrannies’” (2010, 15). In a plural society with multiple competing value orientations, it is of some, but only limited, worth to know that state-led participatory initiatives rarely live up to participatory democratic ideals. Previous work of this author showing that official evaluations of deliberative initiatives in the UK pay scant regard to principles of deliberative democracy (R. Dean 2012), as well as Barnes, Newman and Sullivan (2007) locating pressures for inclusive democracy outside the state and in contradistinction to their four official discourses of participation, suggests that rather than practising a debased form of deliberative or participatory democracy, official interest in increased public participation is often due to commitment to other competing normative propositions. In order to understand these initiatives it would be more instructive to analyse them in the light of what they are intended to achieve and why their propagators view them as legitimate, viable approaches to participation.

While radical democrats acknowledge other approaches to participation but dismiss them, advocates of more neo-liberal forms of participation show little awareness of other alternatives. Armed with an alternative nomenclature of consumer *choice* and *voice* (Le Grand 2008), their focus is on how citizens can participate as consumers, primarily through choosing which services to use or refrain from using and providing customer feedback (Osborne and Gaebler 1993; Le Grand 2008). Although there is scope for the notion of voice to encompass radical democratic ideas, it is usually conceived of in depoliticised, consumerist form; in the words of the President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim (2013), “Citizen voice can be pivotal in providing the demand-side pressure on government, service providers, and organizations such as the World Bank that is needed to encourage full and swift response to citizen needs.” This lack of engagement between advocates of participation across ideological divides also inhibits the exploration of hybrid forms or combinations of participation that may strengthen each other.

The polysemy of participation is part of what makes it beguiling. Its flexibility means it is adaptable to a range of political contexts. Its vagueness enables people with quite different worldviews to coalesce around a common project. Nonetheless, the lack of a thorough understanding of the competing logics that drive participatory innovation

hampers our understanding of current practices and the possibilities for future development. In 1989 the democratic scholar Robert Dahl wrote:

The theory and practices of modern democracy have resulted not only from the legacy of popular government in ancient city states but also from other historical experiences, both evolutionary and revolutionary, they are an amalgam of elements that do not fully cohere. As a result contemporary democratic theory and practice exhibit inconsistencies and contradictions that sometimes result in deep problems. (1989, 13)

In the intervening period there has been a great deal of democratic scholarship that has attempted to clarify the presuppositions behind alternative theories of the democratic state (Dryzek and Dunleavy 2009; Held 2006) and contribute to improving democratic institution building. The theory and practice of participation, however, still exhibits inconsistencies and contradictions that result in deep problems. It means that when we create opportunities to participate or when we decide to participate, we often do so with complex, even contradictory, assumptions about what participation means underpinning our decisions. This thesis will point to a number ways that a lack of appreciation for the different logics of participation results in muddled thinking or incompleteness, both in academic debates and in practice.

The primary aim of the thesis is to provide an account of the different ways participation is understood, in the academic literature, the policy literature and amongst actors involved with participatory initiatives. It follows John Dewey's advice that,

It is not the business of political philosophy and science to determine what the state in general should or must be. What they may do is aid in the creation of methods such that experimentation may go on less blindly. (1926, 34)

The thesis is not prescriptive about adopting one particular model of participation. It attempts to understand different approaches to participation from within the perspectives from which they are advocated. The objectives of the thesis are therefore principally analytical rather than normative. Providing an analytical account of alternative modes of participation - their rationales and practices, how they animate those involved with participatory initiatives, and what functions they serve in the broader political system – is intended to foster clarity in academic debates about how to classify and evaluate participatory policy-making. It is also intended to assist commissioners to be more clear-sighted in their designs, potential participants to be more aware of what they are getting involved in, and critics to be more nuanced in their criticisms. The later parts of the thesis

do present some recommendations – chiefly Chapter 6, which proposes a pluralistic system of participation – but these arguments predominantly rest on pragmatic premises arising from the analytical insights of previous chapters. Overall then, the aim is to contribute to better quality participation in governance processes, but without prescribing what quality means from within a single normatively contentious perspective on participation.

## **1.2 From ‘Participation in Democracy’ to ‘Participation in Governance’**

This thesis draws on democratic thinking, but it is not concerned with democracy as commonly conceived; the realm of politicians, political parties, voters and elections. It is about policy, bureaucracy, governance. Democratic theory still tends to view policy as a purely technocratic endeavour, a neutral translation of political input into policy output. Scholars of public administration have rarely shared the idea that political will is straightforwardly applied through administration. They have noted the extensive discretion of ‘street-level bureaucrats’ (Lipsky 1980) and how policy is prosecuted through networks of diverse stakeholders with differing capabilities to shape implementation to their interests (Boswell 2016). Some scholars have argued that, with the rise of the ‘network society’ (Castells 2000), the normative project of democracy has been supplanted by an alternative project for good governance (Bang and Esmark 2009). This shift has inverted the subservience of policy to politics, so that “the orientation of the political system [has switched] from politics before policy to policy before politics” (Bang and Esmark 2009, 18). Whereas the politics-policy conception of the political system sees broad-based social interests and identities forged through the competition of electoral politics, represented by politicians and political parties and then implemented by bureaucracy, the policy-politics conception views publics as formed in relation to more specific policy issues, with social interests and identities shaped through investment in these policy projects.

The politicisation of policy has been accompanied by a re-evaluation of ‘public encounters’, namely; the contacts between citizens and public officials (K. Bartels 2013). Though the vast majority of citizen interactions with the political system are through public encounters with officials as service users or clients, such encounters have traditionally been seen as problematic. The Weberian conception of bureaucracy in which officials were considered to be duty-bound to the impersonal application of specified rules,



meant public encounters were feared for their dangerous potential to create opportunities for clientelist actions or relationships impervious to democratic control. According to Bartels (2013) this conception has been challenged from three directions. First, the New Public Management, which critiques bureaucracy as inefficient and over-regulated, maintains that public encounters are valuable for enhancing the power of customers, and as a means to improve service quality. Second, the challenge from Critical Theory argues that administrators should not be seen as inhumane cogs in the political machine and stresses the necessity of re-founding the moral agency of public officials in their interactions with citizens. Third, participatory governance critiques impersonal bureaucracy for alienating citizens, disconnecting officials, and thus reducing the ability of the political system to effectively problem-solve. It calls for public encounters in spaces of shared decision-making in order to find more effective policy solutions. The shift to policy-politics and the re-evaluation of public encounters should not be viewed as straightforward processes of depoliticisation, or the triumph of technocracy over democracy, but also as a process of politicisation and democratisation of policy and administration. The democratic theorist Mark Warren, for instance, claims policy and administration have now become the vanguard of democratisation, in a way that could prove to be “a transformation of democracy as dramatic and important as the rise of mass electoral democracy in the nineteenth century” (2009, 9).

If actions within the realm of policy and administration are at the forefront of democratisation (Warren 2009) and “the principal force behind societal change” (Bang and Esmark 2009, 18), then it is in social policy that these changes have their deepest roots. Public participation has naturally been more prevalent in the quotidian policy domains than those that are more removed from citizens’ everyday existence, so we find attempts to democratise health, education, housing, policing, and welfare in ways that are not apparent in foreign, economic or industrial policy<sup>1</sup>. The practice of public participation in social policy design and service delivery has a longer history than scholars’ concern with a network society and network governance. In the UK, public and patient involvement through Community Health Councils was established as early as 1974 (since reorganised into Local Involvement Networks (LINKs), then again into their current form as Healthwatch). Similarly, social housing has a history of participation dating back to the

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<sup>1</sup> There have also been attempts to conduct environmental policy, science and technology policy, and arts policy in more a more participatory fashion, which do not fall within the confines of what is usually considered to be ‘social policy’ as an academic field.

1970s (Hague 1990), and there now exists an extensive architecture for tenant and community participation in housing, neighbourhood and regeneration policy. In both education and healthcare, the public has been encouraged to think of itself as consumers in a market for services, but also given opportunities to take up leadership roles as governors of schools and hospitals. Public participation in social security, poverty and social exclusion policy appears to be a newer phenomenon but is proliferating. Community involvement was embedded into large New Labour projects aimed at tackling social exclusion such as the New Deal for Communities and Sure Start. There was a National Pensions Debate in 2006, and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has experimented with deliberative research exercises to inform benefits policies. There are also novel civil society initiatives like the Poverty Truth Commissions of Glasgow and Leeds and the Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power, all of which connect(ed) those experiencing poverty with those who make and deliver policy about poverty.

It is the promise of participation to potentially reduce forms of social exclusion that has drawn most excitement in the field of social policy. Lack of political engagement has itself been defined as key component of social exclusion, with relationships to other forms of exclusion such as low income, low wealth, lack of productive activity and social isolation (Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud 1999; Levitas et al. 2007). Political inclusion through participation has been advocated as a means for realising inclusive citizenship that gives a voice to those usually excluded from making the decisions that affect them (Lister 2002; Lister 2007; Beresford and Hoban 2005). In addition, participatory spaces have been championed as arenas for ‘a politics of needs interpretation’, where people can negotiate their social rights (H. Dean 2013).

The success of participation in actually reducing exclusion and tackling inequalities is, however, somewhat mixed. At the level of individual participatory projects, there have undoubtedly been some successes that have resulted in more inclusive policy-making and better outcomes for previously disadvantaged groups (Fung 2004; 2015). Still, for some projects it is difficult to identify whether there has been any impact on policy at all (del Tufo and Gaster 2002; Kashefi and Keene 2008). They have commonly resulted in frustration, dissatisfaction and powerlessness for citizens, as their concerns are outweighed by other institutional imperatives (Newman et al. 2004; Martin 2011). If participatory inputs fail to influence policy outputs then it is unlikely they will address the more difficult issue of inequalities in policy outcomes. At the macro-level, it has been remarkably difficult to uncover large-scale impacts. The growth of participatory policy-making and

other participatory democratic initiatives has been accompanied by growing inequalities in wealth and income, and there have been concerns that much participation at best reproduces existing inequalities and at worst exacerbates them (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 1998; 2001; Walker, McQuarrie, and Lee 2015). Participatory innovations in legislative politics, which have received more sustained evaluation have shown similarly mixed effects (G. Smith 2009). Touchton and Wampler (2014) have documented how participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities has been linked to increased provision for the problems of the poor, as well as improved health inputs and outputs. In contrast, direct legislation through citizens' initiatives and referenda have a well-established bias towards those with resources (Lupia and Matsusaka 2004).

The study of participation in governance processes remains in need of greater attention from within the field of social policy for two primary reasons. First, if social policy has become the primary locus of democratisation, this has not been matched by a concomitant increase in social policy research on this topic. There is an opportunity for the field of social policy to greatly contribute to these debates. In thinking about participation in governance from the perspective of social policy, this thesis aims to ensure that inappropriate theories and concepts, such as the notion that policy is simply a neutral process of technocratic translation, are not uncritically adopted in the field of democratic innovation. To paraphrase Foucault (2004), social policies are not born of nature, they are born of real battles; poverty and social exclusion are the results of actual social processes of politics and policy-making. The shift from politics-policy to policy-politics means these battles increasingly take place within the policy process, and thus a policy-oriented perspective is necessary to fully understand them.

The second reason is that if these battles increasingly take place within the policy process then, despite the mixed results to date, new forms of participation in policy-making retain their promise for addressing a core agenda of social policy research: the wicked problem of persisting inequalities in the access to, and benefits from, social goods such as healthcare, education and housing. These forms of participation take on greater importance in the face of mounting evidence, at least from the US, that representative democracy has been captured by the affluent and takes little account of the concerns of the median or disadvantaged voter (Gilens 2014; Gilens and Page 2014; L. M. Bartels 2010). The Habermasian two-track conception of the political system in which a free-wheeling public sphere generates communicative power that informs but is separated from the sites of administrative power is inadequate. JS Mill founded the superiority of democracy partly on

the principle that “the rights and interests of every or any person are only secure from being disregarded when the person interested is himself able, and habitually disposed to stand up for them” (1861, 65). The politicisation of the policy process should entail its democratisation. Citizens, particularly those on the margins, can only stand up for themselves if they are involved in the policy battles that characterise the interpretation of democratic will into concrete policy outputs. Fung has argued,

Advancing social justice through participatory governance is a nontrivial achievement. It requires at least two necessary conditions. First, reform champions must simultaneously seek both greater public engagement and greater equality. Second, champions must have the imagination and resourcefulness to design and implement participatory institutions that work. (2015, 519)

In providing a framework for understanding the different ways that participation has been used in social policy and what these different modes of participation can feasibly achieve, the thesis will contribute to Fung’s second condition for participatory social policy to advance social justice. It can assist designers of, and participants in, participatory governance with the imagination and resourcefulness to make participation work.

### **1.3 Defining the Object of Study**

Participation in governance can cover a broad set of phenomena, so it is important to more specifically define the object of study. For the purposes of this research project participation is characterised as ‘institutionalised public participation in social policy decision-making’. Each component of this characterisation is quite broadly conceived, though it also entails important exclusions. Participation in ‘decision-making’ is interpreted as a means by which the public can influence or take policy decisions. The research does not explore participation as a form of co-production, in which citizens are directly involved with the provision of public services (Bovaird 2007; Whitaker 1980; Alford 1998). As a form of ‘institutionalised’ decision-making there must be a connection to the body or network with the authoritative power to realise any decision that results from the participation, which is analogous to what Warren (2009) calls ‘governance-driven democratisation’. Though institutionalised it covers both weak publics that only have advisory influence and strong publics that encompass decision-making (Fraser 1990). It tends to be elite-driven, and thus is more characterised by ‘invited’ than ‘claimed’

participatory spaces (Gaventa 2006). Nonetheless, the tendency of spaces for participation in governance to be state-created does not make them impervious to bottom-up claims. As shall be demonstrated, invited spaces can be designed with more or less flexibility for the participants to negotiate the conditions of the space. Furthermore, there is always the potential for participants to subvert the conditions of their invitation, and invited spaces may themselves have been created in response to bottom-up demands (Cornwall and Coelho 2007). The ‘institutionalisation’ condition does however point to another important exclusion from this research. This thesis does not attempt to account for participation in civil society actions such as protest and campaigning, which is only alluded to when it can illuminate the discussion of more institutionalised participation. These exclusions are not intended to signify that participation in decision-making is more important than protest or co-production, a well-functioning political system would contain possibilities for all three. They simply fall outside of the scope of this research.

Defining what is meant by the ‘public’ in public participation is somewhat complex. If we take seriously the idea that a public does not exist independently waiting to express itself or be represented, but is constituted through the process of participating (Mahony, Newman, and Barnett 2010; Barnes, Newman, and Sullivan 2007), then we have to countenance that to a large extent it resists a concise pre-definition. Barnes, Newman and Sullivan (2007) have documented the multiple ways that publics are differently constituted through different participatory exercises, so to define what constitutes the public would be in some sense to pre-judge the question this thesis poses, that of what constitutes participation in social policy decision-making. As a working definition, for the purposes of this thesis ‘public participation’ refers to instances in which individuals engage in the policy process as: 1) citizens<sup>2</sup> or service users on 2) matters of public concern. The definition thus has two parts; the first relating to the type of role the participant takes on, and the second relating to the type of issue. Nonetheless, neither part should be interpreted too rigidly as the boundaries of both are open to question.

On the type of role, to participate as a member of the public or a citizen is to do so without specialist status as a result of one’s technical expertise, for example; I may be an engineer and bring to a participatory initiative the benefits and perspectives of being an

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<sup>2</sup> The term citizen participation is used interchangeably with public participation throughout this thesis. Citizen is used in an inclusive way to refer to anyone who is a part of and could thus be said to have a legitimate claim to be affected by the decisions and policies of a community. It is not intended to signify a person’s legal standing within a nation state.

engineer, but would not be participating in a formal capacity as an engineer. Service-users are, however, often involved explicitly because of their specialist knowledge of their condition or service provision, and the focus on representativeness in some participatory exercises is often related to an assumption that people with different identities possess different perspectives, namely; one is implicitly asked to participate as a woman, or as an Asian.

On the type of issue, feminist theory has similarly taught us that we should always question any tight definition of what is a public and what is a private matter. It is far from simple to draw a neat dividing line between participation as a private individual and participation on matters of public concern. There has, for instance been a movement to give patients much greater influence over decisions about their own healthcare, which at-first-glance could be clearly demarcated from participation on matters of public concern. Processes of citizen redress, which provide avenues for people to challenge public services when they receive unfair or poor treatment through complaints, appeals and tribunals, would also appear to fall outside of the definition of 'participation on matters of public concern'. Nonetheless, greater patient choice and voice has been explicitly advocated for its proclaimed beneficial systemic effects in improving the performance of public services (Le Grand 2003; 2008), as has citizen redress (Dunleavy et al. 2005). Moreover, citizens often use individualised processes of redress for public ends, to try to prevent repeated failures or challenge policies that impact on a wider population, and redress feeds into broader processes of policy oversight by ombudspersons and regulators. Determining the boundaries for what counts as public participation is thus more art than science. Part of the aim of this thesis, discussed in detail in Chapter 3, is to problematize what have commonly been taken to be the boundaries of public participation and make the case for a more capacious definition that takes account of these complexities.

Social policy as a field of enquiry also has fuzzy boundaries. In its broadest definition social policy is simply the study of the ways that social relations can be organised in the service of human well-being (H. Dean 2012). Here it is used in a more restricted sense, as a signifier for a set of policy domains that have occasioned the collective provision of social goods, with a particular focus on health policy, housing and neighbourhood policy, poverty, social exclusion and social security policy. This focus on policy comes at the expense of a consideration of participation in electoral politics. The emphasis is on the type of public encounters detailed above, between citizens and officials as opposed to citizens and politicians. The thesis is about participation in policy

organisations that often have no or only weak links to the legislature, rather than political organisations and arenas such as political parties and parliaments. This includes but is not limited to the central state bureaucracies that do still retain their connection to legislative politics. With the agencification of the state capacity (Moynihan 2006; Christensen and Lægheid 2006), as well as its fragmentation into policy networks (Rhodes 2007; Sørensen and Torfing 2005), there are an increased number of policy organisations that require public participation precisely because their weak democratic anchorage calls into question their legitimacy to make and/or implement public decisions.

There is a final important exclusion that is more related to the approach to the object of study rather than the definition of the object itself. There is considerable scepticism about the practice of participation and how it can be abused, for example; in order to legitimate a decision that has already been taken elsewhere, to manipulate public opinion, or shift blame for difficult decisions (Martin 2008; Papadopoulos and Warin 2007; G. Rowe and Frewer 2000; Pearce 2010; Arnstein 1969; Pretty 1995; Lee, McQuarrie, and Walker 2015). An understanding of the different abuses of participation is of undoubted importance for analysing real world practices. Nevertheless, since this thesis is concerned with competing understandings of what might reasonably argued to be legitimate forms of participation, in which those involved could be said to be engaged on genuine terms, it does not give much consideration to egregious examples of democracy-washing, in which participation is abused in order to create the veneer of legitimacy. There is also something to be said for not rushing to make normative judgements about participatory activities, which rarely straightforwardly empower citizens as opposed to drawing them into alternative modes of governing comprising new relationships of power (Barnes, Newman, and Sullivan 2007). What is considered legitimate and illegitimate of course depends upon the normative assumptions that underpin one's own view, as noted above in the discussion of the radical democratic project to define authentic participation. A more normatively plural understanding of participatory practices could assist the analysis of when participation is actually disingenuous and when it only diverges from one's own normative preferences but is genuine from within an alternative perspective.

## 1.4 Thesis Structure and Narrative

The aim of this thesis is not to make a case for or against participation in general, nor to advocate for one particular approach to participation. Given the plurality of political values in complex contemporary societies, these are questions that are better left to real political debates that take account of the specificity of context. It instead aims to unravel what could be considered plausible alternatives for how to make policy-making more participatory. In order to do so it draws on an eclectic range of sources. Though it is not purely an exercise in ideal theory, it employs ideal theories of democracy and public administration in order to establish alternative rationales for participation and their associated practices. It does not, however, derive its answers wholesale from theoretical precepts. The democratic and public administration theory is supplemented with an analysis of the grey literature on participation, for instance the guides on how to do and how to evaluate public participation that are commonly produced by government agencies and civil society organisations. This is also accompanied with an examination of actual examples of participatory social policy and the values that they embody, along with some original empirical research that investigates the participation preferences of those involved with participatory social policy initiatives in the UK. The empirical research, which forms the basis of Chapters 4 and 5, is restricted to the UK, but the theoretical work (primarily Chapters 3 and 6) draws on wider traditions and means that the thesis as a whole has broader applicability. The different elements of this approach and how they fit together, along with what kind of inferences it enables, are described in Chapter 2, which outlines the research design.

Typologies of participation mechanisms are the first subject of analysis. Existing typologies have been particularly bad at recognising the normative plurality that can be observed in our political and policy institutions and that has informed approaches to participation in governance. Mostly they take one of two approaches. They categorise participatory mechanisms from worst to best according to a radical participatory world view, an approach Bishop and Davis (2002) have called the continuum model and of which Arnstein's (1969) ladder is the most prominent example. Alternatively, they categorise by institutional design features, such as how participants are selected, without reference to the principles that underpin such designs (Fung 2006; G. Rowe and Frewer 2005). Chapter 3 presents an answer to the question of whether there are a range a coherent approaches to participation with alternative normative underpinnings. It gives an overview of existing



typologies and their problems, before outlining a new typology of four modes of participation. These four modes - which are termed *knowledge transfer*, *collective decision-making*, *choice and voice*, and *arbitration and oversight* – comprise a set of practices associated with specific rationales for participation. These rationales are situated in distinct theories of democracy and public administration, the ways that they have defined the relationship between citizen and state, the problems of governing and their concomitant deficits. The typology is a challenge to the continuum model in that it highlights how this approach takes certain normatively contentious assumptions and presents them as if they are universal features of participation. It is not, however, intended to replace the typologies of mechanisms by institutional design features. It is best used in conjunction with them in order to comprehend which types of participation might best suit different contexts, as well as why the same participation mechanism is often deployed in quite different ways.

The middle part of the thesis reflects on the empirical component of the research, which combined a Q-method survey with unstructured interviews to explore procedural preferences for participation in social policy decision-making. Chapter 4 employs this data in tackling the question of whether the participation preferences of those involved with participatory policy-making initiatives reflect the four modes of participation proposed in Chapter 3. This is important since other similar studies have demonstrated that the conceptual categories that prevail in the academy do not always translate to a broader population (Dryzek and Berejikian 1993; Skelcher, Sullivan, and Jeffares 2013). It is primarily structured around results of the Q-method survey and what they can tell us regarding participants' beliefs about the objectives of participation and appropriate roles for citizens and officials, as well as how participation should be practiced and evaluated. The findings provide some support for the utility of the typology of the four modes of participation, particularly the knowledge transfer and collective decision-making modes, for understanding how people think about participation. The data provide more than just a hypothesis test though. The participants in the study are key informants specially selected for their knowledge and experiences of participatory social policy. The rich data provided by the combined qualitative and quantitative approach means that participants' knowledge and experience can be brought to the fore to enrich the modes of participation in a process of translation between academic, practitioner and lay knowledge. An understanding of how those designing and participating in these initiatives think about them is also instructive for comprehending current practices, for instance; what types of participation are likely to be

instituted, as well as potential tensions that might exist between those with different views of the process.

Chapter 5 draws on the same data, though with greater focus on the qualitative material, to speak more directly to the small but burgeoning literature on procedural preferences (e.g. Bengtsson 2012; Bengtsson and Christensen 2016; Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; P. Webb 2013). The possession of both in-depth quantitative and qualitative data on the same person's procedural preference is rare. It presents an opportunity to interrogate an important ontological divide between two approaches to researching political opinions: a quantitative 'cognitivist' tradition that has primarily used large-scale surveys to measure and aggregate individual cognitions, and a qualitative 'discursive' tradition that has tended to focus on naturally-occurring speech or research interviews to examine how opinions are discursively constructed. The chapter attempts to navigate a path between the two approaches demonstrating how participation preferences are both predictable and patterned at the aggregate level, yet ambivalent and context-sensitive at the individual level. It continues the exegesis of different modes of participation by conducting this analysis through a concentrated discussion of two divisive issues: the distribution of decision power and the role of self-interest and conflict in participation. The focus of this chapter on the heterogeneity within an individual's preference also facilitates an analysis of the ways in which these views may be used productively to make sense of one's place in a complex set of social relations, and the ways they become traps that prevent individuals from seeing plausible alternatives or adapting to changed circumstances.

In Chapter 6 there is a move back towards theory. This chapter asks how we can take account of the range of theoretically plausible and empirically desired modes of participation when building effective participatory institutions. It makes the case for a systemic approach to thinking through these issues by drawing on insights from recent innovations in two different theoretical fields. One is the insight from deliberative systems theory that no single deliberative arena performs all the necessary functions to authorise a political decision, thus it must be distributed across different arenas each performing different labours (Dryzek 2010; Mansbridge et al. 2012; Parkinson 2006). The other is Grid-Group Cultural Theorists' argument that, given the diversity of plausible worldviews, to achieve widespread legitimacy we have to constructively harness the contestation between different viewpoints rather than adopt 'elegant' solutions that optimise around a single problem definition (Verweij and Thompson 2006). The chapter examines the

contribution that participation can make to complex policy systems, what problems is it intended to solve? It proposes three functions – effectiveness, autonomy, and accountability – demonstrating how different modes of participation can perform different labours with regard to these functions. Examples of participation in the English National Health Service are used to illustrate throughout, with the additional purpose of showing that the systemic way of thinking also has purchase in clarifying understanding of current practices, what they are attempting to achieve, where the tensions lie, and how they can be improved.

The final chapter discusses the implications of the theoretical innovations and empirical findings outlined in the previous chapters for both the academic literature and for policy-making. It is divided into three sections. The first section primarily considers the implications for the academic literature, particularly the existing typologies of participation and common ways of thinking about participatory governance. The second section concentrates on how the lessons of the research may be employed in improving participatory practice, emphasising the need for a flexible understanding of citizens and officials' roles and relationships in participation initiatives. The concluding section then suggests some potentially fruitful directions for further research, detailing some ideas for extending the research empirically and analytically. Before any of these questions are addressed, a thorough account of the study design and methodological approach is presented in Chapter 2. This next chapter situates the study within the tradition of philosophical pragmatism and considers how the mixed methods approach, combining documentary analysis, a quantitative Q-method survey and qualitative interviews, contributes to strengthening the design of each component and the quality of inferences that it is possible to draw.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Research Design and Methods**

This chapter gives a detailed account of the research design and methods. The reader may be surprised to find the methodological discussion at such an early stage of the thesis, but it has been situated here for two reasons. First, Chapter 3 provides an extensive overview of the academic literature, but it is not a traditional literature review. It is intended to be a substantive theoretical contribution that was arrived at through the process of literature review and an empirical stage of research that is described below in Section 2.2. Other relevant literature is then discussed in the specific chapters to which it pertains, rather than in a separate literature review chapter.

The second reason is that one of the primary methods employed within this project, Q-method, is not widely known. In addition, some of its practices – for instance, the facility to generate statistically significant results using small samples – may seem unusual to readers more accustomed to traditional quantitative survey methods. Accordingly, it was felt important to give a clear and comprehensive statement of the methods at an early stage of the thesis; both to aid readers who are unfamiliar with the approach to understand the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5, which discuss the empirical results, as well as to avoid unnecessary methodological concerns or confusions.

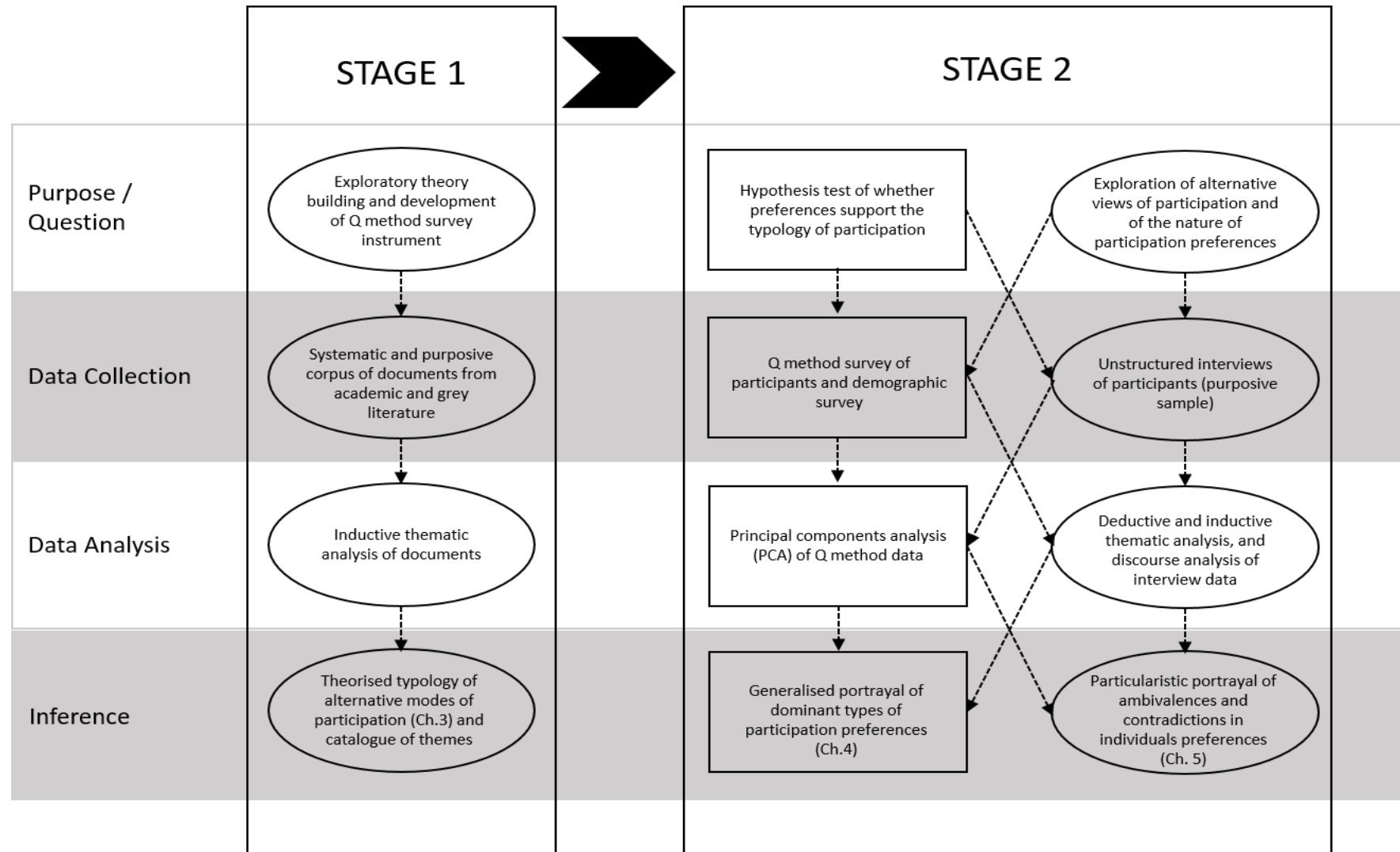
The chapter is composed of four main sections. The first section outlines the methodological approach and the two stage, mixed methods design. The following two sections each relate to one stage of that design. They detail each component of the methods, why it was chosen and how it was conducted. For each of these two stages the discussion is divided into four subsections: purposes, data collection, data analysis and inferences (summarised in Figure 2.11 below). The final section of the chapter discusses the ethical considerations that accompanied this research and the procedures used to address them.

## 2.1 Overall Design and Methodological Approach

This study broadly consisted of two empirical stages. The first stage was qualitative in orientation. It involved an inductive thematic analysis of documents from the academic and grey literature on approaches to public participation in policy decisions, with the aim informing a typology of public participation and generating a catalogue of themes that could inform the development of the Q-method survey instrument employed in the second stage of the project. This second stage combined a Q-method survey with unstructured interviews of a group of 34 purposively sampled individuals involved with public participation in policy-making. The objective was to explore their procedural preferences concerning participation. Q-method is an approach to studying individuals' views that asks participants to perform a process called Q-sorting. They rank a set of statements concerning the phenomenon under investigation, in this case participation, onto a pre-set distribution grid, based on their relative level of agreement with each statement. These rankings are then subject to statistical analysis in order to identify common viewpoints amongst the participants. The second stage of the project has what (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003) refer to as an integrated mixed model design. It is 'mixed model', as opposed to 'mixed methods', because it combines qualitative and quantitative approaches in all phases of the study, not only in the data collection and analysis phases (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003). It is integrated in that throughout the different phases of the project qualitative and quantitative components are used to mutually influence how each phase is conducted (see Figure 2.11 for an overview). The interviews are conducted directly after a participant has performed their Q-sort and informed by this process. The thematic analysis of the interviews helped to guide the statistical solution for the Q-method results, and the Q-method results were important in selecting the themes for discourse analysis. Moreover, the inferences in Chapters 4 and 5 simultaneously draw on both the qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

Mixed methods research has always provided a challenge to the qualitative-quantitative paradigm wars whereby particular methodological approaches were viewed as wedded to particular ontological and epistemological principles (Bryman 2008; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003). Accordingly, there have been numerous attempts at establishing a foundation for the mixed methods approach independent of qualitative and quantitative traditions (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003). One such foundation is methodological

Figure 2.11: Overview of study design



Adapted from (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). Ovals represent traditionally qualitative orientation, rectangles traditionally quantitative.

pragmatism. Research design is a craft skill, and we make choices about which methods to employ based upon the effects they produce,

There can be no better or more natural way of justifying a method than by establishing that “it works” with respect to the specific appointed tasks that are in view for it. (Rescher cited in Maxcy 2003, 81)

For the methodological pragmatist the key question is will the research design effectively produce results, with methodological pragmatism having been described as the ‘dictatorship of the research question’ (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003). The best research design is one that is most well-suited to tackling the research questions. This is a sensible starting point and one that was adopted in designing the approach to this study, though it does overestimate the extent to which research is technocratic process of input and output, as opposed to a journey of discovery in which the researcher must also always be alive to the new pathways that serendipity bestows.

The primary research question for this study was to ask whether there are a number of distinct and coherent perspectives on participation in social policy decisions, and if so, how these frame: a) the objectives of participation; b) the roles of participants, officials and the relationship between them; c) participatory forms and practices; d) criteria for evaluating the efficacy of participatory processes. Q-method “is most often deployed in order to explore (and to make sense of) highly complex and socially contested concepts and subject matters from the point of view of the group of participants involved” (Watts and Stenner 2005, 70). It is thus a good fit for this endeavour to understand the complex concept of participation, in its multiple and contested guises. The combination of Q-method and qualitative interviews also had some practical advantages for interrogating this phenomenon compared to using traditional surveys or only interviews. Unlike a survey, the Q-sorting process forces respondents to continually compare the different statements they are presented with in order to prioritise which they most agree and most disagree with. This is particularly valuable in a field where many of the terms such as participation and empowerment are superficially attractive, thus can receive assent without much thought. The interview then provided an opportunity to probe further the ways these statements were prioritised and the struggles participants experienced in choosing between them, adding depth to the data. This dual process therefore created a rich data set that also had an objective structure derived from transparent and replicable statistical procedures. The objective data structure that could not have been obtained from interviews alone is an

additional benefit, since similar types of qualitative studies of ‘cultural orientations’ in various fields have been subject to criticisms of ‘bird-spotting’, that is searching out examples that fit their theory (Mamadouh 1999). Moreover, this thesis argues that theorising about participation has been skewed by the normative biases of the researcher and an objective data structure helps to guard against researcher bias.

Pragmatism can extend to many different facets of the research process, and there were also pragmatic considerations in terms of what it was feasible to achieve given the limitations of the research project. There are no appropriate secondary data sources that could address the questions this project set out to answer. Given that conducting a traditional survey on a large, randomly-selected sample is extremely expensive, there was a substantial advantage in using Q-method, from which it is possible to obtain significant results and make the kinds of inferences necessary to address the research questions without a large, randomly-selected sample.

Pure methodological pragmatism as a justification for the selection of research methods leaves open the question of the epistemological and ontological assumptions that underlie the particular methodological approach selected. This study is primarily concerned with people’s interpretations and preferences for participation; as such, it would appear to naturally fall into an interpretivist field of enquiry. The research field is, however, not so straightforward. There is a considerable debate around the nature of political attitudes and how to study them. It could be argued that the dominant approach is post-positivist in orientation. It employs large-scale quantitative surveys, informed by the idea that attitudes are stable and measurable mental entities belonging to an individual, which can be captured by a small number of survey items, and have a causal relationship to actions. Most of the studies of individuals’ procedural preferences for policy decision-making are of this type (Bengtsson 2012; Bengtsson and Christensen 2016; Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015; Neblo 2015; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). Nonetheless, this approach has been criticised by post-structuralist researchers who have questioned the utility of quantitative measurement of attitudes in favour of qualitative exploration of what they consider to be a context-dependent, intersubjective and discursively-oriented phenomenon (see Chapter 5 for more detailed discussion of this debate).

One approach to designing this study would have been to pick a side in this debate and then employ the corresponding methods. Philosophical pragmatism, however, rejects the idea that we can have a fully worked out, *a priori* epistemological and ontological



position. We come to know the world by acting upon it, with specific ends in mind, and by analysing the effects of our actions (Maxcy 2003). Rather than picking a side, the project instead adopted the dialectical approach to philosophical paradigms advocated by Greene and Caracelli (2003). It complements philosophical and methodological pragmatism by productively exploiting the tensions between opposed or contradictory ideas in the service of a better understanding of the phenomena under study:

different paradigms do indeed offer different, and sometimes contradictory and opposing, ideas and perspectives. In dialectic mixed methods inquiry, these differences are valued precisely for their potential – through the tension they invoke – to generate meaningfully better understandings. (Greene and Caracelli 2003, 97)

It has already been noted how quantitative measurement is combined with qualitative exploration, but Q-method is itself flexible with regard to questions of ontology. Ramlo (2011), for instance, argues that Q-method is compatible with both post-positivism and constructivism. Examining the same individuals' viewpoint through both qualitative and quantitative lens enables the identification of generalised patterns (which are outlined in Chapter 4), as well the exploration of the many ambivalences and contradictions that underlie this patterning (Chapter 5). This is a significant advantage over solely quantitative studies and solely qualitative studies, since it goes beyond the former's tendency to focus on the general but not the particular and over-emphasise consistency, as well as the latter's tendency to over-emphasise particularity at the expense of generality.

This ability to more fully describe our interpretations of and preferences for participation was a key reason for the selection of the integrated mixed model design for this project. When social phenomena are complex then it is necessary to be able to draw on different kinds of inference in order to properly understand them (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003). Each component of this study is intended to build upon the others to enrich our understanding of participation. The first stage theorises a typology of participation based upon the public transcripts that are produced by organisations and academics, drawing out the most prominent modes. The second stage tests whether these modes hold-up from the perspectives of individuals involved with these processes, and explores alternative understandings. The combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques to do so produces a richer description than could be achieved otherwise. The results of the different components of mixed methods studies may corroborate each other, and the qualitative and quantitative findings from this study are certainly employed in this regard, for instance;

part of the function of the interview is as a validity check on the Q-sort. They may also diverge and the findings from this study are used to problematise each other too, in the process, elucidating the multifaceted nature of participation preferences.

There are a number of other reasons to employ mixed methods – Bryman (2008) lists as many as sixteen. The other important one for this project is in the process of instrument development. Carrying out the inductive thematic analysis in the first stage was a necessary pre-condition of developing the statements for the Q-method survey (as discussed in more detail in Section 2.32 below).

The above discussion has attempted to outline the general methodological approach to this project and justify the overall research design. Attention is now turned to the specific components of that design, why they were chosen, how they were conducted, and what we can reasonably infer from them.

## **2.2 Stage 1: Mapping the Landscape of Participatory Governance**

### *2.21 Purpose*

The first stage of this study was oriented towards achieving a broad understanding of the range of perspectives that exist in relation to public participation in social policy decisions, particularly with regard to the objectives of participation, conceptions of the participant, participatory practices, and evaluation criteria. This endeavour had two ends. The first was substantive. As is made evident in Chapter 3, there have been few attempts to contextualise participatory mechanisms and practices within broader theoretical perspectives, thus such an endeavour was intended to generate new substantive insights in this field. The second was instrumental. A broad overview of the different perspectives on participation was a necessary first step in developing the Q-method component of the project. To generate the Q-set of statements that participants are asked to rank, it is first necessary to have an understanding of the wider ‘concourse’ of statements; that is, “the ways in which a particular object of enquiry is represented” (Watts and Stenner 2012, 34).

## 2.22 Data collection

A traditional academic literature review was carried out, encompassing a number of overlapping literatures including democratic theory and public administration theory, along with the more applied literature on democratic innovations, especially typologies of participation mechanisms and evaluation frameworks for participation. This was accompanied by a formalised thematic analysis of a corpus of 27 documents primarily drawn from a database the researcher had constructed for a previous project examining how different participatory ideologies impact on the evaluation of participatory policy initiatives (R. Dean 2012). The database contained a range of documents on participatory policy-making from national and local government, NGOs and academia, sourced using systematic searches that attempted to identify all UK publications in this area between 2002 and 2012, following the procedures prescribed by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI) (2010) protocol for conducting systematic reviews<sup>3</sup>. The advantage of using systematic searches is that it is a further way to reduce researcher bias. After laborious screening of thousands of search results, 79 documents were identified from the academic and grey literature, consisting of academic case studies and evaluations of participatory initiatives, government and third sector self-evaluations, as well as government and third sector guides on how to do participation. Accordingly, each provided insights into the values attached to participation and prescriptions for how it should be conducted.

The scope of the PhD meant that there was insufficient time to comprehensively analyse all 79 documents<sup>4</sup>, so it was decided to randomly select one third of the documents for the full thematic analysis. Each document was given a number from one to 79 and a random number generator was then used to select 26 of the documents. Three of these documents were then de-selected because they did not pertain to the policy areas of interest for this study – health, housing, poverty and social security – since the earlier study for which the database was constructed had included more social policy domains. A further four documents were then added to this sample from outside the systematically sourced database, making the total of 27<sup>5</sup>. The original intention of this study was to study

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<sup>3</sup> The generation of this database is only summarised here, but a detailed description can be found in Dean (2012).

<sup>4</sup> It is also questionable whether it would have been desirable to analyse all 79, given the law of diminishing returns in adding extra documents. I was satisfied after completing the analysis of 27 that I had reached saturation point, and that further analysis was unlikely to add further insight.

<sup>5</sup> These 27 documents are listed in Appendix 1

deliberative forms of participatory policy-making, and the searches were oriented towards identifying such instances of participation. However, it transpired that the searches identified a much wider class of participatory initiatives, and deliberative initiatives were only a small subset. Focussing solely on deliberative initiatives would thus exclude the greater part of participatory governance. This assessment was reinforced by the concurrent literature review, and it became apparent that some perspectives on participation were under-represented in the sample of documents, particularly a clear statement of the New Public Management approach that many people claim has been influential in shaping how participation is practiced (Papadopoulos and Warin 2007; Parkinson 2004; R. Rowe and Shepherd 2002), as well as the viewpoint of the radical participatory left. Three of the additional documents were included to redress this lacuna in the sample. The fourth addition was the Public Administration Select Committee (2013) Report on *Public Engagement in Policy-Making*, which was released whilst the analysis was ongoing. This was included because the other government produced documents pre-dated the change in government from New Labour to the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition. A change in government may have led to a change in perspective concerning participation, though the analysis did not reveal any substantial differences, perhaps because the Select Committee is cross-party. The inclusion of the four additional documents re-introduces researcher bias. However, since these four comprise a small percentage of the total, it could only be a minimal bias, which is outweighed by the added value each performs in addressing a potential omission.

### 2.23 Data analysis

The 27 documents were then subjected to a two-step process of deductive followed by inductive coding using a PDF analysis program called Qiqqa. It is good practice in thematic analysis to code line-by-line (Braun and Clarke 2006), however; most guides to thematic coding are focused upon researcher-generated data like interview transcripts. In naturally-occurring data, such as government reports, not all the material is likely to be relevant to the object of enquiry. The first step of deductive coding was, therefore, primarily to index for relevance.

It was apparent from Chapter 1 that there is a significant amount of variation in the proposed objectives of participation, as well as conceptions of the roles of the participant

and their relationships with officials. Each of these has implications for the forms that participation takes and the types of participatory practices employed, as well as the ways that participation is evaluated. Accordingly, these four themes were taken to be the constituent elements of a mode of participation, and analysis focused on these four areas. Each document was carefully analysed to identify any lines of text that referred to the objectives of participation, conceptions of the participant, participatory practices, or criteria for evaluating participation. The appropriate lines were then highlighted and tagged according to their object of reference, for instance; evaluation.

Following Ritchie and Lewis (2003), the second step was similarly an indexing process concerned with labelling what the lines were about. However, this step proceeded inductively in that codes were generated from reading the text, rather than text being assigned to pre-existing codes. The indexing was also at a much more fine-grained level. Consider that the text was referring, explicitly or implicitly, to an objective of participation. The next question was ‘which kind of objective of participation?’ If the objective was ‘improved accountability’ the question then became ‘how is participation improving accountability?’ Since seven different ways that participation was seen to improve accountability were identified, codes were assigned at multiple levels, for example: Objective → Improved accountability → Accountability through face-to-face dialogue. Once this inductive analysis was completed, the resulting codes were mapped using a mind-mapping type feature of the Qiqqa program.

Four such maps were produced, one for each of the top-level codes: objectives, participants, practices, and evaluation. This process streamlined and systematised the coding framework by assisting in identifying and amalgamating duplicate codes and identifying families of codes. This final analysis stage thus ensured that the codes were coherent, consistent and distinct, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). Similarly, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) recommendation for good practice each of the resulting codes was matched with an illustrative example piece of text from one of the documents<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> The coding framework is reproduced in Appendix 2.

## *2.24 Inferences*

The outputs of this stage of the project were, as intended, two-fold. The thematic analysis was later employed as the basis of the Q-method concourse, with some of the statements that participants were asked to rank replicating the illustrative example pieces of text for particular codes. In addition, the new typology of participation presented in Chapter 3 was facilitated by conducting the thematic analysis alongside the literature review. Performing the two tasks simultaneously enabled analysis to move iteratively between theoretical literature and applied policy documents. This was productive in that the theoretical literature could assist in making sense of the insights that were being generated from the inductive thematic analysis. In Chapter 3, for instance, the contribution of Grid Group Cultural Theory to the new typology is described. Nevertheless, there was no pre-meditated intention to develop a typology along the lines of Grid-Group Cultural Theory. The typology was developed more through a process of coalescence between the empirical data and the theory. My observations from the empirical data began to resonate with the distinctions of other typologies, notably Christopher Hood's (1998) typology of modes of public administration and Hartley Dean's (2013) modes of social citizenship. Approaching the data through this theoretical lens then helped to analyse and structure the data, but the data also helped put flesh on the bones of my nascent theoretical ideas, both providing concrete examples to draw on and challenging me to adapt the theory where it did not fit, (hence, for example, why the typology of participation diverges from a straight Grid-Group Cultural Theory template).

## **2.3 Stage 2: Understanding Participation Preferences**

### *2.31 Purpose*

Stage 2 of this study combined a Q-method survey with unstructured qualitative interviews in order to explore both the content and nature of people's preferences for public participation in social policy decisions. Moreover, it aimed to examine the utility of the typology of modes of participation, developed in Stage 1, for understanding participation preferences. Based on the typology, the hypothesis was that participation preferences would mirror the alternative modes of participation, thus that the statistical

analysis would identify four principal components (or two bi-polar principal components), with substantive interpretations that fit the four modes of participation: knowledge transfer, collective decision-making, choice and voice, and arbitration and oversight. Nonetheless, Q-method provides more than a hypothesis test. If the statistical solution was as predicted it would also provide additional data, especially when combined with the material from the qualitative interviews, to enrich the understanding of the four modes of participation. If the statistical solution diverged from the prediction, then the data would be sufficient to develop an alternative participation typology, or amend the existing typology to take account of the results.

The combination of Q-method and qualitative interviews, as described above, is particularly well-suited for these purposes. Q-method is commonly deployed in order to understand the subjective perspectives of individuals with regard to complex and socially contested concepts (Brown 1980; Watts and Stenner 2012). In addition, it has been successfully employed in cognate research projects. Dryzek and Berejikian (1993) have used it to explore discourses of democracy, and Theiss-Morse (1993) conceptions of the good citizen among the US citizens. Skelcher, Sullivan and Jeffares (2013) conducted a Q-method study of public administrators' interpretations of network governance, and Gaynor (2013) looked at stakeholders' views of the role of Community Development Corporations in local government. Importantly, the ability to work with a small sample size (compared with traditional surveys) also made this methodological approach feasible within the resource constraints of a PhD research project. The rich qualitative information coupled with the objective quantitative data had a number of benefits too. It increased confidence in the inferences drawn from each component of the research, enabled a fuller understanding of the object of enquiry, and provided a new way of approaching a theoretical debate between quantitative and qualitative approaches to studying political preferences.

### *2.32 Data collection*

Instrument development: The standard procedures for conducting a Q-method study are now widely agreed and have been clearly codified (Brown 1980; McKeown and Thomas 2013; Watts and Stenner 2012). The first stage of any Q-method study is to compose a 'Q-set' of statements, usually between 40 to 80, that the participants will be asked to rank. This Q-set of statements should be broadly representative of the concourse,

which itself is supposed to capture the full set of representations of the object under investigation. It was detailed above how Stage 1 of this project was oriented toward mapping the landscape of representations of participation in order to provide a concourse from which a Q-set of statements could be derived. The challenge was in reducing the 257 codes into a manageable number of statements for participants to sort. Following Skelcher, Sullivan and Jeffares (2013) and Dryzek and Berejikian (1993), a sampling grid was employed in order to reduce the statements to an appropriately-sized Q-set, whilst maintaining diversity of representation. Given that one aim of the research was to test the typology of modes of participation, the four modes of participation provided one dimension of the sampling grid. The second dimension was the four components of participation – objectives, participants, practices and evaluation - identified as key constituent parts of a participation preference. Each intersection of these dimensions was awarded two cells – for instance; two cells for knowledge transfer type objectives – accounting for 32 statements in total<sup>7</sup>. Then each of the four components of a preference were awarded some cells for ‘wildcard’ statements. These wildcard cells were used for statements that did not fit with one particular mode of participation, or when an important element of one of the modes would have been excluded by using only two statements.

This structuring of the Q-set is what makes the study a test case for confirming or disconfirming the typology of four modes of participation. As Brown (1980) has noted, structuring the Q-set has a number of benefits; it can ensure balance, provide a focus and allow the researcher to explicitly state a theoretical position. Structuring the Q-set does not obtrude on the possibilities of the research participants expressing their own subjective viewpoints for the simple fact that there are so many possible combinations of statements, so it cannot be said to prejudice the approach in order that the researcher inevitably finds what he or she set out to find (Brown 1980, 38–39). Participants can arrange the statements in whichever way suits them, including contrary to the theory that structures the Q-set, for instance; in this case, if participants simultaneously highly rank statements connected to multiple modes of participation, it would not be possible to argue that they subscribe to one of the modes. Therefore, structuring the Q-set does not make it more likely that the

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<sup>7</sup> Whilst these distinctions were helpful in maintaining diversity, it is also worth noting that there are some similarities as well as differences between the four modes of participation, so, for some statements, though they were assigned to one category they can be seen to straddle the boundaries. Similarly the objectives of participation can be related to its evaluation and conceptions of participants connected to practices, thus there are some statements that straddle these neat conceptual boundaries too.



principal components identified through the statistical analysis will correspond to the theory that structured the statements.

Statements were drafted in three ways. In a small minority of cases it was possible to reproduce statements exactly as they appeared in the 27 documents thematically analysed in Stage 1. For the most part, it was necessary to edit statements from these documents to ensure they more precisely referred to the relevant concept and were sufficiently succinct, but the general tenor of the original was retained. There were a further minority of themes that were implicit in the documents, or had been theoretically derived, where it was necessary to draft statements from scratch. The initial sampling process produced a Q-set of 55 statements. A number of statements within this Q-set were deliberately in opposition with one another. This was intended to reflect the tension between different plausible preferences and force participants into making choices about what they most valued.

There are some important differences between the Q-method approach to the statements that comprise the Q-set and the approach of traditional quantitative attitudinal surveys, like the British Social Attitudes Survey, European Social Survey and World Values Survey, to their questionnaire items. Large-scale attitudinal surveys commonly draw inferences from a single survey item. Such inferences are dependent upon the survey items having fixed meanings for all survey respondents. Accordingly, much effort is expended on defining *a priori* the concept which is being measured and how to operationalise it in a survey item that is consistently interpreted by respondents. Some respondents may in practice interpret the survey question differently, but these deviations from the researchers' definition are counted as error. This is part of the reason that such surveys need to recruit a large number of respondents, in order that significant differences can be separated from measurement error. The inferences from traditional attitudinal surveys then, usually, express a good deal of confidence in the robustness of the meaning of a survey item, but little confidence in the responses of the individual respondents – they trust their variables but not their cases.

The Q-method approach is very different. Q-methodologists tend to reject the fixation on operational definitions of attitudinal concepts as the imposition of the researchers' meanings upon the respondents (Brown 1980, 2–5). Q-method is open to the notion that “language-in-use is by its nature symbolic and self-referential” (Brown 1980, 3), and thus different respondents will interpret the same statements differently. The researcher may have a working definition that guides the drafting of the statements, but,

when interpreting results, must be alive to the fact that respondents may interpret the statements differently, which should not simply be categorised as measurement error. The focus of Q-method is therefore on *a posteriori* interpretation of the meanings of statements based upon respondents sorting behaviour, rather than *a priori* definition of the statements according to the researcher's presuppositions.

This process of *a posteriori* interpretation is rooted in Q-method's *contextual principle*: individual statements are situated within a broader nexus of propositions (Brown 1980, 53). Inferences from single statements are eschewed in favour of a gestalt orientation. Inferences are based on upon the respondents Q-sort as a whole. Accordingly, the interpretation of individual statements cannot be abstracted from this whole and must take into consideration the context of its relations to other statements in the Q-sort. The result is that Q-method is a reverse of the common survey approach to inference. It is flexible with regard to the meanings respondents attach to individual statements, but inferences are tied to the gestalt, and at this level Q has much greater confidence in the robustness of its individual respondents.

These differences in approach mean that the drafting of statements for the Q-set can at times depart from what is seen as best practice for the development of operationalised concepts that informs the design of attitudinal survey questionnaire items. Unlike survey items, some of the Q-set statements for this study contain multiple clauses for instance. Statements were drafted in this way when it was felt that additional contextual information was necessary to understand the normative clause of the statement, thus there are 'mixed statements' that combine a contextual clause with a normative clause. An example of this type of statement is: "Society will always contain conflict about what the right values are, as well as competing claims for resources. The aim of public participation should be to resolve these conflicts between competing interests". The first part of the statement is contextual, the second part normative. This creates a potential conflict as respondents may agree with the contextual clause but not the normative one, or vice versa. However, this did not cause significant problems for ranking these statements, nor interpreting their ranking. Respondents were reminded that the process was intended to identify their normative viewpoint, so if they felt ambivalent about a statement they should privilege the normative clause. If participants' ambivalence persisted then they could simply rank the statement in the neutral section. Since the analysis of the Q-sort data has a gestalt orientation the impact of a single statement on the results of the analysis is rather minimal, and because the principal components analysis is weighted in favour of the extremes of the distribution, this

is particularly true for statements that are neutrally ranked. In addition, the emphasis on *a posteriori* interpretation of a statement in the light of its relation to the other statements provides a means for unpicking the meaning a respondent (or set of respondents) attaches to a statement and thus why it is ranked as it is, and why it may generate conflicted feelings. There is also an opportunity to seek further information from respondents in the post-Q-sort interview. Participants' ambivalence over statements with more than one clause can lead to discussion in the interview that helps to illuminate the nuance of their position, for instance; why they disagree with a common interpretation that a certain normative attitude follows from the contextual information. The opening part of the analysis in Chapter 5, for example, focusses on one such example of ambivalence, where a respondent struggles to reconcile the two parts of a statement, in the process illuminating how civil servants are conflicted about their role as neutral experts.

Once the statements were drafted, the Q-set of 55 statements was then tested in six pilot surveys and interviews. Of course the pilot phase was not intended to test for robustness of operational definitions of the statements, as may be expected in the pilot of a traditional survey. Instead it focused on more practical matters such as the intelligibility of the statements and whether participants are able to understand and perform the procedure. Feedback from pilot interviews indicated that there were a few too many statements, making the process a little overwhelming, and that some of the statements could be more clearly written, which instigated an editing phase. 19 statements were redrafted to make them more succinct and clarify concepts, and seven statements were removed either because the theme could be partly captured by the amendments to other statements, or because it was judged to be non-essential. This produced a final Q-set of 48 statements, consisting of the 32 core statements and 16 wildcard statements (see Table 2.31 below).

Table 2.31: Full Q-set of statements and related themes

	Objectives		Participants		Practices		Evaluation	
	Theme	Statement	Theme	Statement	Theme	Statement	Theme	Statement
<b>Arbitration and Oversight</b>	<i>Resolve conflict between competing interests</i>	Society will always contain conflict about what the right values are, as well as competing claims for resources. The aim of public participation should be to resolve these conflicts between competing interests.	<i>Impartial adjudicators</i>	Public organisations frequently act like just another interest group, so it is important to create roles in which the public can provide impartial oversight or adjudication on controversial issues.	<i>Adjudication / arbitration</i>	Participation should take a form that allows all those with a stake in the decision to present their claims, then there needs to be a clear and impartial mechanism for adjudicating between those claims.	<i>Conflict resolution</i>	The success of a participatory decision process should be assessed on how far it contributes towards resolving any conflict between competing interests or competing perspectives with regard to the decision being taken.
<b>Arbitration and Oversight</b>	<i>Achieve decision legitimacy</i>	Participation is about improving the legitimacy of decisions by bringing decision-making out into the open from behind closed doors. By involving everyone with a stake in the issue, the public can see a decision is fair and does not favour vested interests.	<i>Activists/ unrepresentative</i>	Any participatory process needs to be actively managed (e.g. through participant selection and facilitation) in order to prevent an unrepresentative group from dominating the process and hijacking the decision.	<i>Defined participatory space</i>	Public participation initiatives should have a clear question that is being asked of participants. Participants need to be informed of what is in and out of the scope of the discussion, what is expected of them as participants, and what the limits of the process are with regard to its impacts on policy.	<i>Decision legitimacy / Fairness</i>	We should judge the success of a participatory decision process on the extent to which it results in a decision that is accepted by everyone as fair and legitimate.
<b>Knowledge Transfer</b>	<i>Maximise information / capture lay expertise</i>	The objective of public participation is to improve policy decisions by ensuring that decision-makers can access wider sources of information, perspectives and potential solutions.	<i>Experts</i>	Local people are the best source of information about their own neighbourhoods, poor people are the experts in poverty, and service-users best know where the problems with services are. The public should be valued for the expertise it can bring to policy decisions.	<i>Public interest</i>	Public participation is not about who can shout the loudest for their own private interests. It should be directed towards finding the common good, rather than bargaining about who gets what.	<i>Decision quality / sponsor satisfaction</i>	The success of public participation should be judged by those who commissioned the process and whether they feel their decision has been enhanced by the involvement of the public.

<b>Knowledge Transfer</b>	<i>Improve substantive outcomes</i>	The aim of participation should be to improve policy and to improve services. If public participation does not result in noticeable improvements in policy and/or services then it has failed.	<i>Policy tool</i>	The best people to involve in any particular participatory policy-making exercise are those who can contribute most to improving the particular policy that is under consideration.	<i>Authorities retain decision power</i>	To ensure accountability, it is important that elected representatives and public officials retain ultimate authority over any final decision.	<i>Agenda-based / universal vs specific</i>	We cannot say there are a number of evaluation criteria that apply to all, or even most, public participation exercises. The assessment of success or failure must be based on the purpose(s) of the specific exercise being evaluated.
<b>Collective Decision-Making</b>	<i>Collective self-government</i>	The aim of participation is to enable citizens to take the decisions that affect their lives through collective discussion and decision-making. It should be about collective self-government.	<i>Public reasoners</i>	Publicly debating social issues is the primary political act, so reasoning between people should be the guiding procedure for policy decision-making.	<i>Collective dialogue and decision</i>	Though it may not always be possible, participation should always aim to make collective decisions based on group consensus.	<i>Negotiated by participants / participant control</i>	Participation should be evaluated based on how much control the participants have over the process, for instance; have the participants set the agenda, and how much control do they have over the final decision?
<b>Collective Decision-Making</b>	<i>Participation as a right /end not means</i>	Participation may be a means to achieve better outcomes, but its principal objective is to realise people's right to participate in decisions about the society in which they live	<i>Social</i>	It is primarily bonds with others and shared social goals that motivate people to participate, so participation works best when it is woven into the fabric of people's everyday lives, for instance; situated in local communities.	<i>Independent / counter-publics</i>	If it is to have any power, public participation should be independent from state institutions. It should be a space in which the public can articulate their own agenda and demands, before negotiating these with government and public organisations.	<i>Dialogue quality / mutual understanding</i>	Has there been an open and honest exchange of ideas and perspectives from all those involved? Has this resulted in greater mutual understanding? These are key criteria when assessing whether public participation has been a success.

<b>Choice and Voice</b>	<i>Capture public needs and wants</i>	Public services have to compete for customers, and politicians for their constituents. Therefore, the aim of participation should be to find out what people want and need, then deliver that.	<i>Consumers</i>	People don't want to attend endless meetings and discussions. The best way to enable the public to influence policies and public services is to give individuals options from which they can choose, whether that's a choice of service provider or a choice of different priorities for spending in their neighbourhoods.	<i>Private interest</i>	People are not motivated to participate in policy-making for the health of democracy, but because they believe they have something to lose or gain, therefore; participation should enable individuals and groups to promote and defend their interests and values.	<i>Improved services / responsiveness</i>	To judge the success of public participation we need to look at the resultant policies and services and ask are they more responsive to public needs and public values.
<b>Choice and Voice</b>	<i>Empower public through choice</i>	The objective of participation is to empower the public and the best way to do that is to give individuals a choice over which provider of services they can use.	<i>Multiplicity of publics</i>	There is no one 'public' with a general interest. Participation initiatives must bring together lots of overlapping little 'publics', all with their own interests and values.	<i>Individualised</i>	It is more important that participation should give individual citizens a means to voice their preferences and have them heard by decision-makers than facilitate discussions between citizens.	<i>Participant satisfaction</i>	The success of public participation should be assessed by asking the participants whether they are satisfied.
<b>Wildcard</b>	<i>Remedy political/ social exclusion</i>	Participation should be a means through which the marginalised in society can challenge their political and social exclusion.	<i>Battle</i>	Citizens and the state only work together when their interests coincide. Most of the time they don't, so participation has to enable the public to battle public institutions to get what it wants.	<i>Tailor forms</i>	There is no right way to do participation. The particular form of participation should be determined by what is most appropriate to the particular issue under consideration.	<i>Subjective empowerment /system legitimacy</i>	A key measure for the success of participation is whether people feel they have any influence: Do they think they can affect decisions on policies that matter to them?

<b>Wildcard</b>	<i>Challenge the powerful</i>	The aim of participation is not to make decisions with policy-makers, but to hold them to account and exert pressure on them to make the right decisions.	<i>Partners</i>	Public participation in the policy process should create a new relationship between public institutions and citizens in which both are equal partners co-creating policy.	<i>Equal / Mutual respect</i>	It is important that participation initiatives cultivate an environment in which everyone has an equal opportunity to give their views. One particular way of communicating should not be privileged over others, and differences should be recognised and respected.	<i>Representativeness</i>	Public participation is of little value if those that participate are not representative of those that will be affected by the decision, therefore; representativeness is a key criterion for evaluation.
<b>Wildcard</b>	<i>Community development / Big Society</i>	The point of public participation is to create cohesive communities, in which responsible citizens can work together to solve their own problems without relying on the state.	<i>Authorities as enablers</i>	Public organisations and public officials should not try to lead participation exercises, but play an enabling role. They should help the public achieve their own agenda by providing the skills and resources the public lack.	<i>Openness &amp; Inclusivity vs restricted selection</i>	Participation initiatives should be open to all those who wish to participate. Participants should not be specially selected, though extra resources may need to be focussed on encouraging disadvantaged groups to participate.		
<b>Wildcard</b>	<i>Process legitimacy / System legitimacy</i>	The objective of public participation is to create a fairer process for making policy decisions and in turn a fairer democracy, one that is perceived to be legitimate by the public.			<i>Invited vs informal spaces</i>	If government or public service organisations want to talk to the public, they should do so by engaging with existing community organisations, rather than setting up and imposing new participatory structures.		

<b>Wildcard</b>	<i>Voice and Responsiveness</i>	The aim of participation should be to give the public a voice that can influence decisions. Policy-makers need to listen, but must then exercise judgement in deciding what should be incorporated into the final decision.								
<b>Wildcard</b>	<i>Subjective empowerment</i>	The point of participation is to improve participants' skills; to give them a greater sense of confidence and of their own power to act and influence the decisions that affect them.								
<b>Wildcard</b>	<i>Transfer power</i>	The aim of participation should be to transfer decision power from elites in bureaucracies and public service organisations to the public, so the public can exercise some control over these institutions.								



These 48 statements were then printed on a set of 6 cm x 5cm cards and laminated for face-to-face use, as well as uploaded to the specialised PoetQ online program (Jeffares and Dickinson 2016) for online use. A sample of the cards is reproduced below as Figure 2.31. You can see that the statement is accompanied by a statement number from 1 to 48, which was randomly assigned to each card, along with a letter – either an E, F, O or P – in the bottom right corner. The numbers were to facilitate the quick recording of the results at the end of the survey and interview process, and later statistical analysis. The letters refer to the four components of a participation preference: evaluation, forms/practices, objectives and participants’ roles and relationships. They were included to facilitate quicker analysis by the researcher as the cards were being sorted, for instance; so that the researcher could quickly scan the distribution and see the location of all the objectives statements without having to read the whole statement.

Figure 2.31: Sample of Q-sorting cards

<p>The aim of participation should be to give the public a voice that can influence decisions. Policy-makers need to listen, but must then exercise judgement in deciding what should be incorporated into the final decision.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">43   O</p>	<p>Has there been an open and honest exchange of ideas and perspectives from all those involved? Has this resulted in greater mutual understanding? These are key criteria when assessing whether public participation has been a success.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">48   E</p>	<p>A key measure for the success of participation is whether people feel they have any influence: Do they think they can affect decisions on policies that matter to them?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">46   E</p>
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It was also necessary to decide upon the shape of the pre-set distribution grid onto which the statements would be ranked (see Figure 2.32). The sorting grid departs from the common Q-method practice of selecting a kurtosis that reflects a quasi-normal distribution. The justification for a quasi-normal distribution with longer columns in the middle of the distribution is that there will normally be more items that participants feel indifferent about than strongly about (Brown 1980). However, this assumption is questionable with regard to the statements for this study, which were purposefully drafted to be provocative and in tension with each other. A flattened, platykurtic distribution was chosen for this study, which enables more fine-grained discrimination at the margins where the participants feel most strongly about the statements. This is more suitable for the particular Q-set and it has



been specifically recommended for use with knowledgeable participants, like the recruited key informants (Watts and Stenner 2012).

After the pilot phase it was also decided that an interview topic guide was unnecessary, and that given the Q-sorting process is highly structured it would be more profitable to conduct open, flexible, unstructured interviews. Only one question was retained from the initial topic guide, which was the opening question: once the participant had completed the Q-sort, they were encouraged to challenge it and think about whether they considered that anything important was missing. This partly provided an opportunity to check the validity of the Q-set according to participants' assessment of its comprehensiveness. More importantly, it was intended to open up the interview. The Q-set presented participants with a large number of ideas, and was generally experienced as intellectually challenging. Accordingly, it would be easy for participants to become fixated on the material of the Q-set at the exclusion of missing ideas that they would ordinarily raise as important. This first question was thus intended to be an explicit encouragement of dissent.

Data collection process: The primary data collection process for this stage of the research, as aforementioned, consisted of a Q-method survey and an unstructured interview. A short questionnaire was also included to record demographic characteristics of participants and the ways they have been involved, if at all, in participatory policy-making (see Appendix 3). Participants were asked to allow 90 minutes to complete all three elements of the process. For the vast majority of the participants data collection was conducted face-to-face. They were first given a short description of the study and asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 4). They then performed the Q-sort, which was directly followed by the interview. At the end of the interview the participants were asked to complete the demographic questionnaire, which only took one or two minutes, whilst the researcher recorded the results of their Q-sort and thanked them for their time in taking part. The duration of most participants' Q-sorts was around 25-40 minutes, leaving between 50 and 65 minutes for the interview, however, there were a small number of particularly fast Q-sorters who completed the task in approximately 15 minutes and a small number of slow Q-sorters, with two participants taking 90 minutes to complete the Q-sort.

The face-to-face Q-sorts began with the researcher's description of the task at hand, and the 'condition of instruction', advising participants of the basis on which to sort the statements. Participants were sat in front of the Q-sort ranking grid (Figure 2.32). The

researcher held in hand the set of cards containing the Q-sort statements (Figure 2.31), whilst explaining the task, so that the participant's attention was fixed on the explanation, not on the statements. The explanation took the following form:

I have a set of 48 cards containing common statements people make about public participation in social policy decisions. There is one card for each cell on the grid in front of you and by the end of this process you should have sorted each card into a cell, based on your opinion about public participation, particularly concerning health policy, housing policy, poverty policy or social security policy. I am interested in your opinion about how participation *should be*, not how it currently is, so please rank each statement based on how much you agree or disagree with it based on how participation should be.

Most people find it a bit overwhelming to place the statements straight onto the grid, so first off, it is best to do a quick sort into three piles based on whether you agree, disagree or feel neutral or are not sure about them, then work from there.

The purpose of this explanation was to set the scope: it is about participation in social policy decisions in health, housing, poverty and social security policy, not for instance co-delivery of services in education policy. There was also an emphasis that it was the participant's normative opinion that was sought, not their description of how participation currently works. As can be seen from Figure 2.32, this condition of instruction was reproduced above the sorting grid, so that participants could refer to it as they conducted the sort if necessary. Then, following Q-method best practice, there was the suggestion that participants began sorting the cards into three piles, a recommendation that not all participants followed, some preferred to work straight onto the grid. Either once the participant had finished the initial sort, or if they began sorting straight onto the grid, some further explanation was provided. Participants were advised that

The ranking process usually works best if you sort from the ends of the grid and work your way into the middle. So, first select the five statements that you most agree with, then the five you most disagree with, and work inwards from there.

You can move the statements around as much as you want until you are happy with the distribution.

The most agree to most disagree scale is a relative scale. It is about your relative rankings of the statements in comparison to one another, rather than whether you absolutely agree or disagree with a statement.

The first of these three instructions again follows Q-method best practice, and it was noticeable that those participants who followed this advice found it significantly easier to complete the task. The final instruction also proved very significant because a number of participants had a positive skew to their rankings thus were reluctant to place statements on the left of the distribution until it was reiterated that it doesn't matter if you agree with a statement, you can place it in a 'disagree' column as long as you agree with it less than the other statements you agree with.

The interview approach was technically unstructured in that there was no topic guide of questions that the researcher followed. The researcher tried to ensure that the interviews were comprehensive in covering the four constituent components of a participation preference, so that there was some data on the participant's opinions on the objectives of participation, conceptions of the participants, participatory practices and evaluating participation. Nevertheless the interview was flexible within those parameters based on what the interviewee was most interested in, for instance, with regard to which objectives of participation were focused on, and how much time was spent talking about participation practices versus evaluation criteria.

The preceding Q-sort also implicitly provided a structure for the interviews, and a number of techniques were used to generate questions out of the participant's experience of the Q-sort. Participants would often spontaneously explain why they had placed statements in particular columns, particularly those at the extremes of the distribution that they most agreed or disagreed with, but when they did not the researcher would probe this and ask the participant why she felt most strongly about those statements. The researcher also probed when statement placement appeared to be incongruous, for instance; when seemingly contradictory statements were ranked close to one another, or where statements seemingly of a similar nature were placed at alternate ends of the spectrum. This provided deeper understanding of the participant's viewpoint, elucidating the meanings that participants' attached to particular statements and how they related to one another. The researcher attempted to minimise conversations during the Q-sort, unless they were points of clarification, so as not to influence the participant's sorting of the statements. Nonetheless, participants would often make comments about the statements as they were sorting them, either to themselves or to the researcher, and this was a further way that questions were generated from the experience of the Q-sort; by noting comments and returning to them later during the interview.

This close connection between the Q-sort and the interview potentially creates a risk that the interview is dominated by the researcher's concerns at the expense of the perspective of the participant. However, the Q-set of statements is intended to be representative of the opinion domain on the research questions at-hand, thus the implicit structure provided by the Q-sort should not be overly restrictive of appropriate topics. In addition, the researcher was attentive to this problem, and, as aforementioned, the one consistent question that was posed to participants, always the first question of the interview, was an attempt to open up the process and encourage the participant to think about any topics they felt were missing, or any issues that they felt couldn't be expressed through the Q-sort and were deserving of discussion. Despite this opportunity, participants did not raise undue concerns in this regard, were generally satisfied that the Q-sort was a good representation of their opinion, and happy to return the discussion to it. This suggests the Q-set of statements was relatively comprehensive in capturing the diversity of perspectives on participatory governance. If the Q-sort is viewed as akin to a process of participant-led topic prioritisation, then generating questions out of the Q-sort, rather than breaking from this process and introducing an additional researcher-defined interview topic guide, is actually an effective way of keeping the interview close to the participant's concerns. Probing the statements that participants have placed at the extremes of the distribution ensures that a major part of the interview tackles the topics on which the participant feels most strongly, for instance. Returning to the comments that participants had made during the Q-sort was also an attempt to keep the interview close to the participant's initial reactions.

For six of the 34 participants the Q-sort and interview process substantially diverged from this template. It was not possible for three of the participants to meet in person, thus the process was conducted remotely. Participants completed the Q-sort using the online PoetQ software. Once completed, the researcher took 30 minutes to access and examine the results before contacting the participant on Skype to conduct the interview. The PoetQ software models the same process that face-face Q-sorts take. Participants are first presented with each statement one-by-one and asked to sort them into one of three columns, based on whether they agree, disagree or feel neutral about the statement. They then go through two stages of refinement. First they are presented with all the statements they agree with and asked to select the five statements they most agree with, then the same for most disagree, alternating until they have filled the entire grid. Participants then get an overview of their final grid and can make any revisions by moving statements around using

drag and drop, like in a game of solitaire. There were two differences from the face-to-face process. The limitations of the program meant the questionnaire had to be included at the beginning rather than the end of the process. Also, the final page that participants see asks them to write free text explanations for why they most agree/disagree choice of statements. Participants were informed in advance that they were not required to complete this phase, since they were to be interviewed, but all three completed it anyway. Time to complete the online Q-sort mirrored the variety of the face-to-face Q-sorts, with the three participants completing the task in 23, 60 and 92 minutes, suggesting that the nature of the participant is more important than the process of data collection in this regard. The duration of interviews with these participants were 67, 66, and 48 minutes respectively.

The other three departures from the standard template were due to the exigencies of collecting qualitative data. One participant was able to complete the Q-sort, but other work pressures meant the process had to be cut short, thus there is no interview with this participant. As already noted, one of the face-to-face participants used the entirety of the allotted 90 minutes to complete the Q-sort. As a result, she offered to return to complete the interview at another time. A new interview time was scheduled, but this was not possible to arrange until 25 days after the original Q-sort. During the return interview the participant was re-presented with her original Q-sort, given some time to re-familiarise herself with it and revise it (though she chose not make any revisions), before beginning the interview. The final divergence was a result of audio recorder failure which meant that almost the entire audio recording of the interview was lost. Again, the participant offered to be re-interviewed and a telephone interview was re-scheduled for 15 days later. The participant was sent a copy of his original Q-sort before the telephone interview, and once again no revisions to the original were requested<sup>8</sup>. The interview approach was not substantially different for any of these interviews, though the greater time for researcher reflection meant that follow-up questions received more thought than the more spontaneous probes in the other interviews. This variability in data collection is not ideal, particularly for the latter two participants who most likely had to reconstruct the reasons they originally ranked the statements in the way that they did. Nonetheless, there was nothing to suggest from either the statistical results or the content of the interviews that this

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<sup>8</sup> This is an indication, though a weak one, that the Q-method results are reliable and would not fluctuate wildly if re-tested.

data should be discarded as non-comparable with the data collected through the standard process.

Sampling and recruitment: The research approach selected for this project does not require a large random sample, or representative quota sample. A small sample provides sufficient statistical power for the principal components analysis to provide meaningful results. It is conventional to carry out Q studies with samples of around 30-50 participants (McKeown and Thomas 2013, 32), though considerably less is perfectly acceptable (Watts and Stenner 2012, 73). Moreover, it is sufficient for the aims of this study, which intends to explore the variety in participation preferences, not make probabilistic statements about their distribution in the general population. It was originally intended that this study would be open to everyone, however; after the pilot interviews it was decided to restrict the study to key informants<sup>9</sup>. Key informants are individuals who are recruited because of their first-hand knowledge, expertise and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Tremblay 1957). In this case, a key informant was conceived of as a person who has been involved in some way in a participatory policy-making process in the relevant policy areas. The population of interest was thus unknown – there is no database of people involved in participatory governance from which a random sample could be drawn, even if it was desirable. This is not, of course, to say that the careful selection of research participants is unimportant, however; this study took a purposive sampling approach that is more commonly associated with qualitative research, following Bauer and Aarts' (2000) criteria for successful corpus construction.

Given that the objective of the project was to uncover the range of different understandings of and preferences for participation, research participants were purposively sampled with the aim of generating maximal heterogeneity in this regard. There is, however, only minimal guidance to draw on in the existing literature regarding the type of factors that influence participation preferences, and thus how to select for heterogeneity. A previous analysis of evaluations of participatory initiatives, drawing on the database

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<sup>9</sup> Two pilot interviews were carried out with people with little education, little political interest and no experience of participation, as a hard test case for whether the method would work with a general population. Both were able to complete the Q-sort but they quickly became very frustrated by the intensiveness of the method, since they were forced to spend a long time ranking statements saying how participation should be done, when they were not very interested in participation being carried out at all, let alone how it is carried out. It was decided that the methods were not well-suited to research with the general population and the decision was thus taken to focus on key informants. I will return to a discussion of the implications of this choice in the 'inferences' section of this chapter.



employed in Stage 1 of this project, suggested differences in conceptions of participation between different organisation types, particularly between governmental and civil society actors, such as academics and NGOs (R. Dean 2012), and the practices of social movements such as Occupy and UK Citizens also suggest they may have a distinct viewpoint. These different organisation types also provide a proxy for the different roles that those involved in participatory governance may play. Public officials are more likely to be involved in commissioning the process, civil society actors involved as brokers or organisers, and citizens and activists more likely to be on the receiving end of such initiatives.

It is plausible that policy focus may influence conceptions of participation too, so three broad policy areas were selected that appeared to have subtly different discourses of participation surrounding them. UK healthcare policy has seen the rise of an individualised, consumerist notion of the ‘service-user’, based on the mantra ‘no decision about me without me’, which originated out of disability rights movements but has since taken on consumerist overtones in official policy circles,

We consider that greater patient involvement and greater patient choice are all part of the same goal: to ensure that “no decision about me, without me” becomes the norm. (Department of Health 2012, 1)

Given the same teams often carry out both patient and public participation in the NHS and for the Department of Health, it was thought likely that this kind of discourse would cross-pollinate into public participation. Whilst there is an element of consumerist thinking in housing policy and tenant involvement, the tenor of housing and local governance policy is often about participation as an instrument to solve intractable problems; participatory budgeting, for instance, is promoted as a creating “greater community cohesion, as diverse groups of people come together” (PB Unit 2008, 8). People experiencing poverty or claiming benefits are rarely viewed as consumers in the fashion that NHS patients are. They are more often viewed as a problem to be solved or disciplined. Nevertheless, there has been an attempt to promote the participation of those experiencing poverty by claiming they possess an expertise that policy-makers lack – as the Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power intones, “Looking at policies on poverty? Involve the real experts” (2000, 46).

The purposive sampling approach thus began by recruiting people in order to fill cells in a 3 x 3 table of organisation type by policy focus (see Table 2.32). Of course, these distinctions between organisation type and policy area are somewhat crude and Table 2.32

is only intended to be a heuristic. It guided the initial recruitment process, but there was a significant amount of craft involved; in accordance with Bauer and Aarts' *Rule 1*, the process “proceed[ed] stepwise: select; analyse; select again” (2000, 31). Since the factors influencing participation preferences were unknown, a variety of other potential factors were also recorded, primarily using the survey questionnaire. These included, sex, age, ethnicity, income, level of education, voting intention and geographical location. The questionnaires were analysed as the data collection progressed to ensure that there was diversity across all of these characteristics, though, once again, there was no attempt to ensure the sample was strictly representative of the population of England and Scotland. The sample is broken down by each of these factors below.

*Initial sampling matrix:* Table 2.32 demonstrates that the sampling achieved a good spread across the different cells of the initial sampling matrix. There are equal numbers of public officials, citizens/activists and civil society actors. There is diversity across policy focus, though there is some under-representation of the housing and local governance policy area, especially with regard to public officials. However, this only considers the participants' ‘main’ role, as defined by the researcher. Many of the participants were involved in participatory governance in more than one guise, and when the participants were allowed to choose multiple options this seeming under-representation of housing and local governance disappears (Table 2.33).

Table 2.32: Number of participants by organisation type and policy focus (main role, as defined by the researcher)

	<b>Public Officials</b>	<b>Citizens/Activists</b>	<b>Civil Society</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Healthcare</b>	5	5	3	<b>13</b>
<b>Housing &amp; Local Governance</b>	1	2	4	<b>7</b>
<b>Poverty &amp; Social Security</b>	6	4	4	<b>14</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>34</b>

Table 2.33: Number of participants by organisation type and policy focus (multiple roles, as self-defined by the participants)

	<b>Public Officials</b>	<b>Citizens/Activists</b>	<b>Civil Society</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Healthcare</b>	8	13	9	<b>30</b>
<b>Housing &amp; Local Governance</b>	8	18	10	<b>36</b>
<b>Poverty &amp; Social Security</b>	11	18	10	<b>39</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>29</b>	

*Sex:* The sample was relatively evenly divided by sex. Men made up 44% (15) of the participants and women 56% (19).

*Ethnicity:* Five participants (15%) denoted their ethnicity as black or minority ethnic, which is close to representative of the UK population total of 13%, and each of these five people reported a different ethnicity from each other.

*Disability:* At least five people (15%) with disabilities were involved in this study, which is a little under, but close to representative of the UK population total of 19%. Disability was not formally recorded for the study, so the exact number is undetermined, since it is only known if the participant mentioned it in interview or had a visible impairment.

*Age:* Adults of a wide variety of ages were involved in this project. Age ranged between 24 years and 84 years, with a mean age of 45 years. As Table 2.34 demonstrates, participants were distributed across different age ranges.

Table 2.34: Distribution of participants by age

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	20-29 years	5	14.7
	30-39 years	6	17.6
	40- 49 years	10	29.4
	50-59 years	9	26.5
	60+ years	3	8.8
	Total	33	97.1
<b>Missing</b>	Missing	1	2.9
<b>Total</b>		34	100.0

*Location:* Participants from diverse geographical locations were deliberately targeted in order to capture some of the diversity of political cultures in Britain, which could influence preferences for participation. As the study was based in London and this is where a large number of government departments and policy NGOs are based, London residents unsurprisingly comprised the largest group of participants (15), but this is still less than half of the sample. Residents of 10 different cities and towns from the North, South, and Midlands of England took part, as well as residents from Glasgow and Edinburgh in Scotland, and two residents of rural areas (one England, one Scotland).

*Income:* Personal incomes were diverse but skewed towards the poles, particularly the well-paid (see Table 2.35 above). This is perhaps not surprising given the target population of key informants included a large number of policy elites on London salaries, but also individuals experiencing poverty and/or claiming benefits. Despite the polarised sample, there is full coverage of the salary range, with a minimum of two people in each salary category.

**Table 2.35: Distribution of participants by self-reported personal, annual pre-tax income**

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	less than £14,999	5	14.7
	£15,000 - £24,999	3	8.8
	£25,000 - £34,999	2	5.9
	£35,000 - £49,999	8	23.5
	More than £50,000	13	38.2
	Total	31	91.2
<b>Missing</b>	Missing	1	2.9
	Don't want to answer	2	5.9
	Total	3	8.8
<b>Total</b>		34	100.0

*Education:* There was a lack of diversity with regard to level of education, with only one participant having achieved less than further education, and 29 participants having a university degree or higher. Since two thirds of the sample is made up of elites in roles where a high level education would be a job requirement, a bias in this respect was not unexpected, yet more diversity in education level of citizens and activists would have been preferable. Nonetheless, participation in political activity is positively correlated with education level in Britain, and this includes participatory initiatives, which is one of the reasons such initiatives sometimes use random selection or other methods to correct this bias (G. Smith 2009). As such, high education levels do reflect the population of the key informants sampled for this study. In addition, the paucity within the sample of those with little education did not preclude the inclusion of people with very different life experiences, which included those who would be considered in the very elite strata of society to those with substantial experience of poverty, as is reflected in the income data.

*Voting intention:* The most troubling lack of diversity concerned participants voting intention, which was measured as a proxy for political outlook (Table 2.36). By the end of the first round of recruitment, none of the participants had indicated support for a right-wing political party, such as the Conservatives or UKIP, though more than a fifth of participants did not profess a definite preference, and it is possible that some of these people may have a right-wing political outlook. Given it is plausible that one's procedural preferences would be related to one's political preferences, recruitment was substantially prolonged to try to address this bias, though with only limited success. Despite a targeted recruitment phase it was extremely difficult to identify people of a right-wing political outlook involved with participatory policy-making, and, once identified, recruit them to participate. The final sample only included one Conservative voter, plus one person who declined to answer the question but was employed in a right-wing think-tank. Greater diversity in this respect would have been desirable, however; the difficulty in even identifying people with a right-wing political outlook involved with participation activities in the policy areas under consideration suggests that this field is dominated by people with the kind of outlook expressed by the recruited study participants<sup>10</sup>. Once again, the bias most likely reflects the bias within the population of key informants. In addition, the very limited sample of right-wing participants who were successfully recruited did not suggest

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<sup>10</sup> Data collection has recently been replicated in the US with a similar sample bias, with Republican voters massively outnumbered by Democrats, which is further evidence for this claim.

there was a specifically right-wing perspective that was missing from this study. Neither expressed unique views that differentiated them from the other participants, and each participant's viewpoint was more similar to other participants than they were to each other – for instance, the statistical analysis showed they each loaded onto different principal components. Accordingly, the participation preferences described by this study are likely representative of those who dominate the practice of participatory policy-making.

Table 2.36: Distribution of participants by voting intention<sup>11</sup>

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	Conservatives	1	2.9
	Green Party	4	11.8
	Labour	15	44.1
	Liberal Democrats	3	8.8
	Scottish National Party	3	8.8
	UKIP	0	0.0
	Other	0	0.0
	Would not vote	0	0.0
	Total	26	76.5
<b>Missing</b>	Missing	1	2.9
	Don't want to answer	5	14.7
	Don't know	2	5.9
	Total	8	23.5
<b>Total</b>		34	100.0

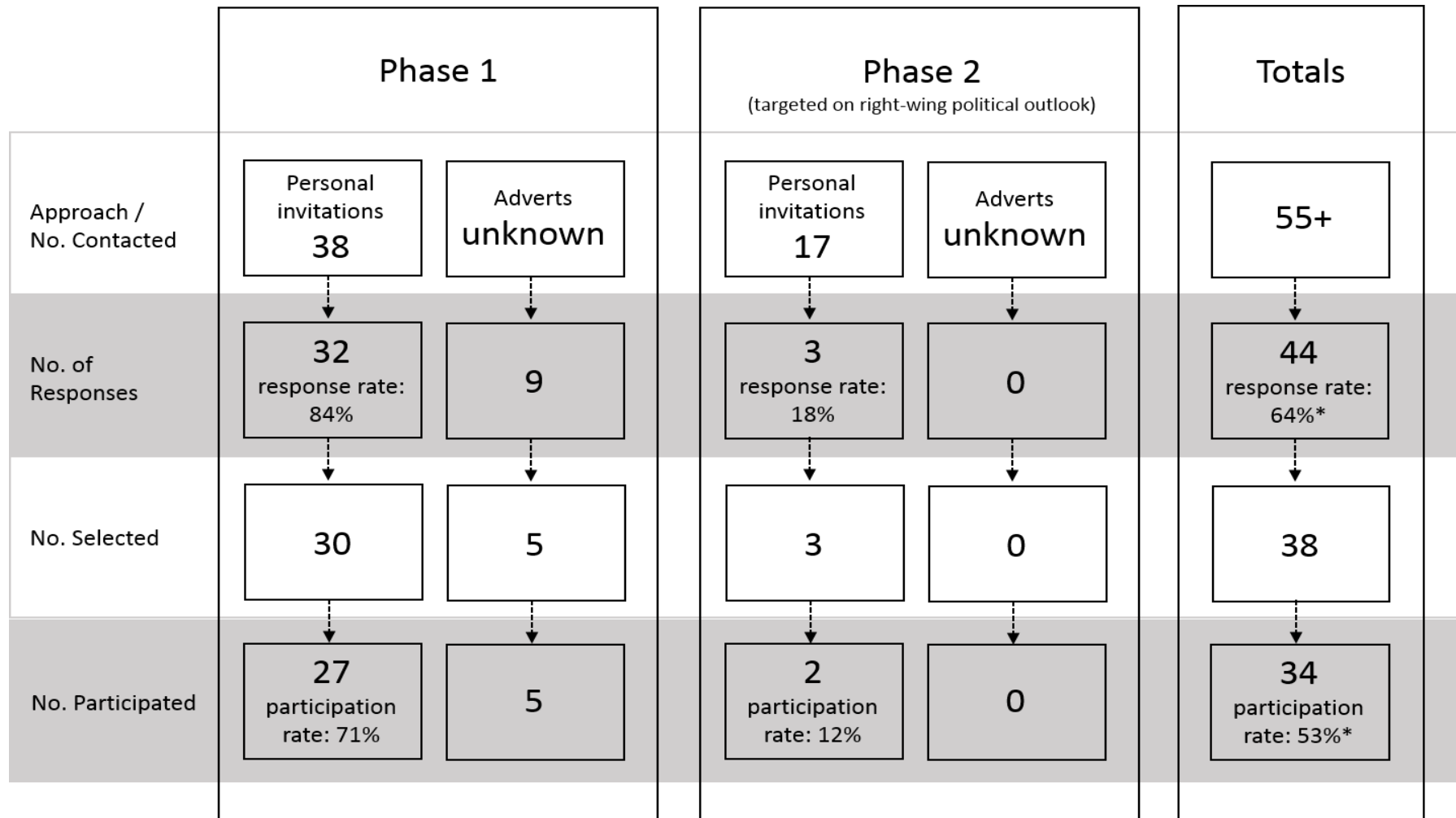
Participants were recruited to take part in this project through one of two methods. Either they received a personalised invitation from the researcher requesting their participation, or they viewed an advertisement about the research and contacted the

<sup>11</sup> Participants were asked the question “If there was a general election tomorrow who would you vote for?”

researcher to participate. Key informants who should be invited to participate were identified by attending many events and workshops on participatory policy-making and using these opportunities to network and seek-out relevant people, by searching for ongoing or recent initiatives online and any named people who were involved in those initiatives, and by drawing on existing and newly-made contacts to suggest potential participants. In the first instance, the researcher approached potential participants at the event to ask if they may be interested in the study and later followed up with an invitation email. In the second instance, the potential participant received a 'cold' email from the researcher. In the third instance, in some cases the potential participant was introduced to the researcher by the third-party, and the researcher then followed-up, or the potential participant received an email invitation directly from the researcher but referring to the fact they had been suggested by a third-party. These personalised invitations proved very effective in the first phase of recruitment. Of the 38 people invited, 32 responded to indicate a willingness to participate, a response rate of 84%. Of these 32 respondents, 27 participated in the study. Three participants were lost simply due to scheduling issues, however; two of these people suggested substitutes who did participate. Two further people expressed interest in participating but this was at a time when the recruitment process was focused on trying to improve the diversity of the sample, and it was not considered that they would add to the sample diversity.

Advertising proved less fruitful. In order to advertise the research, a webpage explaining the project and containing a form that readers could use to contact the researcher and signify their interest to participate was created on the researcher's personal website. This webpage was also used to advertise on social media, primarily Twitter using relevant hashtags that interested people would follow, for instance the #demopart hashtag. Initially, the study lacked public officials working in the area of poverty and social security, so existing contacts were leveraged to have the research advertised on appropriate government mailing lists, which attracted a small number of participants. In total nine people contacted the researcher because they had seen the project advertised, five of whom were asked to, and did then, participate. Four of the nine were politely declined; one because he did not work in the right policy area, one because she was not based in the UK, and two because they responded quite late in the process, at the time when focus was on diversifying the sample, and it was not considered that they would add to the sample diversity.

Figure 2.33: Overview of participant recruitment



Response rate calculated as no. of respondents/no. of invitations x100. Participation rate calculated as no. of participants/no. of invitations x100.

\* Response and participation rates for totals are only based on figures for personal invitations as the denominator is unknown for adverts.



The 32 participants recruited in the first recruitment phase were surveyed and interviewed in the summer of 2014. 31 of the interviews took place between 4 June and 29 August 2014, but one interview had to be postponed from the original appointment date, thus took place at the end of September. A second phase of recruitment then began to attempt to remedy the seeming left-wing bias of the sample. This proved to be a long process, partly because it was difficult to identify and recruit people with a right-wing outlook involved in participatory policy-making in the relevant policy areas, and partly because the researcher spent some months on a visiting fellowship in the US, which stymied UK recruitment. The same methods were employed: personal invitations and advertisements but targeted to right-wing individuals and organisations. It was of course impossible to pre-judge the political outlook of public officials given they are required to be publicly politically neutral, making them very difficult to target directly. The most prominent right-wing social policy think-tanks appeared to have little focus on participatory governance. A number of the key informants that I contacted asking for recommendations of people to recruit couldn't name a single person involved in participatory policy-making of a right-wing political persuasion. Accordingly, the definition of key informant was relaxed a little to encompass people *interested in* participation, as opposed to involved in. 17 people were identified for personal invitations, but the response rate was considerably lower than for the first phase with only three respondents, an 18% response rate. Two of these respondents participated in the study, but one did not attend the scheduled interview. Tweets and emails were sent to the official Conservative, Young Conservative and UKIP accounts, asking them to circulate the study. A named person, or the official address at the major right-wing think-tanks (Policy Exchange, Centre for Social Justice, Civitas, Adam Smith Institute, Institute for Economic Affairs) was also approached and asked to promote the study, but these requests were not acknowledged. No-one contacted the researcher during this period claiming to have seen the study advertised, and so no participants were recruited through this method in the second phase of recruitment. The final two participants resulting from this second recruitment phase were surveyed and interviewed in July of 2015.

### 2.33 Data Analysis

The data provided by the participants in this study was subject to three analyses. The Q-method survey data was investigated using a statistical procedure called principal components analysis. The interview data was first explored using Framework Analysis (Ritchie and Lewis 2003), and then further interrogated using techniques from discourse and rhetorical analysis (Billig 1991; Gee 2011; Potter 1996). Each of these approaches is explained in turn below.

Principal components analysis: The aim of the principal components analysis (PCA) was to compare the similarities and differences between each participants' preference, as represented by their Q-sort, and reduce them to a smaller set of shared preferences. PCA is thus in essence a data reduction technique; it *calculates* a descriptive summary of the data through a linear transformation. This distinguishes it from factor analysis techniques that are concerned with *estimating* latent variables (factors) that underlie the observed variables (which in this case would be an individual Q-sort). There is an ongoing debate among Q-methodologists regarding whether to employ PCA or a technique called centroid factor analysis (CFA) that has fallen into disuse outside of Q-method. The preference for CFA over PCA is commonly justified on the grounds that CFA allows the researcher greater latitude to explore theoretical hunches (Brown 1980; McKeown and Thomas 2013; Watts and Stenner 2012), however; this only appears to be the case if one laboriously conducts the factor extraction process by hand, thus can introduce variation in the 'reflecting process' – something that is rare given the advent of modern computing software that runs the process automatically. PCA is disavowed on the grounds that it produces “a single, mathematically best solution” (Watts and Stenner 2012, 99), depriving the researcher of their own judgement in the factor rotation process, but principal components can be rotated in an infinite number of ways, just like centroids. What PCA does specify is a clear criterion for the extraction of components - that components should account for maximal variance – something that CFA lacks and can open it up to criticisms of arbitrariness. Furthermore, CFA has to make some rather heroic assumptions concerning unknowns that are not necessary for PCA, for instance; CFA simply assumes test-retest reliability scores of 0.8, without actually going to the effort of

testing this for each specific application. PCA was therefore selected for this project, as a result of these significant advantages over CFA<sup>12</sup>.

The PCA was carried out using the specialised Q-method software, PQMethod (Schmolck and Anderson 2014). The first step in this analysis is to give each statement in a participants' Q-sort a score based in its placement in the Q-sorting grid. For this study, the five statements in the most agree column were awarded a score of +4, the five statements in the second most agree column were assigned a score of +3 and so on down the scale to the most disagree column, for which the five statements were assigned scores of -4. PQMethod uses these scores to compare the different Q-sorts with one another. The differences in scores for each statement between two Q-sorts are squared and then summed. The ratio of this 'sum of squared differences' to the 'sum of squares',<sup>13</sup> subtracted from one, generates a correlation co-efficient that demonstrates the extent of similarity between the two Q-sorts. This procedure is used to calculate a correlation matrix indicating the similarity of each Q-sort to every other Q-sort, (with a correlation of 1.0 meaning the two Q-sorts are exactly identical, and -1.0 signifying they are exact opposites).

This correlation matrix is the basis from which PCA extracts common variance amongst the participants as principal components (PCs). Each PC captures a portion of common variance, beginning with the largest slice, until all the variance is accounted for. The researcher then has to decide how many PCs to retain and the method of rotating them. There are a variety of tests that Q-methodologists have employed to determine how many factors should be extracted, all based on calculations on the unrotated matrix of PC loadings. These include: whether a PC has two or more significantly loading Q-sorts; Humphrey's rule that PCs should be selected if the cross-product of the two highest loadings are greater than twice the standard error; the Kaiser Guttman criterion, which suggests retaining all PCs with an eigenvalue greater than 1; and the scree test, where eigenvalues are plotted on a line graph, and PCs are retained up to the 'elbow' of the graph, when the line begins to flatten (Brown 1980; Watts and Stenner 2012). Nevertheless, all these tests have their issues, the first two involve some circular logic in that they are based on PC loadings on the unrotated matrix, which alter substantially once

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<sup>12</sup> I'm grateful for email exchanges with Peter Schmolck and Max Held that helped to clarify my reasoning on these points.

<sup>13</sup> The statement scores for the two Q-sorts squared and summed ( $4^2+4^2\dots-4^2+-4^2$ ) then added together, which in this case equals 600. This is equivalent to 2 \* the variance in Q-sort scores, which since the scores are pre-determined by the sorting grid is a constant for the study.

the PCs are rotated. One cannot use the loadings from the rotated PCs since it is necessary to know how many PCs to retain before rotating them. The latter two tests are both borrowed from conventional factor analysis, and are based on the notion that there is one correct solution, a notion that most prominent Q-methodologists reject. In addition, Q textbooks suggest using these tests as a guide, but stress the importance of the researcher's judgements of the substantive interpretations of the PCs as the real test of the solution (Brown 1980; McKeown and Thomas 2013; Watts and Stenner 2012). Since for this study each of the tests suggested a different number of PCs to retain – between two and eight PCs depending on the test - they did not provide much guidance (see Table 2.37).

Table 2.37: Summary of PC selection tests

<b>Test</b>	<b>Suggested no. of PCs to be retained</b>
<b>Humphrey's rule</b>	3
<b>Two significantly loading Q-sorts</b>	5
<b>Kaiser Guttman Criterion</b>	8
<b>Scree test</b>	2

Given the unhelpfulness of the test results, the assessment of how many factors to retain was based primarily on the researcher's judgement of the value of different rotated PC solutions. The initial unrotated solution is just one of an infinite number of potential solutions, and is by no means the most appropriate solution. It is possible to rotate the axes of the principal components based on various criteria. It can be rotated by hand based on the researcher's theoretical presuppositions about the best solution, or rotated according to statistical criteria, such as varimax, equimax and quartimax. The aim of the Q-method component of this project was to clearly model the different participation preferences of the participants as ideal types, so the PCs were varimax rotated in order to achieve a simple structure; that is maximise each participants loading on one PC and minimise their loadings on other PCs. The varimax rotated solutions for two PCs, three PCs, four PCs and five PCs were compared with one another to find the most appropriate solution. This is consistent with Abdi's (2003) recommendation that since the number of PCs selected strongly influences the rotation process, one should try several different solutions in order to assess the robustness of the rotation. The alternate factor solutions were assessed based

on the trade-off between comprehensiveness and parsimony, thus additional complexity (an additional PC) was only accepted if it contributed additional value. This additional value was measured according to the percentage of explanatory variance accounted for by the solution, the size of the participants' PC loadings and their meaningfulness, and the clarity of substantive interpretation of each PC.

The four and five PC solutions were discarded on the basis of diminishing returns. They added small amounts of explanatory variance, but at the cost of diluting the clarity of interpretation of the other three PCs and the meaningfulness of the participants PC loadings. The qualitative interviews meant that there was another source of material on which to judge the similarity of participants' views, and the four and five PC solutions paired people with seemingly very different views on the same PC, thus were considered to be a statistical artefact. The three PC solution was selected because it added to the percentage of explanatory variance accounted for compared to the two PC solution, without diluting the percentage of variance explained by the other two PCs or their clarity of interpretation. Adding a third factor also meant that all participants in the study have a statistically significant loading (5% level) on at least one PC, thus this solution was comprehensive in covering all the participants. The interpretation of the third PC was theoretically meaningful and substantively different from the other two PCs too.

There were however some doubts concerning the third PC. As aforementioned, one of the reasons for running multiple solutions was to check the robustness of the rotation. Varimax rotated centroid factor analyses were also run for two, three and four factor solutions as a supplementary robustness check. The first two PCs were robust across all of these different PC and factor solutions, which always produced two PCs/factors with the same substantive interpretation. This was not the case for the third PC/factor, which was markedly altered depending upon the number of PCs/factors and the type of analysis. Accordingly, there is a much greater likelihood that the third PC is a statistical artefact, thus it should be treated with caution. Promisingly, a more recent, related study on conceptions of accountability in local governance that the researcher has carried out with colleagues at Manchester and Birmingham Universities has found provisional results that suggest there is something meaningful about the scepticism of solidarism represented by the third PC. In summary then, the three PC solution that was finally selected was comprehensive in covering all of the participants in the study, accounting for 45% of the total variance in Q-sorts, and resulted in three PCs that were believed to be substantively meaningful and unlikely to be statistical artefacts.

The substantive interpretations of the PCs presented in Chapter 4 were derived from the PC arrays. The PC array is calculated from the weighted average statement scores of all those who significantly load onto that PC. These z-scores are used to create an ideal Q-sort that matches the distribution of statements to achieve a PC loading of 1.0 for the respective PC. This PC array represents the shared viewpoint captured by the PC. Through analysing the gestalt distribution of statements, which are located in the agree columns and which are in the disagree columns, especially focusing on those statements at the extremes of the distribution, it is possible to describe the content of this shared viewpoint. PQMethod also calculates distinguishing and consensus statements that aid interpretation. Distinguishing statements are those where the differences in statement z-scores between the different PCs are larger than can be expected by chance. Whereas consensus statements are those statements which have no statistically significant differences in z-scores between PCs. These statements enabled the researcher to zero in on the similarities and differences between the respective PCs.

To further assist the interpretation of the PCs, the thematic analysis of the interview data was grouped according to participants' PC loadings. Participants' PC loadings show how closely their actual Q-sort matches the ideal Q-sort for that PC, with a loading of 1.0 signifying an exact match, -1.0 an exact inversion, and 0.0 signifying no correlation. A statistically significant loading is one that demonstrates the correlation between the actual and ideal Q-sort has less than a 5% (or 1%) probability of occurring by chance. Three groups were created, one for each PC, and participants' interview data was included if the participant had a significant loading on the respective PC. The grouped qualitative material was then used both to check the overall thrust of the interpretation and provide deeper insight, for instance; to explore apparent anomalies in the distribution of statements, as well as the different ways participants loading on different PCs had interpreted the same statements.

Thematic analysis: All 33 of the post-Q-sort interviews were transcribed verbatim from the audio recordings and uploaded to the qualitative analysis software Nvivo, along with participant characteristics obtained from the questionnaire, and later, when the PCA was completed, the participants' PC loadings. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) have suggested there are three forms of activity in qualitative thematic analysis, situated at different levels of the analytic hierarchy,

The analytic process requires three forms of activity: **data management** in which the raw data are reviewed, labelled, sorted and synthesised; **descriptive accounts** in which the analyst makes use of the ordered data to identify key dimensions, map the range and diversity of each phenomenon and develop classifications and typologies; and **explanatory accounts** in which the analyst builds explanations about why the data take the forms that are found and presented. (Ritchie and Lewis 2003, 217)

The data management phase was a key part of making sense of what at first felt like an overwhelming and messy set of data. The initial step in this process was to index the data (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Each transcript was read through in its entirety to re-familiarise with the overall sense of the interview, before beginning again and carefully coding the transcript line-by-line, simply based on the topic of the line, for instance; the topic of the line may have been 'participants expertise'. Of course, in real conversations it is common that the speaker weaves together many subjects at the same time, so the same line was often multiply coded and it proved a significant intellectual effort to unpick the multiple subjects of most paragraphs; on average it took between half to a full working day to code an interview in this way.

In many ways the thematic analysis of the interviews in this project is somewhat unusual in that it is taking place in the context of an already completed thematic analysis of documents (Stage 1 of the project) that was used to generate a descriptive-explanatory typology, as well as a Q-method survey that attempted to systematically model this typology and the relationship between its different constituent themes. If the PCA had found quite different results, with PCs that did not fit the existing typology, then the qualitative material would have been a valuable source of inductively generating alternative theoretical types. However, given that the initial evidence of both the Q-sorts and the interviews supported the prior theorising, a more deductive coding approach was employed. A code was generated for each Q-sort statement to capture any direct references to one of the statements in order to facilitate an analysis of participants understanding and interpretation of the statements, as well as why they sorted them as they did. In addition, a top-level code was created for each of the four components of a participation preference, each of which had multiple sub-codes: objectives (22 sub-codes), participants (22), practices (21) and evaluation (22). These sub-codes were based upon the themes of the Q-sort statements, which were of course drawn from the prior thematic analysis of documents, and an 'other' code was also included for material that did not fit the pre-determined codes. The coding process mainly progressed by assigning lines of the

interview transcripts to these codes, however, with sensitivity to potential inductive insights too. Some additional codes were created on-the-hoof to take account of recurring themes across interviews, for example; a ‘relationships’ sub-code was created under the participants code in order to assign text concerning the relationships between participants and officials that was not well-described by the existing sub-codes. Nonetheless, the pre-determined codes described the vast majority of the interview data, and this initial stage of analysis did not suggest that the conceptual schema being applied was inappropriate or in need of substantial alteration.

Once the line-by-line coding of each transcript had been completed, the Framework Analysis function of Nvivo was used to create four ‘framework matrices’ (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). One matrix was created for each top-level code, thus one framework matrix contained all the material pertaining to objectives of participation, and so on. Each row of the matrix represented a participant and each column one of the sub-codes. Each cell therefore contained all the material for a single participant upon a single sub-code. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) advise that the final stage of data management should be to summarise and synthesise the original data. For some sub-codes participants may have only said a few words, but for many sub-codes the material even from a single participant was extensive, so, following this technique, the material within each cell was summarised and synthesised, while retaining the language of and links back to the original data (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). For example, consider the sub-code of participatory practices labelled ‘decision mechanism’, which was a key point of contention between different preferences for participation. Participants’ discussions could run to thousands of words when different fragments of the interview were brought together into a cell (some of this material is presented at length in Chapter 5). Their comments were therefore summarised into short bullet points that tried to encompass their arguments, as in the below example of one participant’s ‘decision mechanism’ cell.

1. Participation involves making sure that the general public are decisions makers, not an arbitrary hierarchy between people who can participate and decision-makers.
2. People who may be decision-makers in one sphere may be participants in another sphere, so it is arbitrary to set up a divide. It is more fluid. And it should be iterative, people will participate more than once, so may have previous experience of decision-making.



3. There needs to be someone who is accountable for the decision and responsible for implementation. They should be involved in the decision on equal footing with others. They shouldn't own the decision as this disenfranchises the participants.

4. You build a consensus of priorities through the process, by getting a shortlist that everyone has a hand in, and work with the accountable person to champion the decisions.

Once these summaries were completed it was possible to look down the columns of the matrix and quickly aggregate all the arguments that the participants had made about the topic of any sub-code. One could also look across the rows for a summary of everything a single participant had said across different sub-codes, as well as easily identify the sub-codes that had not been spoken about at all.

These matrices were then employed to check and provide greater depth to the PCA analysis (as described in Chapter 4). It was possible, for instance, to check the PC solution by looking across a row at the summarised views of a participant to see if they concurred with what would be expected from their PC loading. Looking down the column on the 'decision mechanism' sub-code enabled the identification of all the different reasons that some participants supported public officials retaining decision power, thus provided some explanation for the results of the PCA. Looking down the column on 'participants as experts' helped enrich understanding of the PCs by showing that though the Q-sort statement on this theme (statement S09) was highly ranked for both PC2 and PC1, it appeared to be interpreted in subtly different ways. These framework matrices, when combined with the results of the PCA, were therefore sufficient to provide the material to describe and explain cross-cutting themes. Given the correspondence of the findings from the PCA and thematic analysis, along with the earlier documentary analysis, there was no attempt to go beyond these matrices and organise sub-codes into more formalised explanatory schema, since this would have been an unnecessary recapitulation of the earlier work, and thematic structure is rendered in the principal components.

Discourse/rhetorical analysis: The PCA and thematic analysis were primarily targeted to mapping out the cross-cutting themes and developing ideal types of participation preferences. Through this process of analysis it became apparent that most participants expressed substantial ambivalence and conflict in their preferences. The mode and presentation of previous stages of analysis underplay this intrapersonal ambivalence to focus on interpersonal similarities and differences. Accordingly, an additional phase of

analysis was instigated in order to explore the intrapersonal ambivalence of participants that, rather than breaking down the text into a few lines indicating discreet themes, focused on longer passages and how themes developed and changed as they were spoken.

The preceding PCA and thematic analysis informed the selection of passages to be analysed. The PCA illustrated the core differences between alternative participation preferences. Between PC1 and PC2, this was the distribution of decision power; and for PC3 compared to PC1 and PC2, it was the role of self-interest versus more solidaristic motivations. These topics were selected for further analysis due to their import as core components of the identified participation preferences and core themes of the theoretical typology of modes of participation. Moreover, they provided an interesting test of the depth of ambivalence. Social representations theorists such as Gaskell (2001) have suggested that attitudes are ambivalent at their periphery but not their core, whereas the initial reading of the data for this project implied ambivalence even on these core topics. Once topics for further analysis were selected, it was a simple task to use the Framework matrices to identify possible candidate passages for further analysis. Three extended passages were selected that reflected typical kinds of ambivalence experienced by participants, one for each side of the distribution of the decision power debate, and one to demonstrate ambivalence between ideas of self-interest and solidarism. These passages were then subject to more in-depth analysis and the themes identified were supplemented with additional short quotations.

A combination of discourse and rhetorical analysis inspired the techniques deployed to interrogate these passages. Discourse analysis can mean many things so it is important to be clear how it was employed here. The project is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal and the object of analysis was intrapersonal, so the Foucauldian type of discourse analysis that investigates dominant societal discourses and describes how they alter over time (Foucault 2007) was of course inappropriate. As this phase of analysis was added after transcription, the interviews were not transcribed according to the Jefferson Transcription System that is commonly considered essential by discourse analysts (Potter 1996; van Dijk 1997) and provides a much greater level of specificity about the way things are said than the transcripts available for this project. This is why the analysis was described as deploying discourse analysis inspired techniques rather than as a discourse analysis. It is inspired so in its orientation to what is expressed by the participants. The passages are treated as discursive, as opposed to factual descriptions reflecting a concrete object. Following Billig (1991), they are specifically treated as rhetorical and

argumentative. The analysis therefore focused on what arguments are being presented and how they are made persuasive (Billig 1991; Potter 1996). Gee (2011) details 22 discourse analytic tools, a number of which were used to interrogate these passages, for instance: to ask not just what the speaker is saying, but what they are doing; to ask why the speaker has chosen these ways of representing the phenomenon and not others; to ask how words and grammatical devices are being used to build or lessen the significance of certain things; and to be sensitive the discursive context, the way the argument flows through the passage, how what is said relates to what was said before, and how the speaker attempts to achieve cohesion. In using these techniques the objective was to describe and explain the types of ambivalence that had been observed amongst the participants.

### *2.34 Inferences*

The inferences from Stage 2 of the project are primarily presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Chapter 4 draws on the survey results and interview data to develop a discreet set of participation preferences, and Chapter 5 focuses on the qualitative data in order to explain ambivalence in those preferences. The final chapter of the thesis further expands on the implications of these inferences and draws out some meta-inferences. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) have proposed ideas of inference quality and inference transferability for assessing mixed methods inferences. The former comprises design quality and interpretive rigour and is linked to ideas of internal validity in quantitative research and credibility in qualitative research. The latter is linked to notions of external validity in quantitative research and transferability in qualitative research.

Much of the above has been dedicated to demonstrating the design quality of the research methods - that they follow from the research questions, the rationale for design choices such as sampling, and that each component of the design and analysis contributes to a better understanding of the phenomenon. Sufficient detail to enable the reader to make their conclusions concerning design quality has thus already been presented and will not be repeated here.

One of the reasons previously alluded to for the choice of Q-method with qualitative interviews was the strength of interpretive rigour. The transparent and objective data structure produced through PCA forces the researcher's interpretation to stick closely to the data, thus that inferences are consistent with the data analysis. This increases the

transparency and accountability of interpretation compared with qualitative data alone. The inclusion of the interview element means that unlike survey research, where interpretation of responses is often determined by the researcher *a priori* in the operational definition of an item, Q enables the participant to render their own subjectivity, which is interpreted *a posteriori*. This again helps to ensure a close connection between the data and the inferences. There has also been an attempt to transparently present the data and how the inferences were drawn from it in order to facilitate readers' judgements of whether the inferences are supportable, for instance; by presenting the full PC arrays and the extended interview passages along with their narrative interpretations.

The interpretations of different modes of and preferences for participation were consistent across the different data and analysis types employed in this research which is evidence of their robustness. Combining phased documentary, survey and interview approaches also meant there were in built opportunities for 'member-checking'. Participants had a number of chances through the survey and interview to reject the typology of participation modes. As detailed above, structuring the Q-set of statements according to theory does not produce circularity, but enables a clear assessment of the typology as participants are able to sort statements in ways that contradict the modes of participation. The results, however, mainly support it, as do the assertions of the participants that the Q-method statements, which were built upon the typology, were comprehensive and could accurately represent their viewpoint. Participants were also sent follow-up information in the form of a 1000 word blog written for a general audience, along with the full academic paper (reproduced as Chapter 3 of this thesis), outlining the typology of four modes of participation. This included an invitation to provide feedback to the researcher and responses to date have only been positive. Finally, the inferences are situated within the existing research literature. Though they challenge some current thinking, presentations at appropriate academic conferences and workshops have been well-received and there has been no challenge that the results are unbelievable or inconsistent with the current research evidence. Accordingly, this research satisfies the common dimensions that underpin the notion of interpretive rigour.

It was stated at the beginning of this chapter that the aim of this study was not to make probabilistic statements about the distribution of participation preferences within the population, but to map the range of different understandings of and preferences for participation. The question of inference transferability thus becomes one of whether the range of participation preferences and the associated ambivalences can be generalised to

the study population and other populations. The sample for this study was selected from a population of key informants who had both an interest and experience of participatory governance in social policy in England and Scotland. There is good reason to believe that the empirical findings can be generalised to the larger population of those deeply involved in participatory policy-making. The sample comprises a diverse set of such people, including some very influential actors that are likely to set the tone of the field. The data collection appeared to reach the point of saturation and it was not felt that adding new key informants would have surfaced new viewpoints. Though the sample is biased, particularly with regard to political outlook, it is biased in ways that reflect the biases of this population. Knowing that this population are likely to adopt one of a knowledge transfer or collective decision-making approach, perhaps with some minor additional scepticism or pluralism mixed in, is useful in that these are the people more than any others who are determining the practice of participatory governance.

We may also be interested in whether the empirical findings could be generalised more widely, to the general population of the UK for instance. This is much more debateable. The sample is not representative of the population of the UK. The lack of right-wing participants, as well as the lack of the politically disinterested and those who do not favour participation is problematic in this regard, since there is reason to believe these people may hold qualitatively different views than those sampled. Nonetheless the theoretical work on the four modes of participation does fill in some of the missing detail, so even though the empirical grounds are weak, there is a case to be made for theoretical generalisability. Of course the politically disinterested may make the argument for a unique position of non-participatory governance – that decisions should be left to experts or politicians for example. However, this study was oriented to finding different modes of participation, which is predicated upon the idea that there should be at least minimal participation, so such a position would fall outside the remit of this work. Each of the four modes of participation is located within one of the main strands of political thinking, thus in order to come up with an alternative approach to participation an individual would have to innovate outside of mainstream of political thought. It seems unlikely that a non-interested participant would generate a new approach when the thought-leaders in this field did not. The four modes of participation may be comprehensive regarding the ways of doing participatory decision-making even if they are not comprehensive of the ways of doing decision-making.

There are also empirical and theoretical reasons to think that the range of modes of and preferences for participation may be generalizable to other contexts, for instance other countries or policy contexts. The above argument that the four modes may encompass the main theoretical possibilities applies here too. They are generated out of theories spanning centuries and international borders. In addition, the typology is based upon dimensions that have proved useful for other general theories of related phenomena from approaches to public administration (Hood 1998), to modes of social citizenship (H. Dean 2013) and policy preferences (Gastil et al. 2011). Empirically, the many study participants involved in more than one domain of participatory policy-making did not express a view that participation should be very different in different policy domains. Further work by the researcher, in collaboration with Liz Richardson and Catherine Durose, has found similar results in a new study of democratic innovation in local governance. Together this suggests the inferences may be transferrable to other policy contexts, although this will depend to a large extent on the congruence between contexts. Previous research has shown similarities between procedural preferences in different countries (Bengtsson 2012; Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015). Work has also begun on replicating this study with key informants in the US. Though the results are not yet available for comparison within this thesis, the seamless replication of the Q-method survey with participants in another country is suggestive of the applicability of the concepts underlying the statements to other national contexts.

There are theoretical reasons for believing that the ambivalence associated with different participation preferences may be generalizable more widely as well. The participants in this study are an ideal test case of ambivalence. Zaller and Feldman (1992) note that people exhibit more stability in their responses to survey questions on items that are salient for them and they have thought about. Accordingly, the ambivalence and conflict in preferences expressed by the key informants of this research is likely to be even more pronounced in less informed populations. In summary, though the composition of the sample means that the empirical findings should be interpreted with care when drawing lessons for other populations and other contexts, there are a number of inferences that may resonate in other policy and national contexts.

## 2.4 Ethical Issues

Since a large part of this research involved the survey and interview of human participants a full consideration of the ethical implications of their involvement was necessary. Ethical considerations for this type of research can be broken down into four main areas: “whether there is harm to participants; whether there is a lack of informed consent; whether there is an invasion of privacy; whether deception is involved” (Bryman 2008, 118). This project did not involve any deception – participants were made fully aware of the process by which they would participate, and the researcher’s genuine objectives for their participation both when they were invited to participate and before the Q-sort began. The issue of invasion of privacy was also minimal for this project as the researcher did not have access to any information that participants did not explicitly provide in the research context. Participants were asked questions - for instance, about income and voting behaviour they may have considered private – but it was made clear they did not have to answer any questions they did not want to, both verbally and through a non-response option on the survey. The high non-response to the question of voting intention suggests that participants did feel able to decline to answer questions if they did not want to. The main focus of the research – people’s normative conceptions of participation – was not considered to be a sensitive topic in this regard. A very small number of participants did request that one or two of their statements in the interview not be made public, and in these cases the participants’ wishes have been respected.

The main ethical considerations for this project were in relation to informed consent and harm to participants. As aforementioned, participants were made aware of the objectives of the research and the process of their participation when they were invited to participate and this was then verbally explained before the Q-sorting and interview began. Participants were also given a consent form (see Appendix 4) to sign before the Q-sort began that explained this, along with how the information provided would be used, and stressing that the participant was free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. Since some of the participants were referred to the researcher through a third party, it was also stressed that the participant should feel under no obligation to participate because of their relationship with the third party and their participation would not be discussed with the referring person/organisation.

The potential for harm to participants was also quite minimal for this study. The topic of the Q-sort and interview was not expected to cause the participants any significant

psychological distress. The participants did often experience the process as an intellectual challenge and at times experienced some cognitive dissonance in regard to their views. Nonetheless, most said they found the process interesting and enjoyable, and the willingness of participants to go beyond the initial requirements - by returning to interview when the audio recorder failed, or their Q-sort took longer than expected, filling out additional, non-mandatory information on the online version, and recommending other people to take part – is indicative that the process was not unduly stressful or burdensome for participants.

There was potential for harm in terms of reputational damage for participants, for instance; if a participant's comments were unpalatable to his/her colleagues or superiors. This varied by participant; some were keen to be assured their participation would remain anonymous, while others were happy for their real names to be used. Given this potential for harm, as well as required practices for data protection following the 1998 Data Protection Act, every effort was made to protect participants' anonymity. Participants real names were only collected on the consent forms, which were kept separate from all other data in a locked drawer. Participants were given a reference number that was used for their quantitative data and interview audio files and transcripts, so that in the unlikely event of any of the projects paper or electronic files becoming publicly available they could not be used to identify participants. As Bryman (2008) notes, anonymising qualitative data is more difficult than quantitative data. Participants' comments may reveal their identity through connections to places or particular initiatives. Accordingly, care has been taken to avoid inadvertently revealing a participants identify by removing potentially identifying information from quotes, or not using certain quotations at all where this was not possible. Small details about the participants have also sometimes been changed, (in ways that would not affect the substantive interpretation of the findings) and demographic information has mainly been presented in aggregate, so as not to give enough information about a certain individual that they would be identifiable.

The LSE's ethics procedures were followed and the completed ethics questionnaires are available on request. After completing these forms and following discussion with the two research supervisors of this project, it was decided that self-certification was most appropriate and the forms were not forwarded to the ethics committee.



## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodological approach to this project, the research design choices that were made, and given a detailed account of how the empirical work was conducted. It has made apparent how the upcoming chapters are linked to different aspects of the research design. Chapter 3 is the output of a process of theory building that took place during Stage 1 of the research process. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 focus on the empirical data that was generated through Stage 2 of the research. Chapter 4 possesses a more quantitative bent in demonstrating interpersonal similarities and differences in participation preferences, whilst Chapter 5 concentrates on the qualitative material to investigate intrapersonal ambivalence within such preferences. Chapter 6 is the least tied to research design described herein, thus receives little attention above. Rather than being associated with a discreet part of the research design, it takes the insights and implications of the preceding three chapters to engage in a further stage of theory building. It paints a picture of what participation in complex policy systems could look like if it took account of the heterogeneity of people's participation preferences. First, though, Chapter 3 outlines the new typology of four modes of participation generated out of the documentary analysis and literature review that comprised Stage 1.

## Chapter 3

### Four Modes of Participation in Social Policy Decisions

*Liberals, radicals and authoritarians all favour participation, a tribute to the term's symbolic potency and semantic hollowness.*

Murray Edelman, Political Language

If participation is attractive across the political spectrum, how should we make sense of this? Is the same form of participation attractive to liberals, radicals and authoritarians? Or do they conceive of it quite differently? The multitude of ideological influences that underpin the rise of participation in governance is rarely reflected in the participatory governance literature. Classifications of participatory mechanisms and frameworks for evaluating them have most commonly been theorised from within a participatory democratic or a deliberative democratic tradition. This is apparent, for instance, in Arnstein's influential ladder of participation, for whom "citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power..." (1969, 216). Existing typologies of participation mostly take one of two approaches: either they follow Arnstein's method and assume one particular normative basis then categorise participatory forms along a continuum from most to least legitimate (e.g. Arnstein 1969; White 1996; Pretty 1995); or they categorise by institutional design features without reference to the broader social and political ideology that informs the use of these designs (e.g. Fung 2003; 2006; 2015; Smith 2005; Rowe and Frewer 2005). Those who propose frameworks for evaluation often note the competing imperatives driving participation, but only as a problem standing in the way of the realisation of genuinely democratic designs, thus they do not filter into the proposed evaluation criteria (e.g. Abelson et al. 2003; Papadopoulos and Warin 2007). This chapter outlines a different approach. It treats participation as an essentially contested concept, thus takes seriously the different ideological influences on the ways that participation is constructed.

The majority of the chapter is devoted to proposing a new typology of four modes of participation, which are termed: knowledge transfer, collective decision-making, choice and voice, and arbitration and oversight. These modes consist of a rationale for participation with an associated set of participatory practices, situated within, though not

necessarily bound to, a particular mode of governing. In describing these modes of participation the chapter attempts to unravel the most common ways of constructing participation as a means to influence and/or take policy decisions, connecting these ideas to the broader theories of public administration and social and political theory that have tended to be neglected by current approaches. A systematic typology that makes explicit what are often implicit assumptions when we construct notions of participation can help to clarify our understanding of participatory practices, which frequently aren't solely driven by participatory or deliberative democratic thinking. It provides a useful heuristic that can be deployed to inform participatory design choices, as well as decisions about whether to participate, in order to make them more clear-sighted. However, before outlining the new typology, this chapter will first offer a detailed critique of existing participation typologies.

### 3.1 Current Approaches to Participation Typologies

First published more than forty years ago, Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation has been influential in shaping the way academics and policy-makers think about participation (Cornwall 2008; Tritter and McCallum 2006). Its legacy is still apparent in typologies that similarly rank different mechanisms of participation from best to worst (Pretty 1995; White 1996), as well as in practitioner classifications (IAP2 2014; NHS England 2013; NHS England 2015). Arnstein views participation with an activist's eye, as an insurgency against government power. She proposes a ladder with eight rungs based on the extent of citizen power. 'Citizen control' is the apogee of the eight rungs, and a number of the other forms she identifies are presented with connotations of illegitimacy; the bottom five rungs are classified as 'non-participation' or 'degrees of tokenism' (Arnstein 1969, 217).

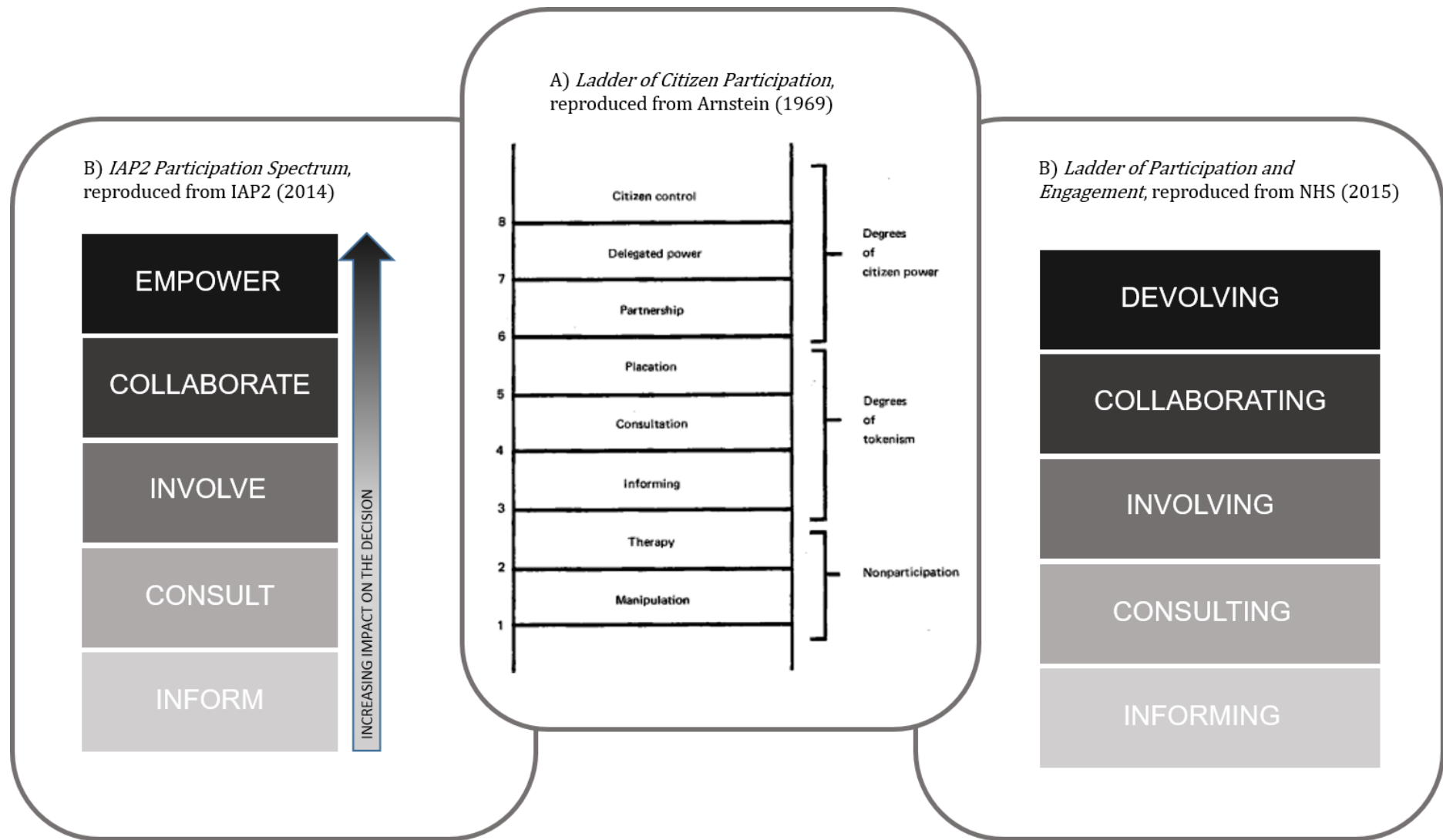
An overt normative basis is a common feature of the 'continuum model' for classifying participatory mechanisms (Bishop and Davis 2002). Pretty's (1995) typology moves through several stages from *manipulative participation* to *self-mobilization*, whilst White's (1996) categories range from *nominal* to *transformative*. As with Arnstein, there is an explicit signal about what is the right and what is the wrong type of participation. However, the use of strongly normative typologies of participation is inherently problematic when participation is subject to competing definitions (Bishop and Davis

2002). A typology normatively skewed towards a single notion of participation is unlikely to do justice to the variety of alternative ways it can be constructed. While it may be tempting to dismiss all those forms of participation that do not fit with one's own preferred practices, this limits the use of the typology and also restricts our understanding of different forms of participation; it makes no genuine attempt to discover why these other forms of participation are legitimate within the theoretical framework in which their advocates operate; it only denigrates them and, as such, is unlikely to meet with widespread acceptance in more than a superficial sense.

The problem of this strong normative basis plays out in the practitioner adaptation of these typologies. Practitioners frequently employ typologies that are both based in Arnstein's ladder (see Figure 3.11), but reject its strong normative implications (e.g. Involve 2005; NHS England 2015; IAP2 2014). They recognise that informing and consultation can be valuable and are not simply 'degrees of tokenism'; that "different levels of participation are appropriate in different circumstances" (Involve 2005, 18), and "activity on every step of the ladder is valuable, although participation becomes more meaningful at the top of the ladder" (NHS England 2015, 14). However, to deny the normative assumptions of Arnstein's ladder does not stop them from underpinning the categories. The ladder makes sense for Arnstein precisely because it is a proposition about what to do; to aim for citizen control and participatory democracy. To deny this implication is not to remove it, but simply conceal how the commitment to participatory democracy informs the ladder. It makes it harder to fathom the omissions, for instance; why there are no forms of adversarial participation. If the typology is viewed as a manifestation of participatory democracy based on solidarity and mutual respect this is understandable. It becomes a significant omission when the intention is to adopt it to a very different agenda, the pragmatic participatory reform of the institutions of liberal democracy.

A lack of recognition of the normative assumptions that underpin these typologies and their implications often has a negative influence on debates in the academic literature in this field. In an extensive critique of Arnstein's ladder, for instance, Tritter and McCallum argue, "it conflates means and ends, implying that user empowerment should be the sole aim" (2006, 162). The substitution of the term *user empowerment* for *citizen control* itself hints that Tritter and McCallum are operating with an alternative conception of participation. More importantly, Arnstein would likely reject their claim outright. For

Figure 3.11: Ladders of participation, then and now



Arnstein, citizen control is an end-in-itself and this is integral to her conception of participation; Tritter and McCallum's rejection of this simply demonstrates they are working with a more instrumental conception than Arnstein. In addition, the continuum approach has had the effect of preventing proper consideration of other approaches to participation. Damgaard and Lewis (2014), for example, use Arnstein's ladder as a framework for producing a taxonomy of participatory accountability. In an effort to retain the form of the ladder they exclude choice and competition from their taxonomy despite noting its growth across multiple policy areas and countries.

An alternative, less overtly normative, method for classifying participatory mechanisms is to generate a typology based on a range of institutional design features, such as the direction of information flow, the participant selection method, and the extent of decision power afforded to participants (e.g. Fung 2003; 2006; 2015; Smith 2005; Rowe and Frewer 2005). Smith (2005) takes the most rudimentary approach by straightforwardly listing different types of democratic innovation and classifying them into six broad categories: electoral innovations, consultation innovations, deliberative innovations, co-governance innovations, direct democracy innovations and e-democracy innovations. He produces an impressive list of 57 different types. Rowe and Frewer (2005) take a more abstracted approach. First they identify three broad classes based on directional flow of information: from sponsor to public, from public to sponsor, and two-way. These are then further divided based on six salient features of their institutional design, such as the participant selection method, into fourteen sub-categories. Fung (2006) employs a similar but more parsimonious approach to create a three dimensional conceptual space he calls a 'democracy cube'. Each side of the cube represents one of three dimensions: the type of participants, the authority and power they wield, and the communication and decision mode. Individual mechanisms of participation are located within the cube based on these three dimensions.

The decoupling from a normative basis for participation of these typologies is a potential benefit in that it is not prescriptive about types of participation and thus is potentially more widely acceptable. Fung's democracy cube is explicitly based upon the notion that there is no canonical form of participation in contemporary governance and that it may be used to advance multiple purposes and values. However, this decoupling also reduces the amount of information provided by the typology. The continuum model implicitly provides us with a description, though only partial, of which institutional forms are compatible with which normative claims, whereas there is no comparable information

within the typologies by institutional design features, as they are somewhat disconnected from the wider debates regarding what constitutes legitimate participation. It could be argued that this approach fails to take participatory ideologies seriously. Fung (2006) for instance frames participation as a means to address deficits in existing institutions, rather than as a programme to remould them. This takes the status quo for granted with participation as a desirable supplement, and would be unlikely to appeal to those such as Arnstein, nor perhaps those who have challenged the existing bureaucratic arrangements from a market perspective.

The institutional design approach to classification also fails to highlight how similar institutional designs may be employed in significantly different fashions when they are differently conceived. This has typified the spread of participatory budgeting around the globe. The original case of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre was instantiated by a radical left party with strong connections to social movements as a means for achieving its aims for social justice and fair resource distribution, and this was designed into the process. This has not been the case in other countries which has affected both the design and outcomes of the participatory budgeting processes (Pateman 2012). The experience of participatory budgeting around the globe has been characterised by its multiplicity, so much so that it has necessitated its own taxonomy (Sintomer, Herzberg, and Röcke 2008; Sintomer et al. 2012). Some have even argued that it is the ambiguity and malleability of the process that has facilitated its diffusion to different contexts (Ganuza and Baiocchi 2012). This adaptation in the process of translation to different contexts has not been confined to participatory budgeting. Comparative studies have shown that the administrative traditions in different countries affect the level and reasons for supporting participation (Huxley et al. 2015), and that mini-publics have often been variously shaped by the different political cultures of national political systems (Dryzek 2010, chap. 8). A typology of modes of participation that connects particular participatory practices to the mode of governing from which they draw their meaning would help address this lacuna.

Bishop and Davis go some way towards a typology of modes of participation, each of which “has a public rationale, and a characteristic set of policy instruments” (2002, 26). They argue *contra* the continuum model on the basis that there is no shared theoretical base for participation, so no single dimension such as citizen control upon which different forms can be ordered. They take an explicitly *ad hoc* approach, identifying five types of participation: consultation, partnership, standing, consumer choice, and control. Such *ad hoc* identification of types raises a number of questions as to the extent the types are

discreet, mutually exclusive, jointly exhaustive and of a similar kind. There are some reasons to doubt whether Bishop and Davis' (2002) typology meets these conditions, for instance; they point to the use of one of their categories (consultation) within another category (consumer choice), suggesting that the categories may not be mutually exclusive or of the same kind. In addition, the fact that there is no shared theoretical basis for participation does not entail that there are no underlying dimensions which can provide some comparative order to illuminate the similarities and differences between the different bases. Bishop and Davis (2002) give little attention to these theoretical bases, thus how their different forms of participation are situated in different normative commitments to alternative modes of governing.

The next section of this chapter outlines a typology that attempts to address these issues with existing participation typologies. This new typology refrains from categorising participation mechanisms according to one normative basis. It instead explores the plurality of modes of participation, connecting particular rationales and sets of participatory practices with particular normative commitments that are associated with broader modes of governing. Rather than an *ad hoc* process of identification, these archetypal modes of participation are ordered along persisting theoretical dimensions that help facilitate comparisons between the modes.

### **3.2 A New Typology of Four Modes of Participation**

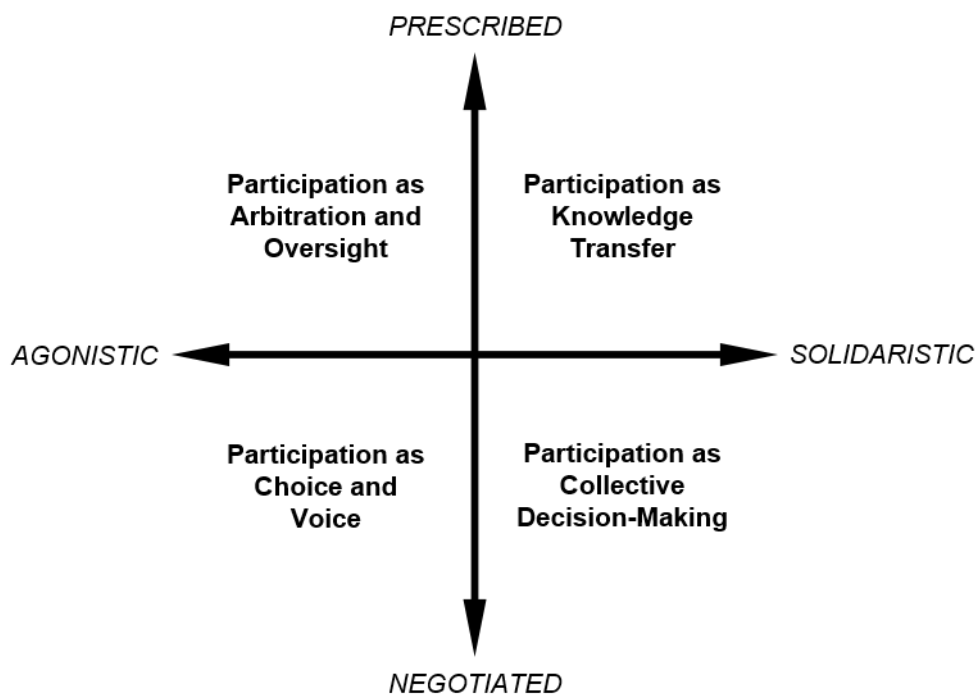
The typology represented in Figure 3.21 posits four archetypal modes of public participation in policy decisions, organised on two, intersecting dimensions: *sociality* and *negotiability*. It draws inspiration from two recent similar typologies, namely; Christopher Hood's (1998) classification of modes of public administration and Hartley Dean's (2013) taxonomy of modes of social citizenship. Accordingly, the dimensions resonate with those of 'grid' and 'group', originally proposed by anthropologist Mary Douglas (1970) in order to categorise traditional societies, and since popularised in political and policy studies primarily by Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky (1990).

The horizontal, *sociality* dimension of the typology concerns the extent to which the participatory space is agonistic or solidaristic. An agonistic participatory space is conflictual with individuals and groups predominantly concerned with promoting and



defending their own interests and values against other participants. In a solidaristic participatory space, on the contrary, participants view themselves as interdependent members of a social collective and participation is oriented towards collective ends and the common good.

Figure 3.21: Typology of four modes of participation



Whether humans are predominantly cooperative or competitive, and thus whether social relations are essentially agonistic or solidaristic has been a point of contestation in political and social theory for hundreds of years. It divides Hobbes from Rousseau and more latterly Foucault from Habermas. Compare, for instance, Habermas' (1996) normative project to root the legitimacy of law in its generation out of a public sphere characterised by relations of mutual understanding free of coercion to Foucault's inversion of Clausewitz's aphorism, "politics is the continuation of war by other means" (2004, 15). It has been at the centre of recent democratic debates. The deliberative democratic critique of liberal democratic theory rejected the idea of democracy as a process of aggregation of individuals' egocentric, pre-political interests (Dryzek 2000; Mansbridge et al. 2010). Deliberative democrats have in turn been criticised for neglecting the role of conflict and self-interest in democracy (Mouffe 2000; Mansbridge et al. 2010; Shapiro 1999). Moreover, sociality has been a prominent concern in recent programmes for market- and

other individual incentive-based reforms of public services and public administration. Proponents have based their proposals on challenging the idea of altruistic public service motivation of officials (Le Grand 2003), whilst critics have retorted that the proposals are likely to create a public sector ‘workforce of cynics’ (Moynihan 2010) and damage welfare norms that underpin support for vulnerable groups (Taylor-Gooby 2008).

“Solidarity versus conflict” has been described as one of the primary tensions of participation (Walker, McQuarrie, and Lee 2015, 14) and the dimension also captures something of Mansbridge’s (1980) distinction between *adversary* and *unitary* democracy, and their associated practices of citizen participation. There is increasing interest, following Mouffe (2000), in agonistic conceptions of democracy. Despite this, the literature that focuses more specifically on the institutional practices of public participation, as detailed above, tends towards a presumption in favour of solidaristic forms and neglects their agonistic counterparts. This is perhaps why market-based mechanisms for empowering the public are rarely portrayed as participatory reforms by either their advocates or critics, despite the critical importance of the participation of citizen-consumers for this theory of public administration. Accordingly, the typology elaborated in this chapter should help to remedy this neglect of agonistic forms of participation.

The vertical, *negotiability* dimension concerns the extent to which the participatory space is prescribed or negotiated. In prescribed participatory spaces questions such as who participates, and about what, are determined outside of the space (perhaps by the commissioning organisation, perhaps by circumstance) and imposed upon the participants, who thus have little scope to determine the conditions of their participation. In negotiated participatory spaces participants are able to negotiate who participates, the intended ends of their participation, and the rules of interaction between participants. This does not mean that they are free from power relations, but in negotiated spaces power relations are predominantly horizontal, between those within the space, whereas in prescribed spaces there are also vertical power relations, between those inside and outside of the space, to take account of.

Once again, a tension between prescription and negotiation has been at the heart of long-standing debates about democracy. A distinguishing feature of debates between republicans and liberals, for example, has been the extent to which rights are the expression of prevailing political will or a higher moral law (Habermas 1996, chap. 6), thus the extent to which negotiated popular sovereignty or prescribed constitutional rights has relative primacy. It also characterises contention over the nature of the representative

relationship; whether representatives are delegates with a prescribed mandate to implement, or trustees with latitude to use their own judgement (Pitkin 1967; Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999a). Similarly, whether public organisations should be constrained by overt rules, standards or targets imposed from above, or free to manage by discretion has been a long-standing point of contention in prescriptions for good public management (Baldwin 1997; Hood 1998). New Labour's use of a centrally-driven targets regime in its approach to public administration in England, for example, provoked much heated debate (Barber 2007; Bevan 2006; Bevan 2009; Gubb 2009). In addition, the extent to which participants can negotiate the conditions of the participatory space, though not synonymous with 'citizen power', resonates with the dimension that underpins the continuum typologies of participation like Arnstein's ladder, and the recurrent questions that surround participatory exercises about who has power to set the agenda, make the final decision, and so on.

Now it has been established that negotiability and sociability are salient features of debates about the practice of public participation in policy decisions, as well as long-standing points of contention in democratic and public administration theory, which are both likely to influence the ways in which participation is more broadly constructed, the chapter will next consider each of the four modes that constitute the typology.

### *3.21 Participation as knowledge transfer*

This exploration of the four modes of participatory decision-processes begins with forms of participation that are prescribed and solidaristic (i.e. the top right quadrant of Figure 3.21): participants have little control over the participatory space but view themselves as interdependent fellows of a unified community with common goals and interests. This accords with what Hood (1998) terms the 'hierarchical way' of doing public management in his grid-group typology of approaches to public administration. Hierarchical forms of organisation may seem a strange place to begin an exegesis of public participation, given public participation is often posited as an alternative to bureaucratic hierarchies (Fung 2004; Le Grand 2008). However, careful examination of the tenets of hierarchical organisation demonstrates how it can, and often does, profitably accommodate public participation.

From Plato's guardians to Weber's bureaucracy, there are a number of common features to hierarchical approaches to government (Weber 1922; Plato, n.d.). The primary feature is of course role stratification – a division between governors and governed – based on the justification that it is in the interests of society as a whole for each individual to carry out the function for which he or she is most suited. To operate effectively this stratification entails a number of conditions: that officials should not use office for the pursuit of their own self-interest or their own personal policy preferences; that the basis of authority is rationality and specialist expertise; and, therefore, officials should be selected by an open and meritocratic process. Though Plato saw democracy as one step from tyranny, an orgy of instant gratification at the expense of wisdom and self-discipline, later theorists such as Weber acknowledge it has an important role as a check on the totalising power of administrative bureaucracy. They thus separate bureaucratic administration from political control. However, Weber is pessimistic about the potential for democracy to realise popular control. The complexity of modern societies renders direct democracy infeasible. This complexity also means that political judgement is itself a form of technical expertise that cannot be accessed by the laity and must be honed by specialists. Judgements based on public opinion can never be more than demagogic, and political leadership is indispensable (Shaw 2008). We emerge with a political-administrative model of policy-making in which it is the role of political leaders to use expert political judgement to ascertain and formulate the general interest of the population and direct the administration towards providing for this general interest. The role of the administration is to bring to bear the requisite specialist expertise and rational judgement to efficiently provide for this general interest. This approximates the 'Westminster model' of government (Gamble 1990), and these ideas pervade quite varied traditions of political thought. They are present in both the Fabian socialism of the Webbs (1920) as well as JS Mill's (1861) epistemic justifications for liberal democracy.

This model of policy-making entails two rationales for public participation in the process, both of which are constructed as knowledge transfer opportunities. The first is that in order to correctly interpret the common will of the population, political leaders will need good information about that population, their needs and values. Accordingly, they may invite the public to participate in processes that capture those needs and values, so we see participation justified on the basis that, "Understanding peoples' needs, preferences and values by talking with them is a way to enhance the effectiveness of decision-making and

service provision” (Involve 2005, 22). The participatory principle is based on pragmatism; participation is to improve outcomes, not necessarily because of a right to participate.

The second rationale is concerned with improving outcomes by ensuring epistemic quality. Epistemic theories of democracy suggests democratic policy-making is the best method for pooling the disparate knowledge required to ensure effective policy decisions (Fuerstein 2008), and participatory governance has often been viewed as a means to improve problem-solving capacity through inclusion (K. Bartels 2013). The public is thus invited to participate where it is seen to possess expertise that can improve the effectiveness of a policy decision, participation “allows government to tap wider sources of information, perspectives and potential solutions, and improves the quality of decisions reached” (Cabinet Office 2002, 5). This also helps to remedy an inherent weakness of stratified political systems in modern societies; the lives of elite decision-makers rarely follow the patterns of those of the 'common man', and so the public is particularly valued for its experiential knowledge of situations that elites rarely encounter, such as poverty. Weber may have based the technical superiority of bureaucracy on the increasing complexity of modern societies, but advocates of participation frequently cite the increasing heterogeneity of society, and a supposedly more educated and less deferential population, as reasons why bureaucratic elites cannot claim a monopoly on expertise (Involve 2005; HM Government 2012). Traditionally, the second rationale would pertain to the domain of policy and the first rationale to politics based on the facts/interests division between the roles of bureaucrats and politicians, though in practice this distinction has become rather blurred (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981).

Unlike the monopoly on specialist expertise, the monopoly on rational judgement remains with political and bureaucratic elites. It is important to stress that these processes are not commissioned in order that the public can directly instruct policy-makers what to do. The public participants are viewed as information units, providing inputs into a process of expert interpretation and decision-making,

Public involvement contributes to evidence based policy-making. But it is only one source of evidence. The advice and decisions of policy makers will involve balancing evidence from a wide range of sources, including existing and new research; economic modelling; regulatory impact assessments; evaluation and scientific, technical and expert advice. (Cabinet Office 2002, 5)

The construction of participation as an opportunity for the public to transfer knowledge to public-spirited, expert decision-makers is likely to be accompanied by particular

institutional practices of participation. Processes are likely to be stratified, with specialist roles reserved for expert decision-makers and facilitators which delineate them from ordinary participants. Still, those involved in the process will be encouraged to see each other as partners, who are all making their own valuable contribution towards a common goal, usually an improved policy outcome, thus bargaining or strategic game playing by participants will be discouraged. In addition, the participatory space is likely to be an invited space in which the public is invited to contribute towards an agenda that is pre-determined by an organisation's policy priorities. Similarly, who is to participate will be decided according to this pre-determined agenda, with the public organisation retaining control over both which participant selection method to use, and then who should be selected. Nonetheless, given that the efficacy of a participation process within this participatory mode is chiefly based on its contribution to improved policy outcomes, the focus is not so much on one particular participatory form, but that the form should be tailored to best attain the desired outcomes.

Governmental consultation processes often take this kind of form. Archetypal examples of the approach would be the experimentation with deliberative research exercises recently conducted by the UK Department for Work and Pensions (Hall and Pettigrew 2007; Hall 2009). Members of the public were invited to attend structured deliberative workshops to discuss priorities for the benefits system or future departmental challenges. Researchers then analysed the deliberations and produced a report that is intended to inform departmental decision-making. Participants' conditions of participation were prescribed for them; they did not set the agenda or decide how deliberations would proceed. Their relationships with the organisers and officials who are supposed to be influenced by the report is also implicitly predicated on the idea that all share a solidaristic concern with making the benefit system better, thus deliberative influence – the unforced force of a good argument, to paraphrase Habermas – will be sufficient for their concerns to have an impact.

### *3.22 Participation as collective decision-making*

The second mode of participation, located in the bottom-right quadrant of Figure 3.21, is that primarily associated with the participatory left. It rejects the role differentiation, particularly the distinction between governed and governors, that

characterised the previous mode in favour of a vision of self-government through collective decision-making, “participation refers to (equal) participation in the making of decisions and 'political equality' refers to equality of power in determining the outcome of decisions” (Pateman 1970, 43). The express notion of *participatory democracy* advocated by Pateman may have originated in the US, out of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, but it has long roots that have found expression in diverse forms throughout history – from Ancient Athenian democracy to the anarchism of Bakunin. Nonetheless, Pateman (1970) is a useful starting point as, drawing on Rousseau, JS Mill and GDH Cole, her theory of participatory democracy weaves together five of the essential principles that have characterised this mode of participation.

The first principle is the direct participation of all in the taking of decisions, based on Rousseau's notion of liberty, that we are free in as far as we are the co-authors of the decisions to which we are subject. The second, a general condition of political equality, is a corollary of the first – we can only be said to be co-authors of decisions if we have equal power to determine them, thus no person should be able to dominate another. Therefore, we are presented with a theory of democratic self-government in which a society of interdependent equals collectively (usually consensually) take decisions to which they are all equally subject. Third is the principle of subsidiarity, that decision-making should take place at the lowest appropriate (usually geographically defined) level and cascade up. The fourth principle is that participation should not be limited to the political. Participatory democracy entails a participatory society in which participation in political, social, civic, and economic decision-making is woven into the fabric of a citizen's everyday life. The final, fifth principle is that participation is, in the broadest sense, educational. It is essential to both the socialisation of citizens and the full realisation of human capacities.

A brief consideration of the position of deliberative democracy within this typology is also necessary, given its influence has arguably superseded participatory democracy, at least in the Academy. Deliberative democracy appears to be overtly solidaristic in nature, given its rejection of deliberation as strategic bargaining between actors with pre-political interests in favour of a conception that emphasises the reflective transformation of preferences, consensus and the common good (Dryzek 2000). It is, however, less clear where deliberative democracy stands on the *negotiability* dimension. Though there seems to be a general presumption that participation should be negotiated, deliberative democrats may show greater commitment to the quality of opinion formation than to the idea of open and direct participation if the two come into conflict (Papadopoulos and Warin 2007). In

addition, Habermas' (1996) influential 'two-track' model of democracy, in which public participation takes place in a free-wheeling public sphere that influences but is separate to institutionalised processes of official decision-making may arguably be considered closer to the knowledge transfer mode outlined above. Other deliberative democrats have also been sceptical of handing formal decision-making powers to ordinary citizens (Dryzek 2010; Parkinson 2006).

Although the return to fashion of participatory democracy in the 1990s and the ascendancy of deliberative democracy are often credited with driving the upsurge in participatory policy-making initiatives, it is quite rare to see their radical egalitarian forms given serious consideration as a practicable component of a theory of public administration. One might expect to find some synergy with theories of *network governance*, which incorporates similar principles of interdependence, autonomy, negotiation and trust (Sørensen and Torfing 2005). However, those theorists of network governance that have considered the role of public participation (Sørensen and Torfing 2005; Bingham, Nabatchi, and O'Leary 2005) give little attention to the direct forms of popular control that sit at the top of Arnstein's ladder and are envisaged by participatory democrats like Pateman. Moreover, Dryzek (2010), though optimistic regarding the potential of a 'deliberative governance', doubts the possibilities for popular control of governance networks given the difficulty of even conceptualising an appropriate public to which a network corresponds. Baccaro and Papadakis (2009) are also sceptical of the possibilities for a 'participatory-deliberative public administration' and contrast this with the Habermasian conception, which they favour.

This lack of fit with theories of public administration is mirrored in the absence of these radical egalitarian modes of public participation in official spheres of policy decision-making, at least in the UK. Although the rhetoric of participatory democracy has become prevalent, the practice of popular control through consensual decision processes is rare even at local level. As noted in Chapter 1, Barnes, Newman and Sullivan (2007) locate pressure for inclusive democracy outside the state and in contradistinction to four 'official' discourses of participation, and previous work by this author has shown that official evaluations of deliberative participation initiatives pay scant regard to principles of deliberative democracy (R. Dean 2012). There is as such some basis to participatory democrats' scepticism regarding the radical intent of participatory governance (Bevir 2006; Pearce 2010).



Outside the UK, participatory democratic prescriptions for decision processes have had greater influence within official institutions. The now famous participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil was inspired by participatory democratic thinking, as were the 30,000 communal councils of Venezuela, and there is a long history of collective, local decision-making through town hall meetings in New England. Within the UK citizen control has been restricted to social movements and civil society. The Glasgow Poverty Truth Commission creates an egalitarian space where those who experience poverty can collaborate on first name terms with public officials, relying on the power of the resultant personal relationships to drive wider policy change. Occupy London also appeared to be heavily influenced by participatory democracy and examining its operating procedures can illuminate the practices typical of this mode of participation.

Like the knowledge transfer mode of participation these processes are solidaristic – interactions between participants are characterised by mutual respect, strategic behaviour based on securing personal preferences is discouraged in favour of public reason-giving, and the resolution of any conflicts proceeds through discussion oriented towards mutual understanding. Unlike the previous mode, the purposes and nature of the initiative are negotiated between the participants, rather than prescribed from outside the participatory space. The agenda is not pre-set, but collectively set by the participants and anyone can contribute a topic for discussion. Participation is open to anyone, rather than participants being selected, and restrictions on participation in order to achieve representativeness or some other criteria would likely be rejected. The rules of appropriate behaviour and the ways in which the business of the participatory space is to be conducted are also collectively determined by the participants, and always open to re-negotiation. As Polletta (2014) notes, though radical egalitarian organisation is often seen as leaderless, a better description is that everyone is seen as a potential leader, and leadership responsibility for particular tasks is continually negotiated between participants. Nonetheless, there is no special elite group of 'decision-makers', and decisions are prosecuted through collective discussion in which each participant can wield an effective veto, thus the aim is to reach group consensus. Whether this approach to collective decision-making can survive institutionalisation on a national scale remains to be seen. The NHS Citizen process to craft a participation architecture for the National Health Service in England, which has some basis in deliberative and participatory democratic thinking, will prove instructive, but it is presently too early to tell whether this initiative will be successful in realising its aim to be

“broad, inclusive and fair” and create an “equal and co-productive relationship between the citizen and the NHS” (Tavistock Institute et al. 2014).

### 3.23 Participation as choice and voice

The third mode of participation is the first of the agonistic types (located in the bottom-left quadrant of Figure 3.21). This mode has an equal disregard for the authority of elites, but would reject the radical egalitarian preoccupation with a collective search for the common good. It is characterised by a utilitarian methodological individualism that holds the general interest is no more or less than the sum total of all the individual interests of persons composing the group (see for instance, Bentham 1789). The enduring popularity of this utilitarian thinking is demonstrated in the pronouncements by both Nicolas Sarkozy and David Cameron (whilst in office) in favour of measuring the effectiveness of government according to *gross national happiness*; viz., by aggregating the individual happiness of each citizen into an overall measure. A concomitant doctrine is the idea of *Homo economicus*: individuals have pre-political interests and values which they are driven to try to protect or secure; they are, on the whole, the best judge of those interests; and, they will respond to incentives. These ideas can be traced back to at least Adam Smith and his oft-cited quote from the *Wealth of Nations* that to secure our dinner we should address ourselves to the self-love of the butcher and baker, not their benevolence (1776, 119). In addition, there is a presumption that the process of each individual pursuing their own interests results in a self-regulating system of spontaneous order that produces social benefits (even Pareto Optimality). Again, this is often (controversially) attributed to Adam Smith and the metaphor of the invisible hand, however; it is explicit in the work of Hayek,

It is, indeed, part of the liberal attitude to assume that, especially in the economic field, the self-regulating forces of the market will somehow bring about the required adjustments to new conditions, although no-one can foretell how they will do this in a particular instance. (Hayek 1960, 346)

These ideas may more commonly be associated with the field of economics, but as Hayek notes, they are also a component of political liberalism and cognate doctrines, and in this section I will outline how they have been constituted as a theory of democracy, a theory of public administration, and how they should be considered as a mode of public participation

in policy-making, given the not inconsiderable irony that they are inherently sceptical of what is usually thought of as the policy process.

Schumpeter's influential *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* is often credited with precipitating the conception of democracy as competition (Mouffe 2000), but Schumpeter's model is overtly elitist in a way that political liberalism would usually reject. A more purely individualistic conception is expressed in Downs' *Economic Theory of Democracy*, which sets out a model in which “parties in democratic politics are analogous to entrepreneurs in a profit-seeking economy” (Downs 1957, 295). Political actors – politicians, parties, governments – are vote-maximisers. They possess their own goals but the realisation of these goals is predicated on political support. Accordingly, political actors are engaged in a continuous competitive struggle with one another to maximise political support, and any decision will be calculated with that end in mind. The voters that they compete for are themselves utility-maximisers. They decide on who to vote for by calculating the *expected utility income* from each of their potential political choices and selecting the one that provides the greatest return (so long as that alternative has a realistic chance of being elected). It is a model of democracy that gives considerable power to individual voters since political actors are beholden to their preferences. It has often been termed aggregative democracy by its critics (Mouffe 2000; Dryzek 2000) as political decisions are calculated by summing the individual preferences of voters.

Public servants retained their air of public-spirited altruism longer than the politicians, but not much longer. From the 1970s the 'knightly' motivations of public servants began to be viewed with increasing scepticism (Dunleavy 1991; Le Grand 2003). Downs (1967) extended his economic theory of democracy to include bureaucracy, with bureaucrats occupying the same place as managers in the theory of the firm, and Niskanen (1971) argued that bureaucrats were motivated by the benefits derived from increasing the size of the budget they controlled (Dunleavy 1991). More recently, the argument has been extended to include public-facing civil servants, such as doctors and teachers, who may additionally engage in unwanted acts of paternalism even when motivated by altruism (Le Grand 2003). As a result, the market-based approach to public administration is increasingly popular. It is a central ingredient of the recipes for entrepreneurial public sector reform espoused by Osborne and Gaebler (1993), who attained guru status with the Clinton administration (Hood 1998), but the most sophisticated exponent of this general approach is arguably Le Grand (2003; 2008), who helped drive New Labour's market-based reforms of the NHS. The kernel of Le Grand's position is competition between

service providers (e.g. hospitals and schools) for the custom of service users (patients and parents), who have the power to choose their provider, will result in greater quality, efficiency and responsiveness of services and greater equity and autonomy for the users of those services, through *the other invisible hand* of state-facilitated quasi-markets.

The primary political/social act according to the economic theory of democracy and the market approach to public administration is thus for individual citizens to express their preferences through choice, whether it is by casting a vote or choosing a service provider. Nozick (1974) even applies this logic of choice to political society in its entirety; arguing that utopia would be a situation in which there exists a multitude of differently constituted communities, where people could choose to live in the community that best suits their preferences. It may be objected that this chapter set out to uncover the variety of different ways the public participates in policy-level decisions, and choosing one's healthcare provider is not participation in a policy-level decision. However, consider the decision process involved in closing a failing school or hospital. Within the knowledge transfer mode, this decision would be made by expert policy elites with appropriate input from the public, perhaps a consultation. Within the collective decision-making mode, the decision would be made through collective discussion and unanimity decision amongst all those affected. Le Grand (2008), however, proposes that these decisions should be depoliticised, enforced by an independent agency that decides by applying specified rules regarding market performance. The individual decisions of citizens in the market thus become a *de facto* process of policy-level decision-making, therefore choice should be regarded as a form of public participation in policy-making. Moreover, it is absolutely essential to the functioning of the market system – if citizens refuse to make choices based on expected utility, then the benefits of the market are never realised – as such, public participation as choice is a doctrinal component of market-based approaches to social policy.

There are a range of secondary mechanisms of participation that are also commonplace within this mode, for instance; complaints procedures, customer satisfaction surveys, and interest group lobbying. It is quite common to find the nomenclature of customer outreach applied to participation, for instance the World Bank has equated citizen voice with listening to their customers and generating “demand-side pressure” (Kim, 2013). As Le Grand (2008) notes, if service providers are trying to attract your custom they have a strong incentive to listen if you choose to voice your wants and needs (as do political parties trying to attract your vote). Therefore, politicians and public service organisations are likely to set up processes that allow you to express your preferences to

them because your preferences are a direct form of market intelligence. Preferences expressed through interest group lobbying should also find a sympathetic ear if meeting them can increase the 'market share' of politicians and public service organisations. Normative opposition to market logic from most proponents of participation means that these forms have rarely received serious consideration as participatory instruments. However, Warren (2011) has called for a reappraisal of exit for its potential to widely distribute empowerments at low cost, and Goodin and Dryzek (2006) have documented the use of mini-publics as a means to shape policy through market testing of ideas.

The conceptualisation of participation as choice and voice differs from the two previous modes of participation outlined in this chapter since it is the first in which participation is oriented towards expressing preferences rather than an attempt to reach a form of mutual understanding or address the common good. Again this construction entails particular forms of participatory practice. Participation mechanisms will tend to facilitate interactions between individual citizens and politicians or public organisations rather than between citizens. The goal of participation is responsiveness: politicians and public organisations should listen to citizens' preferences and do what they say (unless there is a larger group of citizens who express opposing preferences), which is quite different from the knowledge transfer mode, where public participation is just one of a number of inputs that need to be weighed in the decision process. Nonetheless, public voices do not have a decision-making role, such as that in the collective decision-making mode. This is unnecessary since they can exercise their power through making choices in the marketplace. What is similar to the collective decision-making mode is the scope of the public to determine their own agenda for participation. Individual citizens and interest groups decide what preferences they want to express so set the terms of the debate.

### *3.24 Participation as arbitration and oversight*

The final mode of participation, located in the top-left of Figure 3.21, is also based on an agonistic construction of society in which there is continual conflict between individuals and groups to realise their own interests and values. However, this mode is sceptical of the proposition that all this competition leads to spontaneous order and social benefits. For Hobbes, a society left unregulated by a common power will degenerate into civil war as men “make warre upon each other, for their particular interests” (1651, 225).

State compulsion is necessary in order that humans can live peaceably together; otherwise individuals will renege on agreements with each other when it is in their interests to do so, and coordinated action becomes impossible. The notion of the state as a protective check on human vice is a recurring theme in political thought, which still persists today. For Hobbes it takes the form of absolute monarchy, but for Locke (1690) the community can play the role of impartial umpire. Moreover, Dunleavy and O'Leary (1987) argue that much pluralist thinking adopts a similar notion of the *neutral state* in which the state acts as referee between interest groups, working to uphold customary norms and intervening to punish transgressors.

The idea of the neutral state working for the public interest, like the state's claim to a monopoly on expertise, has been attacked by a number of quite different theoretical traditions: Marxists have claimed the state in capitalist society is an instrument of bourgeois power; the New Right has claimed that state actors follow their own private interests (as discussed above); and, even within pluralism, there are competing notions of the state, for instance, as simply a mirror of the balance of interests (Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987). Ideological critique has also been accompanied by the impact of very real failures when public services have caused catastrophic harm to those they are supposed to serve, and moreover, subsequently responded badly to their failures. Dunleavy (1977), for instance, documented how the local authority closed ranks after the partial collapse of a public housing highrise in 1968 killed five residents, privileging their contracts with a construction company over the protests of local residents concerned about safe housing. A more recent example is the scandal of unacceptably high mortality rates and poor patient care at Stafford hospital, where the warnings of patients' relatives were repeatedly ignored as the Board of Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust pushed for foundation trust status (Francis 2013). Just as the challenge to the state's monopoly on expertise opened a potential sphere for public participation, so does the challenge to the state's neutrality and pure public service motivation. It provides two potential rationales for public participation, each oriented towards producing accountability and legitimacy.

If the state cannot be trusted to play the role of the impartial referee, perhaps the public can. The first rationale is thus to substitute for the state as neutral arbiter. This arbiter role can either be systemically institutionalised, or commissioned on an *ad hoc* basis when a public organisation is viewed as too closely aligned to a particular interest group or in possession of its own particular interests that diverge from the public interest. This mode of participation is rarely given much attention in the literature on public

participation in policy-making, but the most widespread example of citizen participation in the business of the state is in a systemically institutionalised arbiter role – as randomly selected members of a jury in a legal trial. Legal juries are, of course, not a form of policy decision-making, and there is no corresponding systemically institutionalised citizen arbitration role in processes of public administration. Nonetheless, they were an inspiration for the policy innovation of citizens' juries that have increasingly been employed as a participatory policy-making mechanism in recent years. Moreover, mini-publics such as citizens' juries and citizens' assemblies have been employed as *ad hoc* citizen arbitration tools, as a means to break through deadlocks in public debates that have become a polarised battle between interest groups (e.g. in cases documented by Parkinson 2004; Beauvais and Warren 2015). Bingham, Nabatchi and O'Leary (2005) have also documented the tendency for the public to take on a quasi-judicial role in new governance processes through their participation in forms of mediation, facilitation, mini-trials and arbitration. Though it is rarely overtly stated as an aim of participation in the grey literature, aspects of the implicit logic of this mode of participation do seem to pervade quite widely, in particular the focus on excluding 'vested interests' from decision power in order to ensure decision legitimacy is a common theme (see, for instance, the Public Administration Select Committee (2013) on *Public Engagement in Policy-Making*). It is often perceived by sceptics as an attempt by public organisations to control the process by excluding more informed and articulate participants, but the quest for impartiality may provide a legitimate rationale for restricting the role of certain groups. The primary objective of participation as arbitration is thus to improve the legitimacy of decisions and render them acceptable to all, by demonstrating that decisions have been subject to a fair process that has not been dominated by of one set of vested interests.

The second rationale is that if public organisations and officials cannot be trusted to carry out their functions in line with the public good, then the public can play the role of impartial critic of state activity and produce accountability through oversight. Public organisations are usually subject to oversight by other government or quasi-government institutions, such as independent regulatory bodies. Processes of citizen redress also enable citizens to directly challenge public institutions through complaints, appeals, tribunals and legal cases when they receive unfair or poor treatment. These processes are extensive, with UK central government processing close to 1.4 million cases received through redress mechanisms each year (Dunleavy et al. 2005). Though redress primarily concerns the treatment of a specific individual it can often impact on policy-level decisions, through

individual cases becoming precedents that force broader policy changes, and through filtering into the work of the relevant oversight bodies such as ombudspersons and public service consumer watchdogs<sup>14</sup>. The original, Scandinavian conception of the ombudsperson, for instance, is modelled on the idea of a people's champion, channelling public demands to point out systemic policy and administration failures (H. Dean 2015, 130). There is thus a case for arguing even these types of oversight through regulatory bodies include a significant element of indirect citizen participation, though the citizen is restricted to the role of complainant.

Examples of full participatory oversight, in which citizens replace professionals in the role of auditor are uncommon in contemporary public administration in the UK, however, they have their historical precedents and advocates. In classical Athens public auditors were selected by lot, and Burnheim's *demarchy* advocates the oversight of government bureaucracies by committees of citizens selected by lot (Hood 1998). Hybrid forms of oversight whereby citizen auditor roles are created as a subsection within a broader process of professional audit have also been introduced into the UK health system by Healthwatch and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Despite the noted potential for participation to realise popular oversight of both underperforming street-level bureaucrats and policy level decisions (Goodin and Dryzek 2006), as well as the widespread view that participation produces accountability, this has mostly been noted as a natural feature of the communicative relationships generated through participatory activities, rather than theorised as a particular mode of participation in itself. An exception is Boswell's (2016) call for a more deliberative bureaucracy, which has a significant focus on making officials more accountable through participatory oversight, proposing 'scrutiny forums' where officials have to justify their interpretation of policy commitments and 'contestatory reviews' that can be instigated by civil society when there is a perceived bias amongst officials.

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<sup>14</sup> There is an important distinction between how redress is formulated from an arbitration and oversight perspective and the types of consumer voice described in the previous section. In a market or quasi-market system the market should ensure that the interests of public institutions and their users are aligned, as entrepreneurial public institutions have the extrinsic market motivation to listen to and address their customers' complaints. Accordingly, voice mechanisms can be relatively toothless – you simply complain to the organisation that has wronged you and the discipline of the market ensures they will put it right. From an arbitration and oversight perspective the relationship is more adversarial. When wronged you must complain to another institution (e.g. the ombudsperson), or institute a formal process of appeal in which the two parties engage as adversaries presenting their cases, precisely because the institution that treated you unfairly is not motivated to remedy the problem and must be compelled to do so.

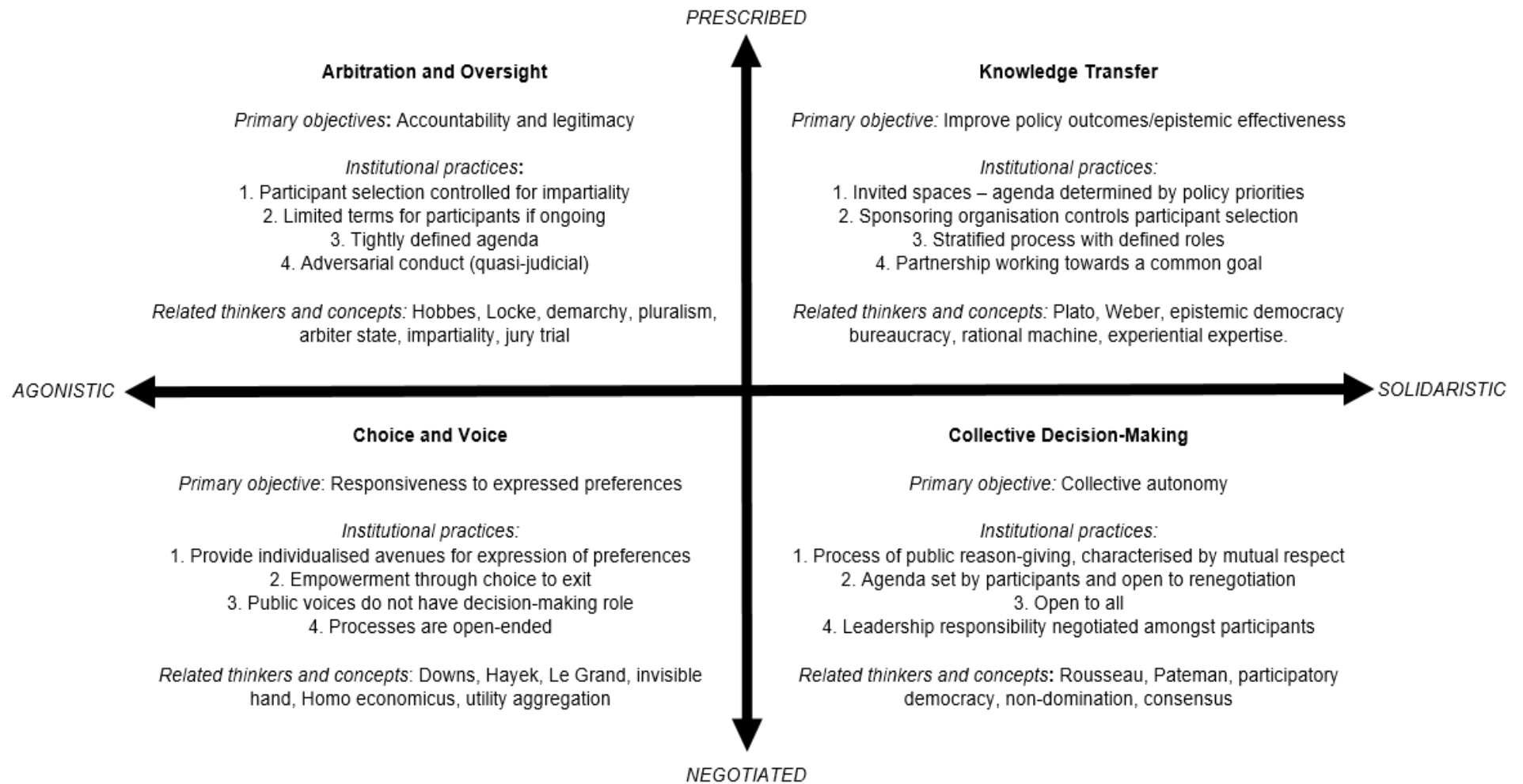


The importance of neutrality for this mode of participation points to some key features of likely participatory practices. Selection of participants will be tightly controlled. Who participates is of crucial importance to the legitimacy of the process and the acceptability of any decisions it reaches, so there will be clear criteria for demonstrating that the selection of participants has not prejudiced the final outcome. Therefore, participants will be selected at random or selected for their impartiality, namely; their lack of any links to the interest groups with a stake in the outcome of the process. If the mechanism is an ongoing process there are also likely to be limited terms for participants, since this reduces incentives for interest groups to try to co-opt participants to their cause. A specific agenda that participants are entrusted with prosecuting will also be determined in advance – this is a necessary pre-requisite for selecting impartial participants and also prevents participants adapting the process to pursue their own interests. Participation is likely to be adversarial. Those with an interest in the decision present their case to the impartial adjudicators, who are expected to interrogate their arguments and come to a balanced decision. Finally, the output of the process will carry considerable weight – it may be a decision that all parties are expected to abide by, or a report to which a public organisation is compelled to respond.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a typology of participation that goes beyond the radicalism and resignation of the most common approach to classifying participation mechanisms, which situates radical democracy as the apogee of participatory practice and any deviation from its principles as illegitimate. It has shown participatory democracy has no monopoly on claims to public participation, and attempted to outline the most common alternative understandings of participation. Public participation is not necessarily in opposition to hierarchy and institutional power. It has a legitimate complementary role in such systems, and this is often how it is constructed by public organisations. Rather than presuming participation should always be solidaristic, the typology includes agonistic modes of participation, which have tended to be neglected in the literature despite rising interest in agonistic conceptions of democracy following Mouffe (2000). This is not to say we should refrain from arguments about what the right forms of participation are, only that these arguments should be directed towards contesting the actual assumptions of

Figure 3.31: Summary of the four modes of participation



alternative modes, rather than simply presuming others are bastardising the ideas of participatory democracy.

The typology presents four modes of participation – as knowledge transfer, collective decision-making, choice and voice, arbitration and oversight – in which clear rationales for participation are linked to historical notions of the functions of the state, and combined with characteristic participatory practices and conceptions of the citizen. It is intended to be a parsimonious heuristic providing useful analytical frames that can illuminate our thinking about participation. It can help us understand conflicts between actors in existing participation initiatives, for instance; why the attempts of public organisations to reduce interest group manipulation of processes are commonly construed as attempts to control the process by those who do not share an agonistic worldview. In addition, it may assist predictions of why some participation initiatives succeed whilst others fail: introducing agonistic procedures into solidaristic institutional cultures may result in alienation, whereas introducing solidaristic processes into agonistic institutional cultures may result in interest group domination and processes being viewed as illegitimate.

The typology is not intended to be a schema for classifying traditions of political thought. After all, it is possible to identify elements of all four quadrants in just the writings of JS Mill. Neither should it be used to rigidly assign different types of participatory mechanisms – e.g. citizens juries – to different participation modes. It can, however, increase our sensitivity to the nuance with which the same or similar mechanisms are used for different ends – citizens' juries, for example, can and have been used for arbitration and for knowledge transfer. Moreover, the four modes are presented as archetypes and cannot capture all the myriad variations in participatory practice. The real world is messier than the neat conceptual distinctions outlined above. The modes should not be viewed as static, self-sufficient, alternative models of participatory governance. They are sets of practices responding to particular problems of governance that are most commonly associated with particular modes of governing. Still, there are affinities as well as differences between the four modes, thus one mode of governing may borrow practices and problem definitions from another. Participatory processes are therefore likely to contain subtle variations on these modes, and even combine elements of different modes into hybrid forms. Take, for instance, the Citizens' Initiative Review that has been appended to referenda in Oregon. It is part soft arbitration in that a group of 20 randomly selected people are asked to hear the arguments from the relevant interested groups for and

against a proposal, then come to a judgement, but the main focus is a variation on knowledge transfer. The judgement statement this group produces is intended to raise the epistemic quality of the final vote by providing high quality, unbiased information to decision-makers, only here the decision-makers are voters as opposed to policy-makers.

Recent moves towards thinking about state structures in terms of multi-level governance, along with the difference democrat critique that there are multiple overlapping publics, not one homogeneous public, create the potential for different modes of participation to interact in a variety of ways to serve multiple functions within complex policy systems. In such instances, the typology can be a useful tool for deconstructing these complex processes to highlight which components are performing which participatory labour and to what end. Chapter 6 addresses this theme in detail. Before this, the next two chapters reflect on the empirical investigation into the procedural preferences of those involved with participatory initiatives. Chapter 4 draws on both the quantitative and qualitative findings to ask whether participation preferences mirror the four modes of participation outlined in this chapter.

## Chapter 4

### Understanding Procedural Preferences for Participatory Policy-Making

*Each man °...carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a “philosopher”, an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or modify it.*

Antonio Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks

The fact that participation is an essentially contested concept forces the actors involved with participatory policymaking initiatives to become everyday philosophers. They must make sense of the diversity in conceptions of participation and what it means for their practice. Which particular conception of participation should they sustain, for instance? Does it need modifying? This chapter is focused on understanding these procedural preferences for participatory policy-making. The idea that citizens have policy preferences – for instance, on the appropriate level of redistribution through taxation, or the right level of immigration – is a familiar one. Procedural preferences concerning the process by which policy decisions are made have been subject to less attention on the basis that citizens are more interested in the outcomes of decisions than how they are arrived at (Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015). There is, nevertheless, a small but recently burgeoning literature demonstrating that, across a variety of countries, citizens’ preferences for democratic decision-making are diverse (Bengtsson 2012; Bengtsson and Christensen 2016; Dryzek and Berejikian 1993; Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001; P. Webb 2013). In UK social policy, analyses of stakeholders’ views have shown a mixture of consumerist, democratic and technocratic rationales underpinning tenant participation in social housing and participation in what were primary care groups in the NHS (Cairncross, Clapham, and Goodlad 1997; Hickman 2006; R. Rowe and Shepherd 2002). The chapter therefore asks whether there is a similar diversity in participation preferences. If so, does this diversity mirror the typology of four modes of participation? Moreover, are there distinct differences between different types of actors, for instance; disagreements between civil servants and activists on the right way to do participation?

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° [and woman...]

Understanding participation preferences is valuable for a number of reasons. It is important for the very reason that the claim of policy initiatives to be participatory is tied to their ability to attract broad-based public support and involvement. Recent research has found that procedural preferences matter for political behaviours and appraisals of political institutions. Whether citizens express a preference for participatory-, representative-, or expert-led decision processes is predictive of their propensity to take up opportunities to participate, as well as the means by which they participate (Bengtsson and Christensen 2016; P. Webb 2013; Neblo 2015). The gap between a person's procedural preferences and their perception of existing procedures is associated with greater dissatisfaction with government and greater inclination to disobey laws (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001). An appreciation of citizen's participation preferences is thus likely to be essential in attracting broad participation, as well as beneficial for the legitimacy of political institutions that open up to participation and the legitimacy of the policies that are arrived at through participatory policy-making.

Understanding participation preferences is also important for comprehending which participatory institutions are adopted, the way they are adapted, and whether they are likely to be successful. Gramsci is not the only philosopher to note that our intellectual activities contribute to sustaining social structures; John Dewey also maintained, "Change men's estimate of the value of existing political agencies and forms, and the latter change more or less" (1926, 6). The notion that political phenomena do not exist distinct from political ideas, the former both shape and are shaped by the latter, has more recently been adopted by the fourth wave of new institutionalism. 'Discursive Institutionalism' has emphasised how agents' background ideational and foreground discursive abilities are central in shaping institutions, how they change and why they persist (Schmidt 2008). Knowledge of participation preferences is thus a prerequisite for a proper analysis of the shape and working of participation in policy organisations.

Discursive Institutionalism outlines three levels at which ideas and discourses influence political phenomena: policy, programmatic and philosophical (Schmidt 2008). Existing surveys of citizens' procedural preferences tend to use a small number of survey items to tap preferences at the philosophical level, focusing on whether citizens believe that in the political system as a whole decisions should be made by the public, by representatives or by experts. This approach in presenting three discreet options at the level of the political system, only one of which is participatory, implies that those who favour participatory decision-making all understand participation in the same way, something that

Chapter 3 gives reasons to doubt. The analyses of stakeholder views are, in contrast, focused more at the policy level, exploring participants' preferences for the use of participation in one specific policy arena. There has been little empirical work focused on procedural preferences at the programmatic level; investigating the broad frames of reference that enable those involved in participatory processes to construct a vision of participation and use it to guide their action.

It is these programmatic level preferences that are the target of this chapter. They are explored through an analysis of the results of the Q-method survey with 34 key informants involved with participatory activities in health, housing, poverty and social exclusion, and social security policy. This in-depth survey method is itself a condensed process of everyday philosophy, presenting participants with difficult choices amongst the competing facets of different conceptions of participation. An individual participant's Q-sort provides a detailed model of their preference for participation in social policy decisions: what they believe are the objectives of participation, the appropriate roles for participants and officials and the relationships between them, their preferred participation practices, and how they think participation should be evaluated. The principal components analysis (PCA) then facilitates a comparison between these individual preferences and maps any common shared preferences among the group. These results are further illuminated by material from the post-sort interviews. The core of this chapter outlines three shared preferences that were identified through the PCA. It first presents them in isolation, then comparatively, highlighting the major similarities and differences between them. The results reveal significant differences between preferences regarding the purposes of participation, how much power should be afforded to the public, and what motivates participation. The three participation preferences are then situated in relation to the four modes of participation from the previous chapter. However, this process is more than a deductive hypothesis test of whether the preferences reflect the four modes of participation. The richness of the data means that the thoughts of the participants are instructive in refining understanding of these modes.





Table 4.11: Breakdown of Q-set statements<sup>15</sup>

<b>Mode of Participation</b>	Objectives	<b>Component of Participation</b>		
		Participants' Roles	Institutional Practices	Evaluation criteria
Knowledge Transfer	2	2	2	2
Collective Decision-Making	2	2	2	2
Choice and Voice	2	2	2	2
Arbitration and Oversight	2	2	2	2
Wildcard	7	3	4	2

#### 4.12 Data analysis process

Once a participant has completed their Q-sort, each statement is then awarded a score based on its position in the grid, from +4 if it is placed in the most agree column, down to -4 for the most disagree column (as per Figure 4.11 above). The relative difference in scores engendered by the different sorting behaviour of the participants is used to create a correlation matrix that shows how similar each participant's Q-sort is to every other participant's. PCA was then employed to identify the common variance amongst participants' Q-sorts, thus whether the Q-sorts are grouped in ways that would indicate the existence of a few shared preferences. Three principal components (PCs) were retained and varimax rotated to produce the solution detailed in Table 4.12<sup>16</sup>. Varimax rotating the solution maximizes each participants' PC loading on one PC and minimizes it on the other two.

Table 4.12: Details of varimax rotated three PC solution

	<b>PC1</b>	<b>PC2</b>	<b>PC3</b>
<b>Variance explained</b>	19%	19%	7%
<b>No. of Loading Q-sorts (sig at 1% level)</b>	16	17	7
<b>Standard Error of z-scores</b>	.14	.13	.24

The loadings of each participant's Q-sort onto each PC is shown in Table 4.13. The magnitude of these loadings demonstrates the association between an individual participant's Q-sort and the shared preference captured by the PC. They run from a

<sup>15</sup> This is a summary of Table 2.31 in Chapter 2, which takes the same form but includes the full text of the statements, rather than just the number of statements.

<sup>16</sup> Full details of how this solution was arrived at can be found in the methods chapter, Section 2.33.

maximum of 1.0, which would demonstrate complete equivalence between the participant's preference as expressed in their Q-sort and the shared preference captured by the PC, to a minimum of -1.0, which would demonstrate an inverse association between an individual's Q-sort and the PC. A loading of 0.0 demonstrates no association.

**Table 4.13: Participants and their Q-sort loadings**

<b>Ref No.</b>	<b>Pseudo-nym<sup>17</sup></b>	<b>Primary Role<sup>18</sup></b>	<b>Policy Area(s)</b>	<b>PC1</b>	<b>PC2</b>	<b>PC3</b>
<b>P01</b>	Mark	Civil Servant	Health, Local Government	0.15	0.70*	-0.04
<b>P02</b>	Rebecca	Activist	Housing	0.21	0.32~	0.10
<b>P03</b>	Richard	Civil Servant	Poverty & Social Exclusion	-0.12	0.58*	0.28~
<b>P04</b>	Flora	Activist	Health, Other	0.51*	0.38*	0.40*
<b>P05</b>	Gary	Civil Servant	Social Security	0.29~	0.50*	0.01
<b>P06</b>	Steven	Civil Society	Health, Local Government, Other	0.15	0.79*	0.03
<b>P07</b>	Celia	Activist	Social Security	0.23	0.64*	-0.08
<b>P08</b>	Jason	Civil Servant	Social Security	-0.25	0.27	0.65*
<b>P09</b>	Maureen	Civil Servant	Poverty & Social Exclusion	0.28~	0.51*	0.27
<b>P10</b>	Lucy	Civil Society	Housing, Local Government, Poverty & Social Exclusion, Other	0.11	0.13	-0.57*
<b>P11</b>	Jim	Civil Society	Health, Housing, Local Government, Poverty & Social Exclusion	0.64*	0.31~	-0.24
<b>P12</b>	Neil	Civil Servant	Health	0.53*	0.25	0.30~
<b>P13</b>	Lauren	Civil Servant	Social Security	0.13	0.69*	0.16
<b>P14</b>	Kate	Civil Society	Health, Housing, Poverty & Social Exclusion	0.73*	0.12	0.02
<b>P15</b>	Jeremy	Activist	Housing	-0.02	0.29~	0.05
<b>P16</b>	Lewis	Civil Society	Health, Housing, Local Government, Poverty & Social Exclusion, Other	0.10	0.17	0.43*
<b>P17</b>	Annette	Civil Servant	Social Security, Other	0.22	0.55*	-0.40*
<b>P18</b>	Nabil	Civil Servant	Health, Local Government, Poverty & Social Exclusion, Other	0.63*	0.17	-0.07
<b>P19</b>	Orla	Civil Servant	Health, Poverty & Social Exclusion	0.75*	0.35~	-0.11

<sup>17</sup> Names and demographic details have been changed to protect participants anonymity

<sup>18</sup> Many participants in this study were involved in participation activities in multiple guises. I have broadly categorized them according to their primary role into civil servants, civil society (people employed in non-government policy organisations) and activists (people who participated voluntarily as individual citizens or in organised campaign groups).

<b>P20</b>	Salma	Civil Servant	Health, Housing, Poverty & Social Exclusion	0.61*	0.46*	0.02
<b>P21</b>	Stella	Activist	Social Security	0.11	0.31~	-0.04
<b>P22</b>	Alexandra	Activist	Health, Other	0.14	0.60*	-0.28~
<b>P23</b>	Anna	Activist	Health, Poverty & Social Exclusion	0.63*	0.37*	-0.08
<b>P24</b>	Michael	Civil Society	Poverty & Social Exclusion, Other	0.55*	-0.31~	0.13
<b>P25</b>	Felicity	Civil Society	Health, Local Government, Other	0.73*	0.34~	-0.25
<b>P26</b>	Carly	Activist	Health, Poverty & Social Exclusion, Other	0.47*	-0.13	0.52*
<b>P27</b>	Gabriella	Activist	Housing, Poverty & Social Exclusion	0.43*	-0.03	0.25
<b>P28</b>	Sarah	Activist	Health, Local Government, Other	0.73*	0.19	-0.09
<b>P29</b>	Janeane	Civil Servant	Health	0.20	0.44*	0.18
<b>P30</b>	Salim	Civil Society	Social Security, Other	-0.04	0.56*	0.42*
<b>P31</b>	Robin	Activist	Health, Social Security	0.63*	0.11	-0.05
<b>P32</b>	Terry	Civil Society	Housing, Social Security	0.50*	0.58*	-0.06
<b>P33</b>	Peter	Civil Society	Local Government, Other	0.34~	0.52*	-0.29~
<b>P34</b>	Elizabeth	Civil Society	Health, Housing, Local Government, Poverty & Social Exclusion, Other	0.39*	0.55*	0.10

Note: \* = statistically significant at the 1% level, ~ = statistically significant at the 5% level

The next step is to interpret the substantive meaning of the three PCs. In order to do this a ‘PC array’ was calculated for each of the three PCs. The arrays are a composite Q-sort calculated from a weighted average of ‘flagged’ Q-sorts, which are those Q-sorts with their highest statistically significant loading (1% level) on the respective PC. This process computes a z-score for each statement based upon the score of flagged Q-sorts weighted by the factor loading of that sort. The z-scores are then rank ordered in the form of the original Q-sorting grid to create a synthetic, composite Q-sort, providing a representation of the shared preference of the participants that can be interpreted by the researcher. Every statement thus has a Z-score and Q-score for each of the three factor arrays. By interpreting an array we can illustrate what the participants loading on this PC hold in common. Comparing the different arrays illustrates how the shared understandings represented by each PC differ from the others.

Q-methodologists interpretations of these arrays often focus on: ‘characterising statements’ – those at the extremes of the PC array; ‘distinguishing statements’ – those that have statistically significant unique placings for a PC; and ‘consensus statements’ – those

where there is no statistically significant difference between PCs. In order to illustrate the three PCs identified by this research, a full representation of the PC array in the form it would appear as a Q-sort is provided for each. Each cell of the sorting grid contains: the statement number, which I use to refer to the statements throughout; the theme the statement pertains to, for example, the objectives of participation; and a short summary of the content of the statement<sup>19</sup>. This is accompanied by a short narrative interpretation of the PC by the researcher, focusing on the characterising statements for the PCs. The analysis then progresses to highlighting the differences and similarities between the PCs, making use of the consensus and distinguishing statements.

## **4.2 Introducing the Three Shared Participation Preferences**

### *4.2.1 Preference 1 (PC1)*

The shared participation preference represented by the array for PC1 is one in which public-spirited and well-informed citizens engage in open processes of collective decision-making and self-government (Statements: S42, S09, S32, S37). It is a solidaristic process oriented towards finding the common good, in which diverse publics should be brought together in a participatory space that promotes mutual respect (S11, S22 S17). Power is an important theme. Participation should be a way for the marginalised to challenge their exclusion (S12). Moreover, policy-makers should not be able to control the agenda setting, decisions, and evaluation process (S4, S43, S35, S8); participation should transfer decision power from bureaucrats to citizens (S20). However, this is not so that citizens can pressurise and battle with self-interested authorities but in order that the two can work together as equal partners (S3, S6, S45). Participation is valued as a means to improve policy outcomes, but it is more important that participation creates a fair decision process that realises people's right to participate in decisions that affect them (S40, S7, S34). The key criterion for measuring its success is whether people feel they have any influence over these decisions (S46), and the extent of control that participants wield in the process (S14). The individualistic approach to participation is rejected. Participation is not simply about promoting and defending one's own interests and values (S15, S33), nor

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<sup>19</sup> A list of the full statements, along with their z-scores and q-sort scores, is provided at the end of this chapter for reference (see Table 4.51).

Figure 4.21: PC1 array

<b>+4</b> (Most Disagree)	<b>-3</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+4</b> (Most Agree)
[27   Objectives] Empower through choice	[06   Objectives] Pressurise, hold to account powerful	[01   Objectives] Develop participants' skills, confidence	[13   Objectives] Access wider information / solutions	[26   Objectives] Self-reliant communities	[40   Objectives] Realise right to participation	[07   Objectives] Achieve process legitimacy	[42   Participants] Social motivations for participation	[12   Objectives] Challenge political / social exclusion
[33   Evaluation] Resolution of conflicts btw. interests	[05   Practices] Individualised channels to decision-makers	[43   Objectives] Give public voice to influence decision-makers	[38   Evaluation] Criteria flexible, tailored to purpose	[19   Evaluation] More responsive policies	[25   Evaluation] Decision legitimacy	[34   Objectives] Transparency, accountability & legitimacy	[46   Evaluation] Participant's feelings of influence	[09   Participants] The public as experts
[10   Objectives] Competition to meet public needs	[03   Participants] Battle between public and institutions	[41   Objectives] Resolve conflict btw. competing interests	[18   Participants] Public reasoning	[29   Participants] Public as overseers / adjudicators	[48   Evaluation] Open exchange / Greater mutual understanding	[28   Practices] Form tailored to suit situation	[17   Practices] Equality and mutual respect	[45   Participants] Public & institutions as equal partners
[35   Practices] Officials retain decision power	[15   Practices] Promotion and defence of one's interest & values	[30   Participants] Selected for size of contribution to policy outcomes	23   Practices Consensus decision-making	[44   Evaluation] Representativeness of participants	[24   Practices] Adjudication of stakeholder claims	[14   Evaluation] Participant control of process	[32   Practices] Open, inclusive participant selection	[37   Objectives] Collective decision-making / self-govt.
[8   Evaluation] Sponsor/ commissioner satisfaction	[47   Participants] Public as choosers	[04   Practices] Clearly defined participatory space	[39   Practices] Informal spaces superior to invited spaces	[02   Practices] Active management of the process	[31   Participants] Institutions / officials as enablers	[11   Practices] Oriented towards the common good	[20   Objectives] Transfer power from elites to public	[22   Participants] Multiple 'publics', not one 'public'
			[21   Evaluation] Participant satisfaction	[36   Objectives] Improve outcomes or its failed	[16   Practices] Independence of process from institutions			

resolving conflicts between competing interests (S33, S41). Similarly, collective processes of decision-making are preferred to avenues for individuals to voice preferences to decision-makers (S5) or choose between policy options (S47, S27).

#### *4.22 Preference 2 (PC2)*

The participation preference rendered through PC2, also rejects the individualistic approach to participation (S05, S27, S15) in favour of a vision in which public-spirited citizens engage in an effort to find the common good (S11, S42), characterised by mutual respect and greater mutual understanding (S17, S48). Similarly, participation is viewed not as a battle or negotiation between the state and citizens (S16, S06, S03), but as a collaborative partnership (S31, S45). However, the notion of participation as collective decision-making and self-government is firmly rejected (S37). Participation is primarily a process in which citizens use their experiential expertise (S09) to help policy-makers access wider sources of information and improve policy decisions (S13), and the key criterion for assessing whether it has been successful is to ask whether the resultant policies are more responsive to public needs and values (S19). Participation is also important in demonstrating that decision processes are fair and perceived to be legitimate (S34, S07), and the public should feel they can influence the policies that matter to them (S46, S43). Nonetheless, influence is not analogous to decision power; policy-makers should listen to the public, but also need to exercise judgement in deciding what should be taken account of in any final decision (S43). When designing participatory initiatives it is important have a clear question and make participants aware of the scope of the initiative and its limits with regard to policy impact (S04), but there is no right way to do participation and it is best to tailor any process to what is most appropriate to the policy issue under consideration (S11).

Figure 4.22: PC2 array

<b>+4</b> (Most Disagree)	<b>-3</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+4</b> (Most Agree)
[27   Objectives] Empower though choice	[8   Evaluation] Sponsor/ commissioner satisfaction	[15   Practices] Promotion and defence of one's interest & values	[24   Practices] Adjudication of stakeholder claims	[20   Objectives] Transfer power from elites to public	31   Participants Institutions / officials as enablers	[07   Objectives] Achieve process legitimacy	[46   Evaluation] Participant's feelings of influence	[13   Objectives] Access wider information / solutions
[18   Participants] Public reasoning	[33   Evaluation] Resolution of conflicts btw. interests	[30   Participants] Selected for size of contribution to policy outcomes	[23   Practices] Consensus decision-making	[32   Practices] Open, inclusive participant selection	[45   Participants] Public & institutions as equal partners	[12   Objectives] Challenge political / social exclusion	[34   Objectives] Transparency, accountability & legitimacy	[28   Practices] Form tailored to suit situation
[05   Practices] Individualised channels to decision-makers	[06   Objectives] Pressurise, hold to account powerful	[37   Objectives] Collective decision-making / self-govt.	[41   Objectives] Resolve conflict btw. competing interests	[40   Objectives] Realise right to participation	[42   Participants] Social motivations for participation	[48   Evaluation] Open exchange / Greater mutual understanding	[11   Practices] Oriented towards the common good	[09   Participants] The public as experts
[21   Evaluation] Participant satisfaction	[10   Objectives] Competition to meet public needs.	[26   Objectives] Self-reliant communities	[47   Participants] Public as choosers	[35   Practices] Officials retain decision power	[36   Objectives] Improve outcomes or its failed	[22   Participants] Multiple 'publics', not one 'public'	[04   Practices] Clearly defined participatory space	[17   Practices] Equality and mutual respect
[16   Practices] Independence of process from institutions	[03   Participants] Battle between public and institutions	[39   Practices] Informal spaces superior to invited spaces	[14   Evaluation] Participant control of process	[25   Evaluation] Decision legitimacy	[29   Participants] Public as overseers /adjudicators	[38   Evaluation] Criteria flexible, tailored to purpose	[43   Objectives] Give public voice to influence decision-makers	[19   Evaluation] More responsive policies
			[01   Objectives] Develop participants' skills, confidence	[44   Evaluation] Representativeness of participants	[02   Practices] Active management of the process			

#### *4.23 Preference 3 (PC3)*

The third and final shared participation preference rejects the idea that people are motivated to participate because of bonds with others and shared social goals (S42). They are motivated to participate because they believe they have something to lose or gain, so participation should enable them to defend their interests and values (S15). There is no one general interest. Participation is about bringing together a range of different publics all with their own interests and values (S22). The purpose of this is not to have an open and honest exchange of ideas that results in greater mutual understanding (S48), nor to use the participation itself to resolve the competing interests (S41). It is about giving all relevant interests a voice that can influence the policy-makers that take decisions (S43). There is qualified support for individualised mechanisms of participation such as choice to empower individuals (S27, S47, S05). In evaluating participation then, it is more important that that all interests have been genuinely represented (S44) than that participants have had control over the process (S14), though it is important to be flexible regarding evaluation criteria, which should be tailored to the purpose of the process (S38). Participation processes should be open to all, with extra resources focused on encouraging disadvantaged groups to participate (S32), and it is important that government and public service organisations work closely with existing community organisations rather than setting up or imposing new participatory structures (S39). Nonetheless, there needs to be clear definition of the scope of the agenda and what is expected of participants (S38).



Figure 4.23: PC3 array

<b>+4</b> (Most Disagree)	<b>-3</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+4</b> (Most Agree)
[07   Objectives] Achieve process legitimacy	[41   Objectives] Resolve conflict btw. competing interests	[06   Objectives] Pressurise, hold to account powerful	[02   Practices] Active management of the process	[28   Practices] Form tailored to suit situation	[13   Objectives] Access wider information / solutions	[09   Participants] The public as experts	[39   Practices] Informal spaces superior to invited spaces	[22   Participants] Multiple 'publics', not one 'public'
[25   Evaluation] Decision legitimacy	[8   Evaluation] Sponsor/ commissioner satisfaction	[20   Objectives] Transfer power from elites to public	[23   Practices] Consensus decision-making	[17   Practices] Equality and mutual respect	[47   Participants] Public as choosers	[34   Objectives] Transparency, accountability & legitimacy	[38   Evaluation] Criteria flexible, tailored to purpose	[30   Participants] Selected for size of contribution to policy outcomes
[48   Evaluation] Open exchange / Greater mutual understanding	[03   Participants] Battle between public and institutions	[36   Objectives] Improve outcomes or its failed	[21   Evaluation] Participant satisfaction	[12   Objectives] Challenge political / social exclusion	[05   Practices] Individualised channels to decision-makers	31   Participants Institutions / officials as enablers	[32   Practices] Open, inclusive participant selection	[44   Evaluation] Representativeness of participants
[42   Participants] Social motivations for participation	[29   Participants] Public as overseers /adjudicators	[33   Evaluation] Resolution of conflicts btw. interests	[37   Objectives] Collective decision-making / self-govt.	[10   Objectives] Competition to meet public needs.	[18   Participants] Public reasoning	[16   Practices] Independence of process from institutions	[15   Practices] Promotion and defence of one's interest & values	[43   Objectives] Give public voice to influence decision-makers
[14   Evaluation] Participant control of process	[19   Evaluation] More responsive policies	[46   Evaluation] Participant's feelings of influence	[24   Practices] Adjudication of stakeholder claims	[35   Practices] Officials retain decision power	[45   Participants] Public & institutions as equal partners	[27   Objectives] Empower through choice	[40   Objectives] Realise right to participation	[04   Practices] Clearly defined participatory space
			[26   Objectives] Self-reliant communities	[01   Objectives] Develop participants' skills, confidence	[11   Practices] Oriented towards the common good			

### 4.3 Comparing the Three Preferences

In presenting the three participation preferences above each was taken in isolation. This section compares the three preferences with one another to further illuminate their interpretation. It begins by comparing Preference 1 with Preference 2, then compares Preference 3 with the other two simultaneously.

#### 4.3.1 Comparing Preference 1 and Preference 2

Preference 1 and Preference 2 both present a direct challenge to the view of participation encapsulated by the other. Table 4.31 provides a descending list of statements with the greatest difference between z-scores for the arrays for PC1 and PC2. Statements at the top of the table are more favoured by Preference 1 than Preference 2, and vice versa at the bottom of the table. It is apparent that S37, at the top of the table, and S13, at the bottom of the table, both capture a key idea for one of the preferences that is rejected by the other preference. The notion that participation is about realising collective self-government through collective discussion and decision-making, which animates Preference 1, is rejected by Preference 2. Likewise, the idea that participation is about public officials accessing wider sources of information in order to improve their policy decisions, a key objective for Preference 2, is rejected by Preference 1. These statistical results appear to capture genuine differences in opinion that were also manifest in the qualitative interviews:

I don't necessarily think that public participation in the sense of getting people to form self-governing communities is very realistic, I think it sounds quite utopian... But talking about going out and consulting people on, you know, very definite things that matter to them now, I think that's really valuable. So I think that would be the sort of public participation I quite like. (P05: Gary, Civil Servant)

It's not giving about giving a voice to influence decisions. It's bigger than that. And it's not about them [policy-makers] then using it to make their decisions. It has to be about taking the control off of the decisions. (P28: Sarah, Activist)

Table 4.31: Comparison of selected Q-sort statement scores, PC1 and PC2

No.	Statement	PC1	PC2	$zPC1 - zPC2$
37	The aim of participation is to enable citizens to take the decisions that affect their lives through collective discussion and decision-making. It should be about collective self-government.	4	-2	2.53
14	Participation should be evaluated based on how much control the participants have over the process, for instance; have the participants set the agenda, and how much control do they have over the final decision?	2	-1	1.55
45	Public participation in the policy process should create a new relationship between public institutions and citizens in which both are equal partners co-creating policy.	4	1	1.14
32	Participation initiatives should be open to all those who wish to participate. Participants should not be specially selected, though extra resources may need to be focused on encouraging disadvantaged groups to participate.	3	0	0.99
20	The aim of participation should be to transfer decision power from elites in bureaucracies and public service organisations to the public, so the public can exercise some control over these institutions.	3	0	0.87
19	To judge the success of public participation we need to look at the resultant policies and services and ask are they more responsive to public needs and public values.	0	4	-1.33
43	The aim of participation should be to give the public a voice that can influence decisions. Policy-makers need to listen, but must then exercise judgement in deciding what should be incorporated into the final decision.	-2	3	-1.62
4	Public participation initiatives should have a clear question that is being asked of participants. Participants need to be informed of what is in and out of the scope of the discussion, what is expected of them as participants, and what the limits of the process are with regard to its impacts on policy.	-2	3	-2.01
13	The objective of public participation is to improve policy decisions by ensuring that decision-makers can access wider sources of information, perspectives and potential solutions.	-1	4	-2.02

Note: All differences are statistically significant at the 1% level

It is apparent from Table 4.31 that many of the most prominent differences between the two preferences relate to the control and power that participants should wield over the process, particularly the decision-making aspect. Whilst Preference 1 views participation as a means to transfer power (S14, S20), Preference 2 is in favour of public officials retaining decision power (S43). Preference 2 is in favour of a tightly defined process with a

specified agenda (S04), whereas Preference 1 opts for open processes in which there is participant control over the agenda (S14, S32). In contrast, both preferences are united in their support for solidaristic statements. Statements about mutual understanding (S48), mutual respect (S17), social motivations (S42) and the common good (S11) are all ranked highly within the PC arrays for both preferences. They also show a similar level of agreement in disavowing statements that express individualistic (S15, S05) or agonistic (S33, S03, S06) sentiment, which receive strong negative rankings for both preferences<sup>20</sup>.

Through analysis of the qualitative interview data it became apparent that some of the statements on which there was, from the researcher's perspective, surprising consensus between the two preferences were interpreted in different ways by participants loading on the different preferences, thus further emphasised the differences between Preference 1 and Preference 2. It was surprising to find for instance that S48 on open and honest exchange and mutual understanding was the second highest ranked evaluation criteria for Preference 2. This statement was drafted to express a deliberative democratic idea and was envisaged by the researcher as being oriented towards mutual understanding between different groups among the public. However, the participants associated with Preference 2 often interpreted this in light of public distrust of policy-makers. They judged that it was important for participation to facilitate an open and honest exchange between policy-makers and the public, thus emphasising the dominance of the public-policy-maker relationship for this participation preference.

The idea that the public should be valued for the expertise it can bring to policy decisions (S09) was ranked in the most agree column for both preferences. It is hardly surprising for Preference 2, which views participation as a process whereby decision-makers access wider sources of information from the public, that the notion that the public has some useful expertise to contribute is important. It is more unexpected that this statement was so important to Preference 1. Nonetheless, a number of the participants loading on Preference 1 put an additional empowerment twist on the idea of the public as experts. Recognising that someone has something important to contribute to a decision was viewed as an important component in empowering them, especially with regard to the socially excluded, who have been conceived of, historically, as passive recipients of policy with little to contribute to its formulation:

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<sup>20</sup> The reader wishing to cross-reference similarities in statement scores can do so using Table 4.51 at the end of the chapter

In terms of that person, who then may have responsibility for tackling in-work poverty within his organisation or is being invited as an expert to talk about that, saying, 'Actually, the real expert is this person [experiencing poverty]. I want you to hear his story first and foremost.' There is a transfer of power going on. It's not an individualistic transfer of power, but I think it is a transfer of power. (P24: Michael, Civil Society)

Once again, therefore, an apparent similarity on closer inspection reinforces the difference in Preference 1's preoccupation with rebalancing power relationships compared to Preference 2's focus on improving outcomes by obtaining relevant lay expertise.

#### *4.32 Comparing Preference 3*

Participants' PC3 loadings appear to show that Preference 3 is complex and draws together two views with a common element. Furthermore, both of these two views look to be associated with the other PCs, which also complicates the interpretation. The factor loadings demonstrate that those with a strong positive loading on PC3 mostly have quite a strong positive loading on one of the other PCs (see Table 4.13), yet for some participants (Flora and Carly) it is PC1 and for others (Jason and Salim) it is PC2. These relationships with the other PCs are reinforced by the qualitative interviews, and help to demonstrate the two viewpoints combined within PC3. Flora and Carly might be described as disillusioned idealists. They believe in a more equal and participatory society, but are sceptical of the motivations of policy-makers and the public, along with the possibility of participation to overturn entrenched power relationships.

So you can make patient participation in the NHS as good as you want, but everybody is still fighting for scarce resources, and every time you win a bit more money for young people's mental health, or actually wheelchair services which is a sort of orphan, a poor area, you're taking away from somebody else. Well that, nobody wants to do that. But that's the status quo and how do you get round that, because actually the people who make the decisions about that are very very powerful with huge economic interests, Can make sure their friends don't go to jail, for phone tapping, I mean, you know, you've just got such a huge, actually it's not huge, it's a small class of people, but with huge resources, huge finances, huge stakes in how it is, you know, and you can't pin the tiger. (P04: Flora, Activist)

The view was particularly characterised by a strong distrust of policy-makers:

If there was, "Right, go in this room and talk to politicians about this." You wouldn't trust them... people just won't go in. Because they'll think,

“Well why should we go in and say this, because they're not going to listen to us or take us seriously anyway”. (P26: Carly, Activist)

Jason and Salim do not share this distrust of public officials and politicians.

Summing up his position towards the end of the interview, Jason mused,

I guess there is a kind of, there's a degree to which I've emphasized wanting participation to be about getting sources of information from people who are most affected by services, into the heads of decision-makers, but leave the decision-makers to make the decision, not looking to the citizens to do it. (P08: Jason, Civil Servant).

This is a clear statement of the kind of reasoning embodied in Preference 2. However, there is also an element of pluralist thought underlying Jason and Salim's preference for public officials to make decisions. The state is viewed as neutral arbiter between conflicting interests:

That is the function that one wants the experts in local authorities and central government to fulfil, is to compare the interests. (P08: Jason, Civil Servant)

I guess what I'm saying is, there will always be people who are shouting for their own interests... I mean, I think I've been relatively consistent in saying basically, everyone should have a voice. But the problem is that you need to be able to easily discount those voices in public participation. (P30: Salim, Civil Society)

The salience of pluralist thinking to Preference 3 is also reinforced by the strong negative loading of Lucy, who expressed explicitly anti-pluralist views, rejecting one statement as “pluralist nonsense” and later commenting “I just think that pluralist model is slightly broken” (P10: Lucy, Civil Society).

Given this complexity, comparing the differences between Preference 3 and the other two preferences is particularly valuable in highlighting the common element that underpins it. Table 4.32 shows the biggest differences between the preferences. Again it descends in order from statements at the top which are favoured by Preference 3 but not the other two, down to statements that are favoured by Preference 1 and Preference 2, but rejected by Preference 3. They demonstrate that Preference 3 is much more sceptical about the solidaristic nature of participation. It inverts the ratings of the other two preferences regarding people's motivation to participate. People are motivated to participate because they feel they have something to lose or gain (S15), not because of shared social goals and bonds with others (S42). That participation should aim to achieve greater mutual understanding (S48) is rejected, and ideas of equality and mutual respect are of little

importance (S17). Individualised avenues of participation for citizens and groups to represent their interests and values to policy-makers are more acceptable than for the other two preferences (S05, S15), and whilst there is not strong support, there is less antipathy towards ideas of choice and competition (S27, S10).

**Table 4.32: Comparison of selected Q-sort statements scores, PC3 with PC1 and PC2**

No	Statement	PC 1	PC 2	PC 3	zPC1 -	zPC2 -
					zPC3	zPC3
<b>30</b>	The best people to involve in any particular participatory policy-making exercise are those who can contribute most to improving the particular policy that is under consideration.	-2	-2	4	-2.61	-2.73
<b>27</b>	The objective of participation is to empower the public and the best way to do that is to give individuals a choice over which provider of services they can use.	-4	-4	2	-2.1	-1.98
<b>39</b>	If government or public service organisations want to talk to the public, they should do so by engaging with existing community organisations, rather than setting up and imposing new participatory structures.	-1	-2	3	-2.03	-2.51
<b>15</b>	People are not motivated to participate in policy-making for the health of democracy, but because they believe they have something to lose or gain, therefore; participation should enable individuals and groups to promote and defend their interests and values.	-3	-2	3	-1.91	-1.55
<b>44</b>	Public participation is of little value if those that participate are not representative of those that will be affected by the decision, therefore; representativeness is a key criterion for evaluation.	0	0	4	-1.68	-1.83
<b>10</b>	Public services have to compete for customers, and politicians for their constituents. Therefore, the aim of participation should be to find out what people want and need, then deliver that.	-4	-3	0	-1.54	-1.15
<b>5</b>	It is more important that participation should give individual citizens a means to voice their preferences and have them heard by decision-makers than facilitate discussions between citizens.	-3	-4	1	-1.26	-1.77

<b>17</b>	It is important that participation initiatives cultivate an environment in which everyone has an equal opportunity to give their views. One particular way of communicating should not be privileged over others, and differences should be recognised and respected.	3	4	0	0.84	1.21
<b>48</b>	Has there been an open and honest exchange of ideas and perspectives from all those involved? Has this resulted in greater mutual understanding? These are key criteria when assessing whether public participation has been a success.	1	2	-4	1.5	2.16
<b>46</b>	A key measure for the success of participation is whether people feel they have any influence: Do they think they can affect decisions on policies that matter to them?	3	3	-2	2.15	2.38
<b>42</b>	It is primarily bonds with others and shared social goals that motivate people to participate, so participation works best when it is woven into the fabric of people's everyday lives, for instance; situated in local communities.	3	1	-4	2.61	1.98

Note: All differences are statistically significant at the 1% level

The qualitative data again reinforced these distinctions even for some of the more unexpected differences on single statements. It was not clear for instance why greater scepticism of the solidaristic basis for participation would result in a more positive rating for S39, which suggests speaking to existing community groups is preferable to setting up new government-led participation exercises. However, it was evident from the interviews how this could be favourably interpreted according to both pluralism and distrust of officials. For Salim it is important for policy-makers to talk to community groups since these groups play a useful role in aggregating and moderating the interests of the communities they represent. Whereas for Carly it is important to participate through community groups because they are more trustworthy than officials, and the weight of numbers gives you more power to influence disinterested officials than participating as individual. The differences between Preference 3 and the other two preferences thus reinforce the interpretation of the PC array, namely; that Preference 3 is more oriented to a conception of participation as a process of interest representation.



## 4.4 Three Preferences, Four Modes of Participation

### 4.41 Preference 1, participation as collective-decision-making

The above description of Preference 1, with its focus on collective self-government and a more equal distribution of power, closely reflects the collective decision-making mode of participation in policy-making that the previous chapter related to the principles of participatory and deliberative democracy. The qualitative data that was gleaned from participants' reactions to the Q-sort statements and the interview that followed the Q-sort indicates there was an undercurrent of participatory democratic thinking that informed the views of the participants who hold Preference 1:

This is about participatory governance... the best case scenario is when you have established a proper kind of process of dialogue, where that, those decisions can be collective decisions, right. (P25: Felicity, Civil Society)

Even participation initiatives which may not fully realise participatory democratic ideals could be viewed as a useful staging post on the route towards a more participatory society, "So there's maybe in those situations, you're going down a much more service user involvement road on our way to participatory democracy" (P25: Felicity, Civil Society).

These participants, however, did not simply reflect back the researcher's preconceptions and there were some interesting ways that participants challenged or expanded the understanding of the collective decision-making mode of participation as theorized in Chapter 3. A community development approach was just as prevalent as participatory democratic thinking in underpinning these participants preference for participation as collective decision-making. Sarah described her approach to participation as "classic community development":

What I would describe it as is, basically lighting fires all over the place... You just ignite people, and you find the people in the community who want to do something, and just get the bellows out and encourage them to do it, and get them together to do it... Classic community development. That's all it is. At its base. Community development. (P28: Sarah, Activist)

Participants also referred to approaches such as 'Asset-Based Community Development' (ABCD) and 'Appreciative Inquiry' that focus on citizen-led interventions that generate improvement through focusing on community assets or what is working well for service users and building upon it.

The prevalence of community development ideas helps to explain the placement of some statements which may raise an eyebrow if Preference 1 were to be interpreted solely in terms of participatory democracy. Consensus decision-making is ordinarily considered a cornerstone of participatory democratic thinking yet is not a prominent feature of this preference, even with the significant caveat that *it may not always be possible* (S23). Though these participants did place an emphasis on the discussion and negotiation of decisions, there was some concern that consensus can be too demanding and that it can also be a power-play, “Consensus, unless there is a [private] vote, is the ability to silence the dissenter” (P11: Jim, Civil Society). A number of the participants were content with discussions followed by voting to determine decisions, particularly if the number of votes were used to balance power relations, for instance; an equal number of votes distributed to policy officials and the public. The community development approach was conceived as more of an ongoing process of negotiating and re-negotiating small scale agreements whereby certain people agree to undertake certain actions, as opposed to arriving at a group consensus concerning what everyone will do. A common refrain against radical participatory modes of organisation is that consensus decision-making is too demanding. It is therefore instructive that those who subscribe to the collective decision-making mode of participation are open to multiple decision processes; whilst wedded to the idea of approximately equal power and non-domination, they do not feel that this can only be realised through consensus decisions.

Despite the participants concern with discussion and negotiation of decisions, there is reason to doubt that deliberative democratic ideas were a strong influence. As with consensus decision-making, statement 18, *Publicly debating social issues is the primary political act, so reasoning between people should be the guiding procedure for policy decision-making*, which is one of the most deliberative democratic statements in the Q-set, was a little surprisingly not prominently placed for Preference 1. This could again be due to the prevalence of community development ideas amongst the participants, which we’ve seen are more akin to anarchist self-organisation than a New England town meeting. A number of participants were flummoxed by this statement and found the meaning vague, which could be due to poor drafting by the researcher. However, a very small minority of participants gave a nuanced response. Three participants, for instance, rejected the statement on the basis that the word ‘reasoning’ privileged one mode of communication and excluded other legitimate modes,

It's about hearts and it's about, as well as minds, and it's about people have got all kinds of things they want to get across. 'Reason' sounds like there's some kind of things you should say and things you shouldn't say, and ways of behaving that you should do, and things you shouldn't do. (P28: Sarah, Activist)

They believed 'reasoning' should be changed to 'discussion'. This has been a criticism of deliberative democracy by feminist theorists, and one participant referred explicitly to feminist theory when making this argument. This suggests that those who have been exposed to deliberative democratic debates could interpret the statement, but that this exposure was not common among the participants in this study. It perhaps indicates that the influence of deliberative democracy on democratic theorists in the Academy is not yet replicated amongst policy-makers and citizens. There was little to suggest that deliberative democratic ideas were an important factor in this understanding of participation as collective decision-making.

In summary, Preference 1 captures an understanding of participation as a solidaristic process, in which equal partners collaborate to arrive at decisions and take actions that benefit the common good. This preference broadly appears to be based on a combination of ideas from participatory democracy and community development. As such, it is a close reflection of the collective decision-making mode of participation outlined in the previous chapter.

#### *4.42 Preference 2, participation as knowledge transfer*

Preference 2, like Preference 1, appears to closely mirror one of the four modes of participation. The focus on capturing lay expertise in order to inform better policy decisions by officials is redolent of the knowledge transfer mode. Analysis of the interviews of the participants that hold this preference again help to illuminate the reasons that participants are attracted to participation in this form, as well as some of the nuance to this position. There were a number of reasons that participants gave for why the public was not tasked with making decisions, but invited to contribute their expertise and opinions to help policy-makers make better decisions. Public officials were seen as more capable of taking decisions, given that they are trained to reflect on their own biases, integrate multiple sources of potentially conflicting information and take a view on the bigger picture:

I think that that's why we have public officials or publicly elected kind of posts, is to sort of step back and look at the bigger picture and hopefully have access to all the information necessary to make a decision which the people in the participation thing might not have access to all the information, necessarily. (P07: Celia, Activist)

This enables policy-makers to take tough decisions that the public do want to make themselves. In addition, they were viewed as connected into the broader policy system so more capable of knowing which decisions would result in tractable interventions, “we [the local authority] are policy experts, we know more than they do about the actual policy levers at our disposal to actually make change” (P01: Mark, Civil Servant).

Reluctance to transfer decision power away from public officials and politicians was also related to support for the primacy of electoral democracy and a concern about what happens to accountability if decision power is given to members of the public:

Perhaps this is the civil servant in me talking, but ministers design policy, and I think that's, there's something very valuable in that. They obviously take public opinion into account as they do that, but you know, that's kind of why we have democracy and why it works that way. (P05: Gary, Civil Servant)

If actually real power is being given to these people, then who are they, why are they being given this power and you know, do they, do they represent the, do they really represent the constituencies that they are claiming to, and so on? (P03: Richard, Civil Servant)

The primacy of electoral politics was also a factor in the need to clearly specify the agenda and parameters of participatory processes. For some participants elected officials set the broad agenda and the public have their input at the ballot box, so participation initiatives have to take their cue from this:

I think your election, your democratic mandate, is almost where you're going to target and what you're going to focus on. Actually how you're going to do it, that's where you have participation. (P01: Mark, Civil Servant)

When as a public servant you ask a question, you ask a question, you go out to consultation, some questions you know the answer to. They're not really open for debate, because ministers have decided, and in my view it's better to be honest about that and say these are the questions which are relevant, so let's talk about them. Even though you want to talk about these, these other issues, there's no point, because they have been decided. And so if you let people set the agenda, then you might just have a totally pointless discussion, which leaves everyone kind of feeling a bit frustrated. (P03: Richard, Civil Servant)

There was however some variation among the participants regarding the extent of flexibility that could be incorporated into the agenda to take account of new issues that the public might raise. Richard's comments also point to a further reason that clearly specified parameters are important: honesty about the limits of participation is important for its own sake, but it is also necessary to maintain trust and avoid frustration.

It became apparent from participants' comments and interviews that participation was not just about accessing wider sources of information for this preference. It was already alluded to above how opening up decision making to greater transparency and rebuilding a dysfunctional relationship between the public and public institutions is an important component of Preference 2. It explains the unexpectedly strong agreement with S48 on open and honest exchange and mutual understanding, along with S34, *Participation is about improving the legitimacy of decisions by bringing decision-making out into the open from behind closed doors. By involving everyone with a stake in the issue, the public can see a decision is fair and does not favour vested interests*, which was originally conceived as a more agonistic statement. The participants loading on this preference favoured openness in order to allay what they perceived as unfounded public suspicions that policy-makers were not working in the public interest, more than as a mechanism to ensure self-interested policy-makers are forced to act in accordance with the public good. Therefore, being very clear and open about the scope of participation, and how the information the public provides is incorporated into the final decision are viewed as key elements of its legitimacy, as well as the legitimacy of public institutions more broadly.

The primary objective of participation for Preference 2 remains to improve policy outcomes. This is a key criterion in assessing whether participation had been successful, but improving outcomes is not everything. This was apparent from reactions to S36, *The aim of participation should be to improve policy and to improve services. If public participation does not result in noticeable improvements in policy and/or services then it has failed*, which only received moderate support. The focus on failure is a much stronger drafting than for the other evaluation criteria statements, which simply ask whether something is an important criterion. Though improved outcomes were thought to be an important criterion, there was less support for the idea that participation had conclusively failed if improvements were not achieved, for instance Mark commented on this statement,

I don't necessarily agree with that, because, I mean, I think that is the primary aim of it from my point of view, anyway, but I actually think

sometimes just going through the process itself, if done in a good way, can be enough. (P01: Mark, Civil Servant)

Preference 2, therefore, captures a technocratic understanding of participation as knowledge transfer to improve policy decisions, underpinned by common ideas from classical public administration theory such as the primacy of electoral democracy and the decision-making expertise of public officials. However, within this understanding there is a recognition that participation can have other benefits too, particularly in regard to fostering public trust in officials and institutions.

#### *4.43 Preference 3, participation as agonism*

The interpretation of Preference 3 is not as clear-cut as that for Preference 1 and Preference 2, and it certainly does not appear that Preference 3 straightforwardly mirrors one of the remaining two modes of participation, choice and voice or arbitration and oversight. The relations between the three preferences do seem to reflect the dimensions that underlie the typology of participation though. If Preference 1 and Preference 2 account for the two solidaristic modes of participation, Preference 3 is a more agonistic counterpoint. The above comparison of Preference 3 to the other two preferences demonstrated that the main differences were along the sociability dimension, with Preference 3 rejecting the social motivations of participating citizens in favour of the idea of their getting involved to defend their own interests and values. The more agonistic bent of Preference 3 was to a large extent underpinned by a pluralist understanding of interest representation, though for some participants it was more related to a distrust of officials.

Chapter 3 detailed the importance of pluralist ideas to conceptions of participation as choice and voice and arbitration and oversight, so it is interesting to find that this more agonistic preference is not strongly reflective of either mode of participation. As was noted above, Preference 3 is distinguished from the other the two preferences by its relative support for choice. Still, the preference is not fervently for choice. Taken together the four most unambiguously choice and voice oriented statements (S05, S10, S27, S47) have mean Q-sort scores of +1 on the array for PC3. The difference is rooted in the fact that these statements were strongly negatively salient for the other two preferences. The same four statements have mean Q-sort scores of -3.5 on PC1 and -3 on PC2. Many of the participants in the study had a strong positive bias in their Q-sorts; they felt there were more statements that they agreed with than those they disagreed with. Yet choice

statements were almost universally quickly rejected by participants holding Preference 1 and Preference 2. Choice was described as “nonsense” by Anna and “trivial consumerism” by Sarah. It was not seen as a form of participation by several participants because it has no collective or dialogical aspect. Some participants supported choice in theory but doubted that it is practicable. They questioned whether real choice exists unless the public is involved in determining the options available as well as choosing between them, and the range of choices has been opened up to include community and other solutions. Despite the qualified support, the relative favour of choice does thus appear to be a significantly different position.

The polysemy of the concept of ‘voice’ means that it was often difficult to disentangle exactly how it was being used; whether it was giving power to the voiceless, voicing lay expertise to assist policy-makers, or voicing consumer wants. Nonetheless, a consumerist understanding of voice was an implicit element of Jason’s view. He spoke extensively about how he would use focus groups to test policy concepts with those who would be affected by them:

And then you listen to what they tell you. And what they tell you, what you're not necessarily doing, is a quantitative study into how many people like and how many people dislike your policy idea. What you're trying to do is get a handle on whether your policy concept is solving the real problem or the real issue that they experience. (P08: Jason, Civil Servant)

Here participation is viewed as analogous to market research, where civil servants design policy products then test out that they meet the needs of the consumers of those products. This implicit consumerist stance was not, however, solely restricted to participants loading on to Preference 3. It was a diffuse element of a number of the civil servants in this study’s viewpoint, for instance; Annette (whose Q-sort loads onto Preference 2) frequently referred to customers, and spoke about running customer forums and customer surveys.

The arbitration and oversight mode also has a curious relation to Preference 3. The idea of arbitration was not very salient across the board, but the three statements that most unambiguously refer to arbitration or adjudication (S24, S29, S41) are actually more negatively ranked in the array for PC3 than for PC1 and PC2. This is perhaps because, as is evident in the quotations from Jason and Salim above, policy elites were viewed as removed from the fray of pluralist competition, so policy elites could perform the arbitration role. The views of participants such as Flora and Carly, with their distrust of officials, implicitly challenge this confidence in policy-makers as neutral arbitrators

though. Despite the distrust of officials that characterized some of the participants loading on Preference 3, there was no greater support for participation as oversight. In fact, all the participants who referred to the value of actual examples of participatory oversight hold one of the other two preferences. Robin pointed to public participation in Healthwatch, Orla to regulatory and scrutiny committees and Janeane to lay participation in Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections, but there was no such discussion from participants holding Preference 3.

In summary Preference 3 appears to underline the usefulness of the sociability dimension of the typology of participation in that it represents an agonistic counterpoint to the solidarism of participation as collective decision-making and participation as knowledge transfer, represented by Preference 1 and Preference 2 respectively. Yet, at the same time, it presents a challenge to the typology given that this agonistic viewpoint does not translate into a view of participation as arbitration and oversight, and shows only moderate support for participation as choice and voice.

#### **4.5 Discussion**

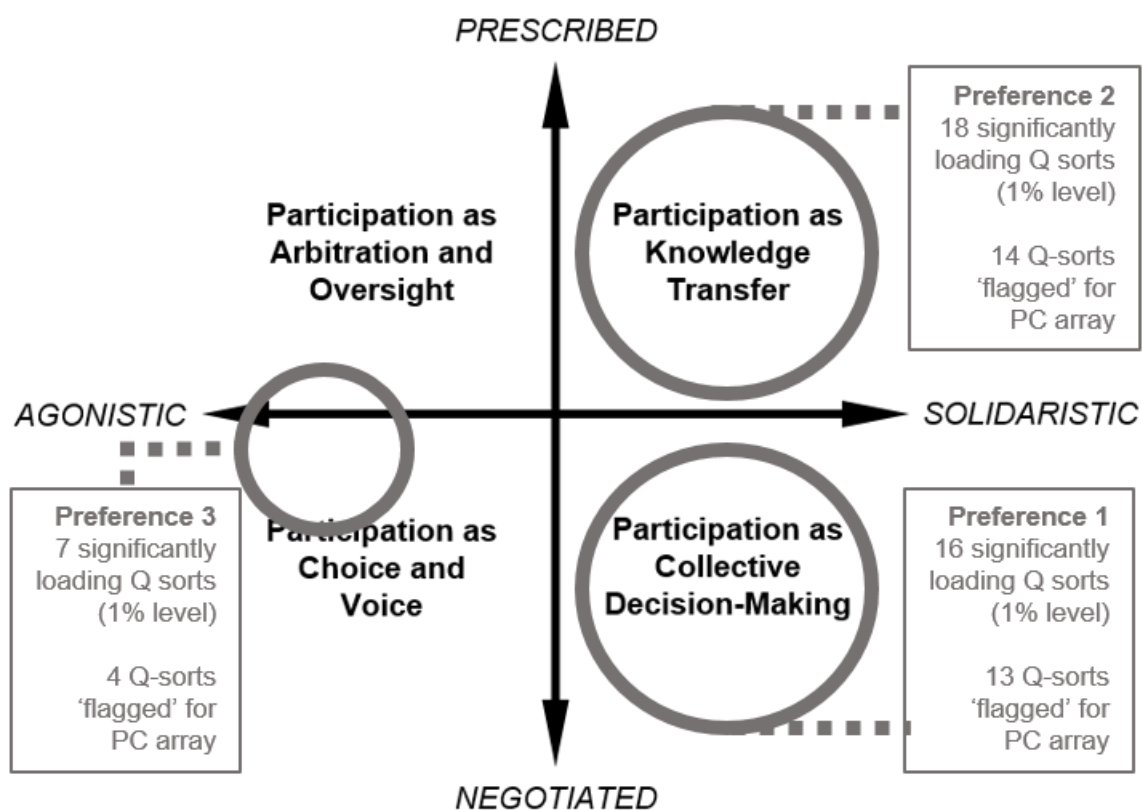
This chapter has analysed the Q-method survey and interview responses of 34 key informants involved with participatory social policy, using them to model three distinct preferences for participation in governance. A large majority of these key informants held one of two of the preferences, which show clear affinities with the collective decision-making mode and knowledge transfer mode of participation that were described in Chapter 3 (see Figure 4.51 below). This suggests that the approach of a large number of prominent actors in participatory social policy will be influenced by these particular broad frames of reference. A third, less prominent, preference was also identified that was held by a minority of participants, often in conjunction with one of the other two preferences. Preference 3 should be interpreted with more care than the other two, since the array is comprised of substantially fewer Q-sorts (see Figure 4.51), making it more susceptible to the vagaries of individual variations among the constituent Q-sorts and measurement



error<sup>21</sup>. Nonetheless, this preference also appears to capture a theoretically meaningful distinction in orientation to participation

As Figure 4.51 illustrates, the three preferences demonstrate support for the typology of four modes of participation. As well as identifying two modes of participation that reflect the knowledge transfer and collective decision-making modes of participation, the dimensions that underpin the typology proved predictive of the differences between preferences. Preference 1 and Preference 2 should be expected to be united on the sociability dimension but divided on the negotiability dimension. This is exactly what was found in the PC arrays, with both preferring participation as a collaborative process oriented towards the common good, but diverging on the amount of control participants should have over the agenda and decision-making. The sociability dimension also predicts the difference between Preference 3, which is more agonistic in orientation, and the other two preferences.

Figure 4.51: Mapping the three preferences on to the participation typology



<sup>21</sup> This can be observed in the greater standard error of statement z-scores for PC3 compared with PC1 and PC2 (see table 4.12 above). See Chapter 2 for greater discussion of the strength of inferences.

Despite the identification of agonistic sentiment in Preference 3, as well as more diffusely in the interviews, these elements did not coalesce into a coherent and distinct mode of agonistic participation, presenting a challenge to the arbitration and oversight and choice and voice modes. Participants frequently asked for clarification or confessed to having difficulty understanding ideas of arbitration. On S29, which states the public should take on oversight or adjudication roles, for instance, Alexandra commented:

Yeah, I think that was why I struggled with it a bit. I mean. I think there are public organisations that seem to be just another group. Sometimes almost quite bland or almost have created themselves to focus on one issue, probably. And so therefore, it is important that people in the public, the public, people who are in the public sector, can provide... But I don't know if they have to provide adjudication. 'On controversial issues.' I think that's why it's sitting there. I can't quite work that one out. I thought that one was a particularly difficult one. (P22: Alexandra, Activist)

It is perhaps not surprising that this was a new idea to some of the participants. It was documented in the previous chapter that these ideas are not common in either the academic or grey literature on participation, thus much less prominent in the rhetoric of participation. In the discussions that followed the researcher's clarifications of these ideas, none of the participants particularly embraced them. This may have been a result of 'the shock of the new', or genuine disagreement.

Even participants that approvingly discussed actual examples of participatory oversight, did not translate this into a more abstract preference for this approach. Take, for example, Janeane's comments on public involvement in CQC inspections:

Experts by Experience, it's called. It's bringing a very different angle, a different perspective, it's someone who actually has received a similar service themselves, so can look in through those eyes, to see whether there is somewhere where they feel that they would have been happy to receive treatment that they had when they were in that position. So in a way, it's kind of like a lay bringing in lay people... Rather than just paid officials who've got their own tick-tick list, bringing in a human factor into it. (P29: Janeane, Civil Servant)

Janeane's comments appear to refract the idea of oversight through her preference for the knowledge transfer mode of participation. For Janeane, the public's role in inspection is described as complementing officials by bringing in additional, experiential expertise, her Q-sort shows she rejects the more agonistic idea of exerting pressure on policy-makers and holding them to account.

The empirical findings therefore raise a question of whether the distinction between two agonistic modes of participation should be jettisoned, given the lack of support for the choice and voice and arbitration and oversight modes of participation. However, this would be a hasty move. Their lack of reflection in the empirical results might be plausibly attributed to the issues of sampling this particular group of key informants (as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.32). Both could be considered a more right-wing approach to participatory policy-making and it was discussed how few of the study participants claimed to vote for right-wing political parties. In addition, both modes have a strong theoretical grounding. Chapter 3 argued that though neither the advocates nor critics of choice have viewed it as a theory of participation, there is a compelling theoretical rationale for challenging this opinion. The remainder of this thesis will therefore retain a distinction between two agonistic modes of participation. This chapter has noted that, despite the lack of a dominant preference for either choice and voice or arbitration and oversight, their logic does implicitly inform some of the opinions expressed by the participants. Moreover, Preference 3 does not appear to constitute a single coherent agonistic approach to participation that could simply replace the existing modes. Retaining the distinction between two agonistic modes is useful in broadening understanding of how participation can be done, for instance; making explicit some of the assumptions behind approaches such as participatory oversight, which the above discussion demonstrated go seemingly unrecognised. It also provides alternatives to restricting decision-making to officials in circumstances of pluralist competition between interests, which the next chapter reveals can often be problematic.

This chapter has focused on elaborating the three preferences in detail, delineating them from one another by drawing clear boundaries around them. It may be tempting to draw a clear dichotomy between the two primary preferences. Preference 1, participation as collective decision-making, is the radical, democratic view taken by activists and civil society. Preference 2, participation as knowledge transfer, is the conservative, technocratic view taken by public officials. Nevertheless it is apparent that the picture is more complicated. As Barnes, Newman and Sullivan (2007) have previously discovered there is a permeable boundary between official discourses of participation generated within the state and focused on improving the quality and legitimacy of decisions, and pressures for more inclusive democracy generated within civil society. Though there were a preponderance of civil society and activist participants with their highest loading on Preference 1 and civil servant participants with their highest loading on Preference 2, more

than a third of participants break this mould (see Table 4.13 above). In fact, the highest loading of any participant on Preference 1 is a civil servant (P19: Orla), and on Preference 2 it is a civil society actor (P06: Steven). Accordingly, it would not necessarily be helpful to locate all tensions in the practice of participation as a simple battle between an official and a radical view. The reasoning behind the preferences also demonstrated that it would be an oversimplification to classify the difference between these two preferences as purely one between technocracy and democracy. Though the technocratic impulse undoubtedly influences Preference 2, it was also apparent that reservations about devolving decision power and agenda-setting were related to the representative relationship. As such the difference between Preference 1 and Preference 2 is also related to preferences for different types of democracy: representative versus participatory.

It is also clear that there is not a simple one-to-one relationship between individual participants and preferences. Despite using a method that forces choices, seven participants have significant positive loadings (1% level) on more than one principal component, and thus endorse seemingly competing preferences for participation (see Table 4.13). Even where participants did not have multiple significant loadings there was still evidence that they borrowed ideas associated with other preferences. This was discussed above for Jason, whose interview clearly referenced ideas linked to knowledge transfer despite not having a significant loading on Preference 2. It was also just demonstrated how Janeane took an alien approach and refracted it through her knowledge transfer preference. The relationships between individual participants and the three participation preferences are thus complex. This is not a unique finding. Font, Wojcieszak and Navarro's (2015) survey of Spanish citizens' procedural preferences also found that many simultaneously approved of apparently contradictory notions of participatory-, representative- and expert-led governance. The next chapter takes up the important points of contention between preferences identified in this chapter, particularly the preference for who should have decision power, and the distinction between social and self-interested motivations for participation. It uses a selection of key interview extracts to examine these issues in-depth, analysing the complexities and ambivalences in individuals' preferences in order to explore the nature of procedural preferences for participation.

Table 4.51: Full principal component arrays

No.	Statement	PC1		PC2		PC3	
		Q-score	Z-score	Q-score	Z-score	Q-score	Z-score
1	The point of participation is to improve participants' skills; to give them a greater sense of confidence and of their own power to act and influence the decisions that affect them.	-2	-0.65	-1	-0.74	0	-0.24
2	Any participatory process needs to be actively managed (e.g. through participant selection and facilitation) in order to prevent an unrepresentative group from dominating the process and hijacking the decision.	0	-0.12	1	0.28	-1	-0.46
3	Citizens and the state only work together when their interests coincide. Most of the time they don't, so participation has to enable the public to battle public institutions to get what it wants.	-3	-1.04	-3	-1.25	-3	-1.08
4	Public participation initiatives should have a clear question that is being asked of participants. Participants need to be informed of what is in and out of the scope of the discussion, what is expected of them as participants, and what the limits of the process are with regard to its impacts on policy.	-2	-0.76	3	1.25	4	1.49
5	It is more important that participation should give individual citizens a means to voice their preferences and have them heard by decision-makers than facilitate discussions between citizens.	-3	-0.83	-4	-1.34	1	0.43
6	The aim of participation is not to make decisions with policy-makers, but to hold them to account and exert pressure on them to make the right decisions.	-3	-0.82	-3	-1.14	-2	-0.74
7	The objective of public participation is to create a fairer process for making policy decisions and in turn a fairer democracy, one that is perceived to be legitimate by the public.	2	0.91	2	0.94	-4	-1.18

<b>8</b>	The success of public participation should be judged by those who commissioned the process and whether they feel their decision has been enhanced by the involvement of the public.	-4	-2.08	-3	-1.09	-3	-1.06
<b>9</b>	Local people are the best source of information about their own neighbourhoods, poor people are the experts in poverty, and service-users best know where the problems with services are. The public should be valued for the expertise it can bring to policy decisions.	4	1.79	4	1.53	2	0.74
<b>10</b>	Public services have to compete for customers, and politicians for their constituents. Therefore, the aim of participation should be to find out what people want and need, then deliver that.	-4	-1.57	-3	-1.18	0	-0.03
<b>11</b>	Public participation is not about who can shout the loudest for their own private interests. It should be directed towards finding the common good, rather than bargaining about who gets what.	2	0.8	3	1.31	1	0.34
<b>12</b>	Participation should be a means through which the marginalised in society can challenge their political and social exclusion.	4	1.83	2	0.86	0	0.26
<b>13</b>	The objective of public participation is to improve policy decisions by ensuring that decision-makers can access wider sources of information, perspectives and potential solutions.	-1	-0.34	4	1.68	1	0.56
<b>14</b>	Participation should be evaluated based on how much control the participants have over the process, for instance; have the participants set the agenda, and how much control do they have over the final decision?	2	0.81	-1	-0.74	-4	-1.87
<b>15</b>	People are not motivated to participate in policy-making for the health of democracy, but because they believe they have something to lose or gain, therefore; participation should enable individuals and groups to promote and defend their interests and values.	-3	-1.12	-2	-0.76	3	0.79

<b>16</b>	If it is to have any power, public participation should be independent from state institutions. It should be a space in which the public can articulate their own agenda and demands, before negotiating these with government and public organisations.	1	0.09	-4	-1.45	2	0.72
<b>17</b>	It is important that participation initiatives cultivate an environment in which everyone has an equal opportunity to give their views. One particular way of communicating should not be privileged over others, and differences should be recognised and respected.	3	1.13	4	1.5	0	0.29
<b>18</b>	Publicly debating social issues is the primary political act, so reasoning between people should be the guiding procedure for policy decision-making.	-1	-0.47	-4	-1.31	1	0.42
<b>19</b>	To judge the success of public participation we need to look at the resultant policies and services and ask are they more responsive to public needs and public values.	0	0.09	4	1.42	-3	-1.15
<b>20</b>	The aim of participation should be to transfer decision power from elites in bureaucracies and public service organisations to the public, so the public can exercise some control over these institutions.	3	0.95	0	0.08	-2	-0.79
<b>21</b>	The success of public participation should be assessed by asking the participants whether they are satisfied.	-1	-0.6	-4	-1.37	-1	-0.57
<b>22</b>	There is no one 'public' with a general interest. Participation initiatives must bring together lots of overlapping little 'publics', all with their own interests and values.	4	1.45	2	0.7	4	2.07
<b>23</b>	Though it may not always be possible, participation should always aim to make collective decisions based on group consensus.	-1	-0.5	-1	-0.48	-1	-0.46
<b>24</b>	Participation should take a form that allows all those with a stake in the decision to present their claims, then there needs to be a clear and impartial mechanism for adjudicating between those claims.	1	0.12	-1	-0.21	-1	-0.6

<b>25</b>	We should judge the success of a participatory decision process on the extent to which it results in a decision that is accepted by everyone as fair and legitimate.	1	0.23	0	-0.09	-4	-1.32
<b>26</b>	The point of public participation is to create cohesive communities, in which responsible citizens can work together to solve their own problems without relying on the state.	0	0.09	-2	-0.97	-1	-0.68
<b>27</b>	The objective of participation is to empower the public and the best way to do that is to give individuals a choice over which provider of services they can use.	-4	-1.4	-4	-1.28	2	0.7
<b>28</b>	There is no right way to do participation. The particular form of participation should be determined by what is most appropriate to the particular issue under consideration.	2	0.86	4	1.57	0	0.31
<b>29</b>	Public organisations frequently act like just another interest group, so it is important to create roles in which the public can provide impartial oversight or adjudication on controversial issues.	0	0.03	1	0.34	-3	-1.11
<b>30</b>	The best people to involve in any particular participatory policy-making exercise are those who can contribute most to improving the particular policy that is under consideration.	-2	-0.73	-2	-0.85	4	1.88
<b>31</b>	Public organisations and public officials should not try to lead participation exercises, but play an enabling role. They should help the public achieve their own agenda by providing the skills and resources the public lack.	1	0.1	1	0.61	2	0.73
<b>32</b>	Participation initiatives should be open to all those who wish to participate. Participants should not be specially selected, though extra resources may need to be focused on encouraging disadvantaged groups to participate.	3	1.06	0	0.07	3	0.83



<b>33</b>	The success of a participatory decision process should be assessed on how far it contributes towards resolving any conflict between competing interests or competing perspectives with regard to the decision being taken.	-4	-1.4	-3	-1.12	-2	-0.98
<b>34</b>	Participation is about improving the legitimacy of decisions by bringing decision-making out into the open from behind closed doors. By involving everyone with a stake in the issue, the public can see a decision is fair and does not favour vested interests.	2	0.87	3	1.34	2	0.74
<b>35</b>	To ensure accountability, it is important that elected representatives and public officials retain ultimate authority over any final decision.	-4	-1.58	0	-0.04	0	-0.12
<b>36</b>	The aim of participation should be to improve policy and to improve services. If public participation does not result in noticeable improvements in policy and/or services then it has failed.	0	-0.28	1	0.5	-2	-0.97
<b>37</b>	The aim of participation is to enable citizens to take the decisions that affect their lives through collective discussion and decision-making. It should be about collective self-government.	4	1.58	-2	-0.95	-1	-0.59
<b>38</b>	We cannot say there are a number of evaluation criteria that apply to all, or even most, public participation exercises. The assessment of success or failure must be based on the purpose(s) of the specific exercise being evaluated.	-1	-0.45	2	0.68	3	1.13
<b>39</b>	If government or public service organisations want to talk to the public, they should do so by engaging with existing community organisations, rather than setting up and imposing new participatory structures.	-1	-0.58	-2	-1.06	3	1.45
<b>40</b>	Participation may be a means to achieve better outcomes, but its principal objective is to realise people's right to participate in decisions about the society in which they live	1	0.8	0	-0.02	3	0.75
<b>41</b>	Society will always contain conflict about what the right values are, as well as competing claims for resources. The aim of public participation should be to resolve these conflicts between competing interests.	-2	-0.7	-1	-0.69	-3	-1.01

<b>42</b>	It is primarily bonds with others and shared social goals that motivate people to participate, so participation works best when it is woven into the fabric of people's everyday lives, for instance; situated in local communities.	3	1.22	1	0.59	-4	-1.39
<b>43</b>	The aim of participation should be to give the public a voice that can influence decisions. Policy-makers need to listen, but must then exercise judgement in deciding what should be incorporated into the final decision.	-2	-0.66	3	0.96	4	1.57
<b>44</b>	Public participation is of little value if those that participate are not representative of those that will be affected by the decision, therefore; representativeness is a key criterion for evaluation.	0	0.03	0	-0.12	4	1.71
<b>45</b>	Public participation in the policy process should create a new relationship between public institutions and citizens in which both are equal partners co-creating policy.	4	1.74	1	0.6	1	0.35
<b>46</b>	A key measure for the success of participation is whether people feel they have any influence: Do they think they can affect decisions on policies that matter to them?	3	1.14	3	1.37	-2	-1.01
<b>47</b>	People don't want to attend endless meetings and discussions. The best way to enable the public to influence policies and public services is to give individuals options from which they can choose, whether that's a choice of service provider or a choice of different spending priorities for their neighbourhood.	-3	-1.2	-1	-0.73	1	0.51
<b>48</b>	Has there been an open and honest exchange of ideas and perspectives from all those involved? Has this resulted in greater mutual understanding? These are key criteria when assessing whether public participation has been a success.	1	0.15	2	0.81	-4	-1.35

## Chapter 5

### Tool or Trap? Cognition or Discourse?

#### What is the nature of a procedural preference?

*That cumbersome computer [the brain] could hold so many contradictory opinions on so many different subjects all at once, and switch from one opinion or subject to another one so quickly, that a discussion between husband and wife under stress could end up like a fight between blindfolded people wearing roller skates.*

Kurt Vonnegut, Galápagos

What is the nature of our procedural preferences? Do we store one of Chapter 4's three participation preferences like code in our cumbersome computers, then apply it to consistently process the data of our external world? Or are these preferences more ephemeral repertoires that people deploy in their discursive interactions with one another, flexibly shifting from one opinion to another as the context demands? Are they productive like tools, used to effectively guide action? Or are they traps that result in myopia and frustration? The majority of the procedural preference literature is based on secondary data analysis of survey data, thus can say little about these questions. This chapter instead draws primarily on qualitative data to illuminate the nature of participation preferences by examining in detail the ways that people talk about these preferences.

The main body of the chapter is devoted to a discursive analysis of the post-Q-sort interviews. It attempts to remove the blindfold and the roller skates from two central debates about participatory governance: the distribution of decision power and the role of conflict and self-interest. For each of these topics the analysis begins by focusing on a key extended extract from one interview, then builds outwards to encompass other research participants. A natural consequence of this process is a further elaboration of the content of the participation preferences and modes, since who holds decision power and the role of conflict and self-interest relate to the two dimensions that structure the typology of participation modes, as well as the main cleavages between the three participation preferences.

Before beginning this empirical analysis the chapter briefly introduces the theoretical debates surrounding the nature of political opinions, and how they relate to

research on procedural preferences. The final section then draws out the lessons of the analysis for the nature of procedural preferences and situates these insights in the theoretical literature. It demonstrates that preferences are context-sensitive. It argues that preferences are ambivalent to the core but that this does not preclude consistent patterns in aggregate responses. In addition, it shows that preferences are simultaneously tools and traps.

### **5.1 Debates on the Nature of Preferences**

The literature on procedural preferences is still in its infancy. It has been mainly oriented towards demonstrating that procedural preferences matter at all, against the contention that people are interested only in policy outcomes, not the procedures by which they are arrived at. Accordingly, it has primarily focused on demonstrating the plurality of preferences, the content of these different preferences – for instance, whether they are for experts, representatives or citizens to make decisions – and whether the preferences are predictive of behaviours (Bengtsson 2012; Bengtsson and Christensen 2016; Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Neblo 2015; P. Webb 2013). Mostly, it has said little about the nature of these preferences. All of these studies have employed quantitative survey methods that, broadly speaking, ask their respondents, do you prefer decisions to be made by experts or representatives or citizens? Currently, there is little research that looks beyond the survey responses about which type of decision procedures people prefer in order to describe what it is they find compelling about them and why, as well as why they dislike alternative approaches (Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015). Accordingly, it has only been possible to speculate on the reasons behind the apparently incongruous result that people subscribe simultaneously to contradictory preferences, which characterise the findings detailed in the previous chapter, as well as those of Bengtsson (2012), Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro (2015), and Neblo (2015).

Survey questions on procedural preferences are focused at a general level, thus decontextualized. It is commonly inferred that the intended decision-level is the nation state, but this is not always specified. It is thus difficult to know how someone with ambivalent preferences - who prefers decisions to be taken by representatives at the national level, but to take decisions themselves at the local level, to leave decisions on

healthcare provision to doctors, but want elected representatives to take decisions on policing – would approach such questions. This is hardly an outlandish hypothetical individual, but it is impossible to know which context would be salient for such a person at the moment of survey completion. These studies appear to be implicitly informed by the orthodox approach to attitudinal research. As Allport's classic definition has it:

An attitude is “a mental or neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related” (Allport, 1935 cited in Howarth 2006).

Procedural preferences, in this view, are to some degree context-independent, inner, mental entities that individuals carry around with them, that can be measured by surveys, and (as the explanatory variable) can explain individual behaviours (response variable). Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro (2015), for example, describe their survey as *capturing attitudes* and Bengtsson (2012), who does give consideration to these issues, argues that surveys are an adequate way of *measuring preferences*.

Critics of this approach to political opinions have labelled it ‘cognitivist’ given its focus on individualised cognitions. It has come under sustained attack from within psychology and sociology. Rhetorical analysis (Billig 1991) and discourse analysis (Potter 1996; Potter and Wetherell 1987) propose alternative epistemological underpinnings whereby opinions are context-specific, action-oriented, and structured through social processes. Social Representation Theory has also criticised the idea that attitudes are individualised cognitions in response to an external object in favour of social representations that are formed through interaction and evident in social practices. (Gaskell 2001; Howarth 2006). These approaches have also challenged the idea that attitudes are consistent, as opposed to ambivalent and ‘dilemmatic’ (Billig 1991). Studies have shown that people's preferences are deeply ambivalent on a range of issues from distributive justice (Hochschild 1981) to intergenerational informal caring relationships (Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Phillips 2011). Robert Merton (1976) enumerated six types of sociological ambivalence as distinct phenomena from, but part of the explanation of, psychological ambivalence. Two of these types seem particularly pertinent to the understanding of participation preferences: a) the notion that a single role or social status often incorporates multiple incompatible normative expectations, for instance; “ambivalence in the role of the bureaucrat when individualised and personal attention is wanted by the client while the bureaucracy requires generalised and impersonal treatment” (Merton 1976, 7); and b) the

existence of contradictory cultural values concerning how society should be organised and the right way to live. As has already been documented, participation is associated with a range of different cultural values with attendant variety for the roles of those involved and the relationships between them.

Mary Douglas' Grid-Group Cultural Theory, which provided the inspiration for the typology of four modes of participation described in Chapter 3, has also provided an influential approach for thinking about both procedural and policy preferences (Gastil et al. 2011; Hood 1998). Its tenets suggest such preferences are cultural in orientation. An individual's preferences are predictable as they are oriented by one of a finite number of cultural biases. For Wildavsky (1987) political preferences are cultural in that they are endogenous and rooted in social life. Culture is constructed in the process of supporting, modifying or opposing existing social relations. This process is, however, limited by the fact that there are only four<sup>22</sup> viable ways of life. Each way of life is characterised by a distinct set of shared values, and defined in opposition to the other three. Therefore, the conflict between the different cultures is an essential component of their identity and viability.

This description aligns cultures with the anti-cognitivist approaches to political preferences, however; similar arguments have been rehearsed in debates amongst cultural theorists regarding both the nature of culture and the extent to which cultural orientations apply at the level of the individual. As Mamadouh (1999) notes, Mary Douglas has argued that individuals' possess robust cultural orientations that pervade the different domains of their life, whereas Thompson and Wildavsky have proposed that, contrariwise, individuals' cultural orientations may shift depending on context, for instance, between the home and the workplace. More recently, an article co-authored by a number of the most prominent Grid-Group Cultural Theorists, including Douglas and Thompson, suggested that cultural theory was not a good instrument for capturing "the totality of an individual's behaviour and thought" and is instead "most applicable to social domains in which people meet, argue, communicate and justify themselves in regular, face-to-face interaction" (Verweij et al. 2006b, 838), suggesting cultural orientations may be discursive in nature. Nonetheless, some recent survey research suggests the applicability of "cultural cognitions" in

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<sup>22</sup> There is some debate in the cultural theory literature regarding whether there are four or five, see Mamadouh (1999) for a useful summary.

predicting individuals' policy preferences across a wide range of topics (Gastil et al. 2011; Ripberger et al. 2012).

Understanding the nature of people's procedural preferences is important in understanding the design of participatory governance initiatives and how they can be improved, as well as how people will behave with regard to these initiatives. The procedural preference literature has been concerned with understanding the influence of support for participatory decision-making on people's propensity to take up participatory opportunities, and Merton has theorised the influence of sociological ambivalence on behaviours. Ambivalent preferences, for instance, may be a strength in terms of openness to many alternative participatory practices, but could result in failures if participation is used to simultaneously pursue contradictory goals or oscillate between them. Strong cultural orientations, on the contrary, may be productive in providing a tool for consistently reasoning through the many difficult tensions that arise throughout the process of participation. However, they may also become traps, blinding people to the merits of alternative approaches, and creating resistance against necessary alterations as the context changes.

The combination of Q-method and interviews employed within this particular research context is well-suited to exploring whether individuals' preferences for participation are culturally coherent or ambivalent, and whether they are rhetorical, cognitive, or discursive in nature. The combined quantitative and qualitative data on the same person's viewpoint provides a richer source of information than having just one type of data. The rendering of subjective viewpoints in an objective data structure provides a detailed model of an individual's preferences that transparently specifies the regularities in similarities and differences between people. It also guards against criticisms of "bird-spotting" illustrative examples that have, for instance, been levelled at other qualitative studies of cultural orientations (Mamadouh 1999). The proceeding interview then enables further in-depth exploration of those preferences: what it is that's compelling about them, and how contestable preferences are justified. The methods can be flexible with regard to epistemology (Ramlo 2011).<sup>23</sup> Most Q-methodologists would reject the idea that it captures inner cognitions in favour of the more behaviourally-oriented notion that it captures the process of expressing one's subjectivity operantly (Brown 1980; Watts and Stenner 2012).

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<sup>23</sup> Although more positivistic uses of Q are often dismissed by Q-methodologists as Q 'technique', i.e. not proper Q 'methodology'

Yet, in many ways the approach may have benefits over more traditional survey methods for capturing cognitions. Participants are given statements that represent the range of debate about participation, which they sort through iterated comparisons. They are able to return to statements and alter their score in light of the other statements. This could help to mitigate some of the problematic framing effects – for instance, those caused by question order and wording - that Zaller and Feldman (1992) note are troubling for survey researchers. The participants are also able to challenge the wording of statements and clarify their responses in the interview, reducing problems of interpretation for the researcher.

The study, in one sense, also constitutes an ideal test case for sociological ambivalence versus cognitive consistency. As detailed above, there are reasons to believe that the subject should produce sociological ambivalence due to the competing values and role expectations associated with participation. In addition, the participants in this study are of a particular type. They are all heavily involved in participation activities; many of them are paid to think about this issue on a daily basis. Zaller and Feldman (1992) note that people exhibit more stability in their responses to survey questions on items that are salient for them and they have thought about. Accordingly, if anyone is likely to have stable and consistent preferences concerning participation, then it is the participants in this study. The next two sections of the chapter take-up the qualitative analysis in order to illuminate these theoretical debates, which until now have only seen light engagement from the literature on procedural preferences.

## **5.2 Who Decides?**

The empirical analysis begins with the question of how decision power should be distributed within participatory governance. The issue of ‘who decides?’ was identified by the principal components analysis (PCA) as the key point of contention between Preference 1 and Preference 2 in the previous chapter, and is also a defining feature of the negotiability dimension of the typology of four modes of participation outlined in Chapter 3. First, the analysis will examine the reasons civil servants give for why it’s important they retain decision power, then consider other participants’ justifications for why decision



power should be distributed more equally. Each discussion commences by examining in detail an extended passage from one participant before broadening out the analysis.

### 5.21 *The technocrat's dilemma*

The following text is an extract from the interview with Jason. One reason for the selection of this particular extract is because it packs into a relatively concise passage a number of the recurring justificatory strategies for civil servants to retain the decision-making role. Jason, as was detailed in the previous chapter, is a civil servant whose viewpoint appeared to be primarily characterised by a combination of pluralist and classical public administration elements. To set the context, this discussion takes place near the beginning of the interview. Jason is still sorting through the Q-sort statements and is responding to Q-sort statement S29, *Public organisations frequently act like just another interest group, so it is important to create roles in which the public can provide impartial oversight or adjudication on controversial issues*. Immediately preceding the extract reproduced here, Jason says he is struggling with the statement, breaks it into two pieces, and argues in regard to the first part that public organisations do not just act like another interest group, they are another interest group. The ensuing discussion is reproduced as Extract 5.21 below.

#### Extract 5.21: The technocrat's dilemma<sup>24</sup>

Which means for the second part of the statement, then, 'so it's important to create roles that the public can provide with impartial oversight'. So by 'the public', do you mean the public through Parliament, or do you mean literally, like we'll just drag people in off the street and they can--

*Yeah, I was thinking more extra-parliamentary initiatives. So for instance, you see things like citizens' juries, et cetera, where sometimes they're brought in when there's a controversial issue, and there's seen as like an impasse and there's no way forward, and then they get a sort of citizens' jury together to sort of come up with a set of recommendations.*

Right, I get you.

*So they're seen as a sort of impartial--*

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<sup>24</sup> Voice of the interviewee is in normal text, voice of the interviewer is italicised.

The experts can't work it out, let's get them to explain it to some members of the public, and see what, see which way their view goes.

*Yeah.*

Oh god. So I don't think, in that case, I really change my view about that. I don't think that's okay. I think that the experts should be able to work it out, and if they can't, you kind of, a politician has to make a decision.

*Right.*

But I am thinking about the kind of policy work I do, I am not thinking about things that look particularly like prison sentences, like you know, making a prison decision, or whatever. So for example, [structuring social security benefits]<sup>25</sup> is bloody technical. And I think it would be a real shame to take something that is as technical and consequential as [structuring social security benefits], and try, and be put in a position where you would have to get someone in who doesn't really understand it, and then try and explain it to them, just because you haven't got your own house in order, and haven't been able to figure out what you think the right thing to do is. Does that make sense?

*Yeah.*

So I'm putting this down there, not because I undervalue the role of sort of public scrutiny, but more because I think experts should be able to do their jobs--should be made to do their jobs properly. The public are paying us to do this, and it seems a bit of cheat to say we can't work it out, you come in and sort it out for us. Does that make sense?

[A brief discussion follows in which Jason enquires whether these type of citizens juries are what the researcher is referring to by a participation initiative, and it is explained that it is for the participant not the researcher to determine what participation means to them. This type of participation is just one example, and there is a little elaboration of the example to place it in a specific context, that of a local authority organising a citizens jury when there is a public uproar around a decision to close a local hospital. Jason then concludes his discussion of statement S29 by saying:]

It's really hard, isn't it? So that's really, really hard, because, you know. That's what the local authority should have been doing, right. That is the function that one wants the experts in local authorities and central government to fulfil, is to compare the interests. It's this first part of the statement that then becomes difficult for me. 'Public organisations

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<sup>25</sup> As the interviewee is speaking about his own work, the exact details have been amended to protect the interviewee's anonymity.

frequently act like just another interest group.' Which I agree with, I just don't give a shit. I might come back to that, is that all right?

The primary topic of this extract is Jason's struggle to decide whether he agrees or disagrees with statement S29, a task he finds so difficult that even after lengthy discussion he postpones until later. What is it that is so challenging about statement S29 for Jason? Jason is a civil servant arguing for a bureaucratic hierarchy in an era when more than 30 years of attack from both the right and the left has delegitimised the idea of bureaucratic hierarchy as elitist. Moreover, Jason has been explicitly presented with these arguments on the other statements and has himself just assented to one of them, that public organisations are just another interest group. Jason is thus troubled by the dissonance of trying to reconcile two contradictory views, that public organisations are interest groups and that they are neutral experts who can weigh up interests. Though Jason understandably fails to reconcile the two, he presents a persuasive case for the authority of experts to make decisions and it is illustrative to see how he achieves this.

The idea of public oversight and arbitration appears to be a new one for Jason. He asks for clarification but in doing so makes an argument that public oversight is through parliament and attempts to dismiss the idea of non-parliamentary means of oversight through making it seem strange and ill-thought out, "dragging people off the streets". Nonetheless, the researcher's clarification has the effect of shutting down this easy dismissal, forcing Jason to make a proper case. It is notable that the collective noun is then immediately transformed from 'public organisations' to 'experts', which is the first time that civil servants are referred to as experts in this interview. It is not surprising that the term experts is employed here; it is loaded with considerable rhetorical power and, as described in Chapter 3, claims to expertise are commonly used to justify authority. The term experts is potentially an inclusive category, it could include anyone, yet here it is being employed to make a category distinction: the public and politicians are not encompassed within the term experts<sup>26</sup>. This is reinforced by the comments that immediately proceed this extract, when Jason states that he disagrees with statement S09 because the public are not experts, they are experienced and these are different things. The substitution of experts for public organisation also functions to distance the decision-

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<sup>26</sup> It is perhaps noteworthy that this distinction between expert civil servants and non-expert politicians is one that reappears in a number of different interviews, and this is not only confined to interviews of civil servants.

makers from the people who were previously described as an interest group, helping to minimise the dissonance between the two ideas. A secondary category distinction quickly follows; Jason is “thinking about the kind of policy work I do”, which is “bloody technical”. The implication is that in less technical policy areas it may not be necessary for experts to make the decisions. This distinction performs two functions. It establishes Jason’s legitimacy for taking decisions about his own work; when Jason speaks about experts he is speaking about himself. It also establishes that he is not ideologically hierarchical, he only supports hierarchy when it is absolutely necessary.

There are two further justificatory strategies that Jason employs, which reappear in other interviews where civil servants make arguments for their authority to make decisions. The first appears contradictory but works to protect the speaker against the retort that he is authoritarian or anti-democratic. Though Jason rejects the idea that the public should provide scrutiny through non-parliamentary means, he first asserts the value of public scrutiny. Similarly, later in the interview, he reiterates his democratic credentials,

Even though I'm a democrat and I believe that people should have a voice, I still, the thing that's guiding the way I've set this out is this belief that having a voice is also about identifying experts to do the decision-making for you so that you don't have to.

The second strategy is to emphasise the need for experts to make decisions as a responsibility to the public. Civil servants are not power-hungry and their privileged role as decision-makers is not a power play; it is a burden that they bear on behalf of the public. It presents a positive picture of the civil servant as a servant of the public, not as, say, a maximiser of professional prestige (as in Public Choice Theory) or a stooge of bourgeois class interests (as in Marxism). This burden motif also recurs in other interviews, for instance; a number of participants state that the public want to influence decisions rather than take decisions, which is persuasive because, as the procedural preference literature shows, for at least some of the public this is true. This burden motif was particularly stark in the comments of Mark, another civil servant, (note there is again a protective link to the democratic):

I think it is that sort of democratic mandate, that we are the, people want to be able to hate us, in a way, they want us to make the decisions that they don't want to make, and they understandably don't want us to make, but it's our sort of duty to do so.

For Jason being a decision-maker is connected to a notion of professionalism. In just the short passage above he refers five times to the idea that if the experts cannot make a decision and have to devolve it to the public then they are failing to do their job properly. As aforementioned, Jason is not speaking abstractly in this passage, he is speaking about himself. The description is therefore partly about establishing a positive professional self-identity. Jason is not simply justifying an abstract principle of organisation, he is justifying his everyday practice. If he does not decide then he is a failure. The professional identity of the civil servant is an important factor behind a number of participants' justifications for expert decision-makers, at times clashing with participants more radical personal identities. Another two civil servants, Annette and Gary, for instance, both primarily paint a picture of participation as a means of government consultation, which belies their more radical personal views. Annette says from a personal perspective she is in favour of collective self-government, but from a professional point of view it is a long way off. At the end of the interview in which he played the role of a very cautious civil servant, Gary unexpectedly said that the things he had spoken about were very much influenced by the fact he had just come from work, and if the interview were to take place on a Saturday he might give responses that were more suspicious of institutions and more in favour of building a new way of doing democracy. It is also illustrative that the civil servants who reject the idea of specialised decision-makers define themselves against the traditional civil service culture. Nabil claims his team has a voluntary sector ethos, and Orla says that she is employed to improve outcomes and her bosses do not realise that her work is actually about realising people's right to participate.

'The experts' are the heroes of Jason's story. They are employing their considerable technical expertise to solve complex challenges that have important consequences for society. In addition, they are weighing up the interests of different groups to ensure that one interest group does not dominate a decision. This construction of the civil servant as neutral technocrat provides a positive professional identity, and also indemnifies against critique. Those who criticize can be construed as the interest groups who didn't get their own way, or those who do not want to face up to the difficult decisions. This way of thinking is undoubtedly productive for individual civil servants. It affords them a positive framework for interpreting and guiding their quotidian practice that is consonant with the traditional culture of their workplace, thus it is integrative, reducing friction in professional relationships. Orla and Nabil question this construction and present themselves more as insurgents fighting to bring about necessary culture change in a

resistant system. Unlike the other civil servants, they report frequent conflicts and frustration with their colleagues in other departments who do not understand how their teams work. The construction also provides clear guidance for dealing with the many interest group claims that civil servants are likely to be faced with in their work. To present as impartial enables one to engage with a number of conflicting groups whilst still retaining one's legitimacy with each group. In both the cases of technical decisions and arbitrating between interest groups the construction of public participation as 'voices' that need to be 'listened to' enables the civil servants to see themselves as acting democratically and to counter claims that they are hierarchical, without having to abandon their professional identity as expert decision-makers.

Though it has its productive features, a strong connection between the construction of the civil servant as a neutral, expert decision-maker and a positive sense of professional identity is also problematic in relation to participatory governance. If one's professional identity is tied to the idea of being a decision-maker, if I'm only doing my job properly if I'm making decisions, then calls to share decision power are going to be viewed at best as a criticism of performance and at worst as an existential threat. To concede that a collective decision process could do as good or better job is to admit failure, or worse, redundancy. Accordingly, such calls are likely to be resisted. This is, however, a trap in which the role of the civil servant is constructed too narrowly. Even though a number of participants in this study rejected the authority of bureaucrats to occupy the role expert decision-makers, they still saw the value of bureaucracy, and professed that there should be a more equal, collaborative relationship between the public and policy-makers. For these participants civil servants would still play an important role, but it should be in enabling and facilitating collective processes. As was observed with Jason and his claims that public organisations are interest groups, the idea of the civil servant as neutral expert is troubling even to civil servants who advocate it. Lauren also had significant difficulties with this idea as is apparent in the next extract.

Extract 5.22: The technocrat's dilemma (part 2)

So a load of conflicting things I've just said in that statement.

*No, I don't necessarily think so. [both laugh] What do you think was conflicting about it, I guess?*

I guess the kind of, my views on, yeah we can't be impartial but actually, I think the centre can be more impartial, but you know. I think it's so hard, I think it's an impossible job to kind of get that balance right between ensuring that people are engaged, participating, and have their, not just have a voice for the sake of sharing their voice, but actually that that voice is being acted upon. I think getting that right, but then making sure that each voice is equally listened to, I just think it's such a difficult tension to balance. But I think that's somewhere where, actually, the public couldn't necessarily, would you, I suppose the question is, can you get that if you devolve it entirely to the public? And I don't know.

*Yeah. I mean, I guess that's a common justification for government, I guess.*

Yes. And they've got your best interests at heart [*sarcastically*]. No, but you know, there is a sense as well that they are good at convening the expertise as well.

This passage follows one in which Lauren was asked why she is sceptical of transferring decision power away from civil servants, and in which she similarly tried and failed to fully convince herself of the role of civil servants as impartial decision-makers. In this extract we see the Janus-face of this idea for Lauren. The sarcasm of “they’ve got your best interests at heart” enables her to assert something she holds as true, whilst simultaneously disavowing it, to prevent her seeming naïve. She rather tentatively invokes the ‘tyranny of the majority’ argument to justify the decision-making power of the bureaucracy, but then undercuts it with her sarcasm, and settles on the ability to convene expertise. In the preceding passage, the same tyranny of the majority argument elides into an argument that the accountability of civil servants means more joined-up delivery. In attempting to justify the decision-making role, Lauren appears to be grappling with the problem of what’s the role of civil servants vis-à-vis the public if they are not impartial decision-makers. The idea that they are conveners of expertise, though here it has more of a stakeholder focus, is not too dissimilar to the facilitative or enabling role that those who favour participation as collective decision-making want to see.

### 5.22 *The radical's dilemma*

Now that we have seen how hierarchy within participatory policy-making is justified, it is illustrative to compare the counter-position: how radicals justify more egalitarian decision procedures. As mentioned in Chapter 4, a number of different decision procedures were advocated that challenged the idea of politicians and public officials as a special class of decision-makers. The following passage from the interview with Kate doesn't propose a particular approach to decision-making, but contains a number of the recurring justificatory strategies for challenging hierarchy that are employed by participants in the study who propose the various egalitarian approaches to decision-making. For context, Kate is an employee of a civil society organisation but is also personally involved in political campaigns as an activist. Like the extract from Jason, this passage is selected from near the beginning of the interview. Kate has just finished her Q-sort and has been asked to reflect on the process and whether there is anything she would like to challenge about the statements she was asked to rank.

#### Extract 5.23: The radical's dilemma

[...] also there needs to be more kind of focus on, proper kind of true participation that also involves making sure that there *isn't* this, "there is the general public who have no skills and then there are experts who have all the skills", I think there is something there about participation also involves making sure that the people who are the general public, who have the experience, are, decision makers. I think you know we're kind of building an arbitrary divide here, between between the people who can participate and the decision-makers who make the decisions, and so I, that's why I quite liked the ones about, yeah, like the public participation and the policy process should create a new relationship between public institutions and citizens in which both are *equal* partners in *co-creating* policy [...]

*I mean I guess the reason why there's quite a few statements that sort of make that, that dichotomy between the public, as people who kind of inform policy and then policymakers as the people who then take decisions is because that's often what policy makers say about public participation, so they're kind of representing that view, so I wonder what you think is wrong with that model, if you don't like it.*

Well I think that people who are decision-makers in one arena may well be participants in another arena, so you may well, you know, I don't know, you might be a government minister and make education policy, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you don't participate in a way much closer



to a normal individual about an issue around the environment on your local high street. I think you can be a policymaker in some situations and a participant in other situations and, and kind of someone with experience in other situations, as someone who you know is being impacted on that, by that, so I kind of I just sort of think and then the dividing line in between the people who can make the decisions and have all the knowledge and the people who participate in these kind of processes is a bit more fluid than it is when you set up a dichotomy between the people who know and do and the people who participate in what everyone else sets up for them.

I think probably there's also something around participation being a kind of iterative process in that once you participate once in something you become a different kind of participant to the first time. So there is a kind of there's disengaged people participating in public policy, then there are more engaged people and then there are your kind of sort of your expert citizens as it were, kind of serial participators, and then there are people who have been, stopped being you know policy officers etc., then there are decision-makers, and I think you can move through those without going straight from being completely uninformed to being a decision-maker, but you can also be any one of those in a different bit of your life at the same time.

In the first sentence of this extract Kate, rather hesitatingly, engages in a bold rhetorical move: she defines what is and is not “true participation”. True participation is when the public are decision-makers and there is no arbitrary divide between participants and decision-makers. The word “arbitrary” reinforces this rhetorical strategy given its etymological connection to notions of capricious randomness along with its conventional use in a political context to refer to anti-democratic or despotic decision-making. As was observed with the discussion of Arnstein’s Ladder in Chapter 3, the labelling of forms of participation that do not meet one’s own normative standards as outside of the bounds of real participation is a familiar strategy amongst those who feel collective decision-making is the only legitimate form of participation. To set up one's own normative preferences as *the* truth suggests a considerable confidence in the rightness of those preferences. This is quite a stark contrast with the type of justifications of hierarchy employed by civil servants, which we saw were much more tentative, usually including a protective clause, and primarily founded on pragmatic grounds. Participants who made arguments for more equal decision power appeared much more comfortable to simply assert these principles without lengthy justifications. Sarah, for instance, simply asserted, “It’s not about elected representatives having ultimate authority. Absolutely not.” The extract from Kate’s interview is therefore somewhat atypical in that it provides a detailed argument for why

decision power should be shared, whereas for many participants this appeared to be beyond need of justification.

Given her bold opening gambit it is interesting how Kate proceeds with the majority of her argument. Kate is primarily trying to establish the arbitrariness of the status distinctions that set up a special class of decision-makers. It is notable that in the first paragraph the general public's legitimacy as decision-makers is predicated on the notion it is they, not the experts, who have experiences. This accepts the premises but reverses the conclusion of Jason's argument that the public were only experienced and not expert, thus should not be decision-makers. Kate continues her argument in a similar vein, meeting her opponents on their own terrain. She makes three claims for why members of the public should not be excluded from decision-making. The first is that they may bring technical or decision-making expertise from other areas of their life that are not immediately apparent from their status as a normal individual. The second claim is that they may bring additional experiential expertise to the decision as someone who is impacted by it. Finally, the third claim is that people may bring decision-making experience from previous participatory activities. All three claims are in effect arguing that if you exclude the public from the decision you exclude some valuable experience or expertise that would make the decision better. They are pragmatic claims, unlike the normative "true participation" claim. Of course, Kate could have argued differently. She could have continued in a normative vein and challenged the notion that expertise and experience are the correct criteria for determining who should be a decision-maker, for instance, making the participatory democratic argument outlined in Chapter 4, that it is integral to someone's autonomy that they have equal power to determine the decisions that impact them. The result of Kate basing her argument in expertise is that she reinforces that this is the legitimate criterion for deciding who should be a decision-maker, so much so that by the end of this process she appears to be advocating the very distinctions she set out to undermine. The final sentence reads as if the uninformed must undertake a participatory apprenticeship before they are eventually rewarded with decision-making responsibility.

The question remains of why Kate, who appears to be normatively committed to equal power in decision-making, bases her argument on pragmatic grounds resulting in some semantic difficulties. There are a number of possibilities. First, perhaps it was simply the most salient argument in this context. Kate is responding against the idea that politicians and public officials should be specialised decision-makers, thus it is not surprising that she alights upon the primary reason that is given to justify this and

improvises a counter-argument within the terms of that debate. An alternative question – for instance, ‘should there be equal power to determine a decision?’ – may have elicited different justifications. Second, the idea that it is qualified people who should make decisions may be to some extent convincing for Kate, despite her conflicting preference for equal decision power. Third, the deployment of pragmatic arguments may have the same protective effect as when civil servants assert their democratic credentials. Radicals are rarely criticised for being too pragmatic or too hierarchical but are often criticised for being too idealistic. They are thus likely to be sensitive to dismissal as too idealistic and, accordingly, there is a symbolic potency to making pragmatic arguments.

This may also partly explain the ambivalent attitude to consensus decision-making that was documented in the previous chapter. Egalitarians have good cause to think that a commitment to consensus decision-making will mark them out as an idealist. It is frequently criticised as unrealistic, for instance; Lauren, the civil servant, refers to it as a “pie-in-the-sky dream”. A number of participants are sceptical or even disavow consensus while also positively describing consensus-like decisions. Jim, for instance, who we saw in the last chapter stated that consensus without a private vote is just the ability to silence the dissenter, later praises Occupy’s consensus decision procedure, though with the caveat that “You wouldn’t be able to make every decision in life through that”. It is particularly evident how the criticism of consensus functions in the comments of activist, Rebecca:

Yeah, I don't know if we can ever reach consensus, not a real consensus. I mean, on a, in the big picture, because humans aren't ever all going to think the same. You just need some degree of consensus, I suppose, but consent is very manufactured, isn't it, like you see it being manufactured all the time, what is reasonable and what is the middle ground. It's actually, that's actually very carefully constructed, it's not a natural position. So yeah, I think the sort of Occupy lot are just naive, really.

*About the consensus process?*

Yeah, about consensus. It's not all just, you don't just sort of do that wavey hand thing, the jazz hand thing, until you all agree.

Here Rebecca criticises consensus from both ends. She asserts her pragmatism and distinguishes herself from the naïve “Occupy lot”, who are made to appear slightly ridiculous, which is the kind of argument that Lauren would approve of. However, she also asserts her radical credentials in arguing, like Jim, that consensus is a power-play as the middle ground is manufactured; a little later in the interview it transpires that this manufacture is “by powerful interests, corporations, and the media, and politicians who

help them”. Just as some of the civil servants are sensitive to the criticisms that they are too hierarchical, and take measures to address this argument that cause them significant cognitive dissonance, some of the activists and civil society actors have the same experience with regard to the critique that they are too idealistic and their proposals are unrealistic. Rebecca ends her discussion of consensus exasperatedly, “I don't know, I'm not answering these very well, am I? I just don't know [*both laugh*]. I just don't know. I mean, they're like, they're big questions that I'm always mulling over and changing my mind on”.

The participants who are attempting to realise more egalitarian decision processes are most commonly battling against the status quo, in which decision power is not widely shared. Just like for any band of insurgents with the odds stacked against them, to be on the side of the righteous (as the standard-bearers of true participation) is likely an important motivation in sustaining this campaign. Still, in order to be successful they need to persuade those within the spaces where decision power is currently held that it should be shared. It is therefore no surprise to find these participants are responsive to the logic of the civil service in their arguments for more equal decision power. In this context it is a wise move to position themselves as expert and pragmatic. When addressed directly to civil servants, the argument that they say the experts should make decisions but in restricting the number of decision-makers they are excluding a wealth of expertise and experience is in one sense very rhetorically effective. The civil servant either has to agree or appear paternalistic; to make a case that the public does not possess any expertise, or make Jason's claim that the public has a kind of expertise but it is not the right kind to enable them to take decisions. It is one thing to make such a case in a private interview with a researcher (another technocrat), but quite another to do it publicly to the people who will be excluded.

The other way that the idea of the citizen expert functions productively is in boosting the confidence of ordinary citizens to participate. For people like Kate, who is a confident and skilled political operator in paid employment in a political role, this is not an issue. But some of the volunteer participants remarked that they and others can be afraid of participating with policy-makers, for instance Carly said, “I think normal people would be scared to engage with politicians. It's like me when I started like, you're wary of them, you think they're higher up. You always have that”. In addition, Gabriella, when discussing her role as co-chair of a local authority poverty initiative, said,

That's why we've got him [Council Leader] sitting there, co-chairing with me, who is just somebody--well I'm not 'just somebody.' I am an important person as well [*laughs*]. But coming from an area that has got a lot of deprivation and sitting along with him.

Constructing the citizen as possessing their own expertise, different from that of the policy-makers, is a way for people who are unsure of their status to feel that they are not 'just somebody', that they have an important contribution to make. Both Carly and Gabriella take pleasure in recounting experiences where they imparted everyday insight that was new knowledge to policy-makers.

There are also dangers to a single-minded focus on the institutionalisation of more egalitarian power relationships between the public and officials within a professionalised and hierarchical bureaucracy. In the discussion of her involvement as co-chair, it is apparent that Gabriella experiences cultural barriers to participating in decisions. She describes officials as "suits" with "a business-like attitude", who have their own agenda and go off and do their own thing. She also experiences her role as co-chair as only the veneer of power. Asked if she feels the initiative is having an impact on policies, she responds:

I don't know if... Because they come along to the meetings, and you know, we've got the leader of the council chairing it with me. Do they almost feel compelled to come because it's the leader of the council? You know, do they really want to be there, or are they just doing what the boss was saying? I've noticed that even if I'm going through the agenda item, there isn't eye contact with me. It's the leader who's being addressed.

*Right.*

It's him that they look at. And I can see the, you know, the body language and the kind of little nervousness in their faces. It's the leader, you know. Can't disagree with him or annoy him, you know? And it's just like, what, I'm supposed, I'm sitting here right next to him, I'm supposed to be the co-chair, but I'm not getting noticed. This is what I mean by, although they're coming along to the table, we're supposed to be sitting side by side, does that really, genuinely happen?

The formal sharing of power may simply obscure the ways that power relations play out, as power is exerted through more amorphous, less accountable means; the real decisions are taken outside of the public decision space, or through implicit professional pressures. What happens to accountability when there are more egalitarian relationships between public and officials was a live debate for participants. For Anna and Michael creating personal bonds between citizens and officials would increase accountability by increasing the

responsibility officials would feel for those they have come to know. Contrariwise, Elizabeth worried that participation could reduce an individual's scope to challenge if they feel complicit in the decision, and Flora worried that her growing closeness to decision-makers made it more difficult to criticise them:

It is very difficult to keep clear oppositional positions against people you drink beer or wine with, you know? It is. Because you start to understand their difficulties, and actually you kind of need not to.

It is apparent then that even those who show support for collective decision-making worry about its dangers, such as a tendency to co-opt by reducing the ability to challenge decisions, as well as to conceal existing inequalities in power.

This section has foregrounded some of the arguments that underpin disagreements on the distribution of decision power within participatory policy-making. Civil servants' professional identity as impartial decision-makers clashes with the egalitarian value that true participation involves equal decision-making power. It became apparent, however, that the participants are not ideologues. They have nuanced positions and express significant doubts about their preferred mode of participation. Those who feel decisions should be the domain of neutral officials doubt the ability of neutrals to act impartially. Those who want to see more equal distribution of formal decision power are aware that this comes with risks that power is exerted in other ways.

The presentation of the ways that people reason through their preferences has begun to provide an insight into the nature of these preferences. It was made apparent how the preferences are rhetorically constructed. In justifying how they rank certain statements, participants implicitly take account of common attacks against their position. Civil servants wanting to retain decision power emphasised their democratic credentials, inuring them against the critique of being overly hierarchical. Egalitarians emphasise their pragmatism, distancing themselves from accusations of naivety. There is also evidence that preferences are productive tools. The idea of the public's expertise can boost the confidence of participants to engage with elites. There is value to the civil servant's self-identity as neutral technocrat. It provides a unifying organisational culture, as well as helping to manage varied interest group claims. Still, it can also be a trap that makes opportunities to collaborate look like threats.

### 5.3 Conflict and Self-Interest

In Chapter 3 it was argued that a defining feature of alternative approaches to the design of social and political institutions throughout history has been the extent to which citizens are regarded as predominantly self-interested or other-oriented and thus whether social relations are predominantly agonistic or solidaristic. This division between agonistic and solidaristic approaches to participation was predicted to be a prominent cleavage between participants in the study. It did separate Preference 3 from Preference 1 and Preference 2. Nevertheless, Chapter 4 detailed how the overwhelming majority of participants favoured solidaristic approaches to participation and eschewed agonistic ideas. As such, this issue provides a counterpoint to the overt contestation around who decides. Rather than being a highly visible point of contestation, it is for the most part an absence. Given the importance of conflict and self-interest in a number influential political theories, from Hobbes to the public choice school, it is interesting to see how the participants address these issues. Have they identified a means for radical egalitarian organisation to deal with the problem of strategic self-interest, or does this remain somewhat of a blind-spot?

One way to deal with the problem of self-interest is to deny that citizens are self-interested at all. Jim gives the most forthright statement of such a view:

She [Margaret Thatcher] basically said, people are selfish and if we accept their selfishness and then create a market for them to be selfish within, everyone will benefit. Well, I don't believe that. I believe the opposite. That everybody is actually altruistic and if we create a place where people's needs are listened to, they can then act in a more adult and altruistic manner. Then everyone benefits.

The other participants do not state their view in such absolute terms. They concede that citizens are mostly a complex mix of self-interest and public-spiritedness. Even so, their presentation and practices emphasise the latter over the former. Michael, for instance, points to the neglect of one side of Adam Smith's writings, claiming that greed and fellow-feeling hold together, then summarises the practice of his organisation as "trying to bring out the best in people, rather than always believing the worst in people." A further common strategy for minimising the problem of self-interest can be seen in the following extract from the interview with Elizabeth.

Extract 5.31: Self-interest as personal passions

And as I say, I think self-interest, there's something just about the self-interest which is where self-interest is defined as kind of purely very self-seeking, and there's--if you were to talk about self-interest in terms of personal passions, they're still the things that interest you yourself, but maybe it's a less conventional. I suppose it's a less ego, I don't know. It's a less self-seeking and self-serving definition of self-interest, where you recognise that actually, you know, you do need to tap into what people feel is really important to them, and what they're interested in. Because otherwise, they won't engage so much, isn't it. [...]

*Yeah. I guess it's just, if you did think that people were sort of only--were more, in a sense, likely to be self-interested than, and not be able to kind of transcend that just individual interest about, 'I want to get from this process what I want to get from it, and I don't care what other people's needs are.'*

Oh, I think people definitely transcend. You know, I think part of the process of participation--and again this goes back to the listening and the relationships horizontally as well as vertically, you know. It, you know, I think that is one of the, that is one of the pluses. I do think that good participation can produce a greater sense of, yeah, where the differences are, but also where people have things in common and a sense of--yeah, I think there is a common good element to it, for sure, that takes people out of themselves. But I don't think that it's, I don't think it's therefore a bad thing to recognise that people bring into that things that really motivate them. You know, I think that's a very, it's a very human part of it, isn't it?

In this passage Elizabeth sanitises the idea of self-interest, transforming it from self-serving ego into motivating, personal passions. This positive re-framing of self-interest from a potential threat to the common good to an essential motivation for people to get involved in political participation is widespread amongst the participants. In order for people to engage you have to meet with their interests and their problems, then through participation they begin to think outside of themselves; they become a part of a public and begin to think structurally.

Another, more subtle, challenge to the idea that Jim and Michael rejected of strategic, self-interested *Homo economicus* is elaborated in the second part of the passage from Elizabeth. Through the process of participation people transcend their personal interests and move towards the common good. Their preferences are malleable and endogenous to the process, not fixed and exogenous. Given this, egalitarian processes of collective decision-making, when well organised and well facilitated, can be a means for



surmounting conflicts. Orla, for instance, describes a participatory budgeting initiative in an ethnically divided community, where previous top-down local authority spending decisions had exacerbated tensions. The process began with “nobody talking to anyone and an atmosphere you could cut with a knife”, but over the two-day duration of the initiative tensions were broken down and the different groups started collaborating with each other. By the end of the process, Orla explains, it was “feel the love territory”. To suggest that those who favour a collective decision-making approach to participation are blind to the role of self-interest and conflict in participatory initiatives would be an over-simplification. They see the importance of personal interest in motivating an individual to participate. The importance of facilitation and other process design techniques in minimising interest group domination and ensuring everyone has a voice recur throughout the interviews. Moreover, the promise of overcoming interest group conflicts and doing politics differently is a primary attraction of this mode of participation.

There is evidence that, despite alertness to these issues, the prevalence and persistence of self-interest and conflict are minimised, suggesting they may be underestimated. Participation as collective decision-making can undoubtedly overcome some conflicts, but even its advocates admit it would be unrealistic to expect it to work in all situations. After describing the successful participatory budgeting initiative, Orla says, “I’m not saying that’s going to work for everything”. Elizabeth recognises that there will be times when groups will try to secure their own needs, especially when there is competition for resources. Sarah, who perhaps has the strongest collective decision-making orientation of the participants, demarcates the boundaries of where her views apply on more than one occasion in her interview:

Whether you could do, you know, areas where there's a lot more competition, say around wind farms or all that kind of stuff and all the NIMBY stuff, then that's a different matter. But in certain areas, this works fine.

Though they state that their preferred mode of participation does not work in all contexts, the participants are vague about where and when it works and where and when it doesn't. There was also little consideration from these participants of how a collective decision-making initiative that fails to result in an acceptably negotiated decision should be concluded. When Sarah is pressed about how decisions are made when there is conflict she begins to speak about how she would stop participating if she strongly disagreed with the group on an important point of principle. This echoes a frequent criticism of radical

participatory democracy that, since all forms of coercion are forbidden, there is no means for resolving conflicts apart from expulsion, splintering or dissolution of the group, which hardly seems like a satisfactory outcome on matters of collective public concern. As was noted in Chapter 3, the collective decision-making mode of participation is far from widespread in policy institutions in the UK. Those who wish to see more of it are faced with institutional scepticism and have to be strong advocates for why it works. As such, it is perhaps no surprise that they are better at making arguments about why it will work than defining the boundaries of its limitations

Self-interest and conflict were more readily accepted as an everyday part of participatory initiatives by those who favoured the knowledge transfer mode of participation. This is particularly true amongst the civil servants, some of whom we have already seen incorporated a pluralist element into their understanding of participation. As foreshadowed earlier in this chapter in the discussion of Extract 5.21 from the interview with Jason, it is a relatively simple move to extend the role of the civil servant from an expert weighing up all the evidence and making a decision to an impartial arbiter weighing up competing interests. Nonetheless, it was noted how some civil servants found their supposed neutrality or impartiality troubling. One of the keys to this conception of policy-making is to locate conflicts among stakeholders – for instance, between benefit recipients and taxpayers, employers and members of pension schemes, tenants and landlords – with the policy-maker remaining aloof from such conflicts in order to govern impartially. We saw that for Jason much of his difficulty with statement S29 was due to him previously stating that public organisations were just another interest group, thus not removed from the conflict.

The perception that public institutions are enmeshed in, rather than detached from, social conflicts was prevalent among the activist participants. They were much more likely to present conflicts as situated between public institutions and the public than between different stakeholders. This cannot simply be attributed to radical political viewpoints. Celia and Stella, for instance, both favour the knowledge transfer mode of participation. They stress the role of elected officials and public servants in assessing the big picture and taking decisions based on a wide range of evidence. Their own activism is motivated by what they see as the failure of current government to adequately fulfil this role, Celia says she has given up participating in government-led participation opportunities on welfare:

Because anything that they would enable or set up is going to be a load of crap and they're not going to listen to it anyway, so you've got to, you know if you want to--with a government like this, if you want to have a voice, or have power, you've got to be an activist and a campaigner and you've got to take a fight to them, basically, in whatever way you can. But that's not necessarily the case, probably, for all areas of decision-making or policy. This is just my experience of the DWP.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is particularly singled out for criticism by a number of participants, who claim that it has its own agenda and is not interested in what they have to say. In describing how the poverty initiative she is involved with has tried to engage the DWP, but were told that it would be too political for the DWP to get involved, Carly says, "So they wouldn't want to be seen to be fighting poverty and challenging stigma, because it's against their--you understand what I mean? Their, it's them that's the cause, so you know." Carly interprets the DWP's attempt to assert its neutrality as further confirmation that it has its own specific agenda, one that is not committed to reducing poverty. The comment points to the problem with public organisations' attempts to assert their impartiality when they are perceived to be the direct cause of the problem by one side in a politically polarised debate. It is extremely unlikely in such a situation that any claims to impartially assess all the evidence and make a neutral judgement will have sufficient credibility with all sides to garner legitimacy for a decision.

This discussion of the perceptions of self-interest and conflict in participation has further elaborated understanding of the knowledge transfer and collective decision-making modes and preferences. The individuals who hold these preferences are not wholly blind to self-interested or agonistic practices. This section has demonstrated that the participants do find means for addressing such practices, most commonly means that mesh, more or less, with their orientation to participation. In each case, however, the solidaristic predisposition of participants does appear to result in a partial blindness to certain forms of conflict. Those who favour the collective decision-making mode underestimate the prevalence and persistence of self-interested conflicts among the public. Those who favour the knowledge transfer mode over-estimate the extent to which public officials are detached from conflicts and can claim impartiality. This analysis has again helped to illuminate some aspects of the nature of the preferences people hold. It was apparent from Elizabeth's sanitisation of self-interest into 'personal passions' how participants can reinterpret the unfamiliar so that it fits with an existing set of meanings – a process social representations theorists have called anchoring. There were also examples of the ways that people draw context-specific

boundaries around their preferences, for instance; Sarah's view that her approach might not work for policy topics on which there is a lot of NIMBYism.

#### **5.4 So, What is a Procedural Preference?**

Section 5.1 of this chapter set up a dichotomy between a cognitivist approach to researching political attitudes and a more discursive approach. The former mainly employs large-scale survey analysis and has dominated the procedural preference literature. The latter is usually characterised by the use of qualitative techniques and has so far been absent from debates on procedural preferences. If preferences are more like cognitions then we should expect them to be consistent and context-independent. If they are more like discourses we should expect them to be ambivalent and context-sensitive. It was argued that this study provides something of an ideal test case, since the subject area is one where we might expect to find sociological ambivalence, yet the participants' knowledge of the subject means they should be expected to have relatively stable preferences. This concluding section of the chapter draws together the lessons of Sections 5.2 and 5.3 and discusses their implications for the nature of procedural preferences, situating them in the theoretical literature discussed in Section 5.1. It first addresses the question of whether preferences are context-independent or context-sensitive. Then it examines the evidence for ambivalence versus consistency. Finally, there is an assessment of the effects of the preferences, whether they are tools or traps.

##### *5.41 Are participation preferences context-independent or context-sensitive?*

There are a number of ways that participation preferences appeared to be constituted in relation to specific contexts. In the above analysis this was most obvious in the ways that preferences were bounded by policy issue context. Jason connected his preference for experts to make decisions to the technical complexity of certain policy issues, and stated it may not apply to other less technical areas like prison sentences. Sarah's preference for solidaristic processes was related to the particular issue on which she works, but she said it may not be appropriate for other, more competitive issues like placement of wind farms. There were a number of other ways that the importance of

context manifested itself. Just as with a survey questionnaire, in the Q-sorting process participants were faced with a range of decontextualized statements to respond to. The lack of 'object context' caused them significant difficulties in deciding whether they agreed or disagreed with a statement. Problems in sorting statements were attributed to: a) geographical context, different types of participation were felt to be more appropriate at different geographical levels; b) political context, different types of participation may be necessary depending on levels of trust between citizens and public organisations; and c) participation type, some participants wanted the type of participation pre-defined (e.g. consultation or co-production), which was particularly problematic given the objective of the process was to allow participants to define participation for themselves.

The discussion in Sections 5.2 and 5.3 also hinted at three aspects of the discursive context that were constitutive of participants' preferences. Gary and Annette both said that they were speaking through their professional identities as civil servants and that in Gary's words, "talk to me on a Saturday, I'd be very different". This is an archetypal example of Merton's second type of sociological ambivalence, "in which the interests and values incorporated in different statuses occupied by the same person result in mixed feelings and compromise behaviour" (1976, 9). Furthermore, it was discussed how the setting, a private research interview with someone who could also be considered an expert technocrat, presented a particular scenario in which it was acceptable for Jason to suggest that the public do not have the right kind of expertise to make a decision. It is questionable whether this argument would occur to him if he were speaking publicly to a group demanding inclusion. In addition, we saw how Kate's switch from normative to pragmatic justifications for equal decision power proceeded out of the specificities of the kind of question she was responding to. Each case suggests that it was features of the discursive context in which the conversation took place that were at least partly constitutive of the views that were espoused. Object context and discursive context are thus potential sources of a substantial amount of variability in a single participants' preferences; variability that would not be captured by rating, on a scale of 0-10, whether allowing experts to decide is the best or worst kind of way to make political decisions (as in: Bengtsson 2012; Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015).

#### 5.42 *Are participation preferences ambivalent or consistent?*

In performing the Q-sort and through discussion in the interview participants did not appear to be simply responding to objects according to a pre-existing, fully-formed participation preference. Instead they appear to be arguing (with themselves) for certain practices and against others, often trying to find a path through difficult issues. This is particularly apparent in Rebecca's comment that she was always mulling over and changing her mind on these big questions. This conforms to Billig's (1991) thesis that thinking is itself arguing and our private thoughts reproduce public debates. Accordingly, we saw above that preferences are expressed in ways that were rhetorically oriented, both offensively and defensively. Kate's pragmatic argument that citizens should be involved in decision-making because of their expertise, for instance, functions both to protect her from criticism as a naïve idealist and to undermine a key argument for why public officials should retain decision power. Kate's characterisation of 'true participation', defined against an arbitrary distinction between decision-makers and participants, is also evidence to suggest that procedural preferences have a cultural element in that they are defined in opposition to alternative ways of organising. Moreover, throughout a number of the passages reproduced above, there is evidence that even strong preferences are dilemmatic (Billig 1991) – that is, contain ambivalent themes. Even those participants such as Lauren, Kate and Sarah with statistically very clear preferences (see Table 4.13, Chapter 4) demonstrate significant ambivalence or contingency on the issue of the distribution of decision power, which sits at the core of their expressed preference. Participants were frequently self-reflexive about their ambivalence throughout their interview, chastising themselves for being hypocritical or contradictory, as can be observed in the first line of Extract 5.22 from Lauren's interview.

The rhetorical orientation of the expressed preferences, coupled with their sensitivity to context challenges the cognitivist notion that individuals have persisting participation preferences that can be unproblematically captured by survey questions. The observed variability and ambivalence is consistent, however, with the discourse approach espoused by Potter and Wetherall (1987). Following this approach, the four modes of participation outlined in Chapter 3 could be seen as furnishing individuals with a range of 'interpretive repertoires' – lexicons of recurrently used terms and metaphors – that participants in this study drew on to perform different tasks as the particular discursive context demanded. Nonetheless, there is something unsatisfying about the discourse

approach, which is that the relation between preference and individual disappears altogether. If preferences are the application of discursive repertoires to appropriate discursive contexts, then the individual preference is simply a series of fleeting discursive acts. It suggests that any individual can and is likely to draw on any interpretive repertoire. Though it explains inconsistency and ambivalence in preferences, it does not help to explain the consistent regularities.

Participants expressed a great deal of consistency in their preferences. They engaged in a number of behaviours that were suggestive of personal predispositions. Though there was ambivalence, there was also certainty, for example; it was noted above that Sarah dismissed the idea that officials should have ultimate authority with just two words “Absolutely not.” Participants were also observed engaging in processes of anchoring: Elizabeth transformed self-interest into ‘personal passions’ to fit with her more solidaristic orientation, and Chapter 4 described how Janeane interpreted participation’s potential oversight function so that it fit with the notion that the public should work alongside officials by bringing complementary experiential expertise. Jason and Kate both employed the same interpretive repertoire – that expertise substantiates claims to wield decision power – to argue for contradictory ends. Kate claimed it justified citizen power, while Jason claimed it justified official power, thus the same repertoire was employed differently by each participant, but in ways that were consistent with the greater part of the other arguments each espoused. In addition, the Q-sort presented participants with a variety of statements encompassing multiple discursive repertoires that they ranked in highly patterned ways that were theoretically predictable and similar to what has been empirically observed in other studies (Bengtsson 2012; Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015).

Gaskell’s (2001) notion that social cognitions and social representations’ possess a stable core and flexible periphery provides one way to explain this simultaneous consistency and ambivalence. Nevertheless, this approach is also unsatisfying. As discussed at length above, there is substantial ambivalence even on the question of the distribution of decision power, which the principal component analysis in Chapter 4 identified as a core principle for each of the two primary modes of participation. An alternative approach is to think of individuals as having a probabilistic orientation (Zaller and Feldman 1992). When an individual constructs their preference regarding participation they will do so in light of multiple conflicting considerations, which could potentially take them in different directions. There are no core aspects of an individual’s preference that are immune from conflict and questioning; they are at heart dilemmatic. An individual

possesses a preference when in the majority of circumstances she resolves such conflicts in a certain direction. Kate and Jason are both conflicted on issues at the centre of their participation preference. Still, Kate keeps returning to the idea that decision power should be more equally distributed, whilst Jason keeps returning to the idea that officials should be the ones to make decisions.

In summary, the participants in this study act rhetorically. They argue with themselves, often contradicting themselves. They are sensitive to the discursive and object context. However, their discursive acts are not randomly determined by discursive context. Different participants have differently patterned responses when such acts are viewed in aggregate. To say that an individual has a strong preference is to say that this aggregate pattern shows consistency. Principal component analysis and factor analysis on survey data, with its additional stage of aggregation, is useful in capturing the contours of the debates on an issue. However, we should be careful about using such methods to pack individuals in neat procedural preferences boxes. It is debatable whether it is possible to classify any individual as possessing a generalised preference for, say, citizen-led decision-making that applies in all contexts in the way that current research on procedural preferences implies. It may be possible to use statistical analyses to argue that, all things being equal, an individual has a predisposition to favour citizen-led decision-making, but in many cases all things are not equal. Even in this study, with its greater specificity of context, the views of participants with statistically unambiguous preferences are characterised by understandable ambivalence, confusion, and context-specific variations. Individuals may have a predisposition towards favouring participation as knowledge transfer or collective decision-making. Still, their ability to move flexibly between preferences should not be underestimated, particularly when the object or discursive context changes. A mixed methods approach that collects both quantitative and qualitative data on a person's preference is thus instrumental in understanding their multi-faceted nature.

#### *5.43 Are participation preferences tools or traps?*

A number of ways that participation preferences were constituted so as to be productive for the preference holder have been documented throughout this chapter. It was argued that self-identifying as a neutral decision-maker was useful for the civil servant in



accommodating themselves to the dominant organisational culture, as well as negotiating with a variety of interests groups. For those who favour collective-decision-making, to be on the side of the righteous in advocating for true participation, and to be vague about the limitations of this approach, are important in sustaining the motivations of those trying to see their vision realised against the odds. Still, just as participants' preferences are characterised by ambivalence and consistency, they can be both tools and traps. At times, it was observed how the very thing that makes a preference productive for negotiating a complex social environment can also prevent individuals from seeing the value of alternatives or adapting to changed contexts.

An identity as a neutral, expert decision-maker meant that Jason saw any devolution of decision power as a threat to his role rather than an opportunity for collaboration. It also caused problems for the DWP when they made claims to impartiality in a situation where they were seen by others as implicated in politicised debates. This is not to say it is never legitimate for public institutions to play the role of neutral arbiter or broker, only that their ability to do so with credibility is circumstance dependent. Paradoxically, it may be most tempting for a public institution to assert its neutrality exactly when its credibility is challenged. Nevertheless, adopting an alternative approach, for instance, instituting a participation initiative as an arbitration or oversight mechanism may prove much more effective in producing a decision that commands legitimacy in such circumstances.

The vagueness over how to do collective decision-making when self-interest and conflict are prevalent is also problematic for its advocates. If collective decision-making does not work in all contexts, then this is exactly the kind of knowledge that is necessary to make it successful. Does this mode of participation simply exacerbate conflict? Participatory decision-making has been observed to obscure differences and conflicts, rather than open them up to greater examination and resolution (Mansbridge 1980). For this type of participation to function effectively in areas where there are deep-seated political conflicts – as there currently are, for instance, around social security benefits – there needs to be a good understanding of how collective decision-making can be realised in such circumstances, or whether other modes of participation would prove more effective.

One way to address the problem of preferences becoming traps is to provide individuals with multiple frames for thinking about participation and their role in it; a task that the typology of four modes of participation can assist with. Some of the participants

demonstrated they were already skilled in this regard, for instance; take Flora's comment on how she approaches her participation as a healthcare activist:

I mean it's it's not the right sort of scenario but I mean I still consider myself a revolutionary socialist, but this isn't about that kind of political scenario. We're not trying to change the context of the system of healthcare, we're trying to fix it, we are trying to save it, we are trying to make it as good as we can.

In her participatory activities Flora brackets her revolutionary socialism and desire to radically overturn power relationships as inappropriate to the political scenario in which she is participating. Instead she applies an alternate frame to her participation and orientates herself to the practical concern of how she can make healthcare services better. Similarly, Orla can switch between different conceptions of her role as a civil servant. In general she doubts the neutrality of policy-makers and works towards more participatory decision-making, but also gives specific reasons why in one particular circumstance it may be more efficient for her team to act as the neutral decision-makers rather than organising a participatory process. Of course this project to provide actors with a range of different frames would generate ambivalence by design, with its attendant risks as well as opportunities.

In the previous chapter it was suggested that the heterogeneity between participants' preferences for participation provides an imperative for creating diverse sets of participation opportunities. If participatory governance is to truly attract broad-based participation it needs to take account of the different ways that people wish to participate. The heterogeneity within participants' preferences for participation outlined in this chapter – that most participants are able to recognise the inherent logics of different ways of doing participation and some can even flexibly switch between them – suggests that a system of diverse participatory opportunities may also be able to command widespread legitimacy. The next chapter will explore in detail what such a systemic approach to participatory policy-making might look like. Drawing on the deliberative systems approach for inspiration it will investigate which functions a policy system has to fulfil, and which modes of participation might best realise those functions.

## Chapter 6

### A Systemic Approach to Participation in Public Administration

*Arbitrary reduction of multiple and conflicting principles to one solitary survivor, guillotining all the other evaluative criteria is not, in fact, a prerequisite for getting useful and robust conclusions on what should be done.*

Amartya Sen, The Idea of Justice

The existence of multiple and conflicting principles of participation, as well as multiple and conflicting preferences for participation, presents the problem of what to do with all of this diversity. The variety of demands on political institutions created by diversity of preferences for political decision-making is considered by some as an insurmountable barrier to engineering an institutional solution that commands widespread support (Bengtsson and Christensen 2016). So, how should we approach the design of participatory policy institutions in light of these competing demands? One solution is to select a preferred mode of participation, argue for its superiority, and design all institutions in its image, discarding the other modes of participation. Given previous chapters' critique of Arnstein and her followers for taking this type of approach, it may come as little surprise that such 'guillotining' is not advocated in this chapter. There is however a more inclusive solution to this problem of value pluralism. The pessimism over the possibility of designing legitimate institutions when faced with heterogeneous preferences is based on an assumption that institutional solutions cannot themselves be heterogeneous. This chapter argues for a more 'ecumenical' approach to institutional design (G. Smith 2009) that recognises the importance of a diversity of different types of opportunities to participate in governance. It adopts a systemic approach to describe how complex policy systems can be founded on what Amartya Sen (2010) has called a 'plural grounding'.

There are now a number of disparate approaches that challenge the idea that institutional arrangements must be founded on a single, coherent set of values or principles. In criticising the 'transcendental institutionalism' of social contract theorists such as Hobbes, Rousseau and Rawls, Sen (2010) has made the case for a capacious theory of justice that recognises the inescapable plurality of competing principles, rather than identifies a single set of transcendental principles of justice with a resulting institution

arrangement. Similarly, Grid-Group Cultural Theorists' recent turn towards 'clumsy solutions' (Verweij and Thompson 2006) is an attempt to deal with the persisting diversity of plausible worldviews. Many of the leading proponents of this field now argue that, given this diversity, any 'elegant' solution to solving a policy problem that attempts to optimise around the problem definition and solutions of one cultural orientation is guaranteed to fail to achieve widespread and longstanding legitimacy. They call for clumsy solutions that constructively harness the contestation between different cultural orientations (Verweij et al. 2006a). Sen has argued that a broad theory that encompasses non-congruent considerations does not by any means become incoherent, unmanageable, or useless; "definite conclusions can emerge despite the plurality" (2010, 397). There are now a number of examples of the clumsy solutions approach providing new insights on seemingly intractable policy problems such as climate change (see: Verweij and Thompson 2006) by including voices from across what Gastil et al. (2016) call cultural cognitive divides. Nonetheless, they have only hinted at the realisation of the clumsy institutional forms that would take account of diversity in procedural preferences (Verweij et al. 2006a).

A systems approach provides a framework for how to conceive of and construct such institutions. Systems thinking offers a means for breaking free of the models-based approach to democracy and public administration, whereby institutions are theorised from within a single normative model, in order to consider the functions a political system must realise and the mechanisms best suited to serving them (Warren 2012). A key insight of the increasingly influential deliberative systems approach is that no single deliberative arena is sufficient to fully perform all the functions necessary to authorise political decisions (Dryzek 2010; Mansbridge et al. 2012; Parkinson 2006). It is systemic in that it considers deliberative arenas as:

A set of distinguishable, differentiated but in some ways interdependent parts, often with distributed functions and a division of labour, connected in such a way as to form a complex whole. (Mansbridge et al. 2012, 4)

The notion that there can be a division of labour between deliberative arenas with each performing different functions shifts the way we should analyse particular instances of deliberation. It is this that alters expectations of them, so that a single site of deliberation is not expected to carry the entire burden of legitimacy for authorising a political decision. In addition, though it is still important to judge sites of deliberation independently, they should also be judged in relation to other parts of the system and in terms of their systemic

effects. A specific weakness of one deliberative arena may not prove to be very important if this is remedied by another component of the deliberative system. Contrariwise an exemplary case of deliberation may turn out to be problematic if it displaces other important components of the system (Mansbridge et al. 2012).

Many of the benefits attributed to the deliberative systems approach are similarly beneficial for reconceptualising the ways we think about participation. Just as with deliberative innovations, there is a tendency to think of new participatory initiatives (which are in some cases the same thing) as individual projects without considering their relations to the broader political system and other means for participation. Once we accept that no participation exercise can realise all the myriad benefits attributed to participation, but different participatory activities can contribute to realising different functions, it opens up possibilities for increased participatory diversity. We may be more forgiving of particular instances of participation that fail to engage a certain group of people if part of the reason for that failure is this group already has another means to make their voices heard. We may be more accepting of types of participation that do not meet our own particular normative conception of participation too. Those who favour the collective decision-making approach to participation, for example, may accept knowledge transfer type activities that aim to collect experiential expertise to inform decisions, perhaps even view these as useful, if they take place in a system where there are other opportunities to realise citizen control. Moreover, thinking systemically helps bring to light the broader context and systemic problems that condition specific instances of participation, for instance; if a large number of participatory activities are failing to engage a certain group in the population, then rather than seeing this as an individual failing of specific initiatives we may instead be drawn to thinking about systemic remedies.

This chapter applies a systemic approach to public participation in processes of public administration. It first argues for why it would be inappropriate to simply apply the influential deliberative systems approach to thinking about participation in policy systems, identifying three forms of synecdoche when the deliberative system is applied to participatory public policy. It then outlines an alternative approach that harnesses the insights from value pluralism and systems thinking to propose three functions that policy systems have to realise: *effectiveness*, *autonomy* and *accountability*. It shows how these functions are best served by different modes of participation, using examples of actual participation in the English National Health Service (NHS) to illustrate. The concluding section then considers some of the ways that different modes and functions can be

structured within a system, as well as the ways to assess how well a system is operating and how the approach can illuminate existing issues in participatory practice.

### **6.1 Beyond the Deliberative System**

The deliberative system has capacious boundaries. All of the most prominent statements of the deliberative systems approach intend for it to include public administration (see: Dryzek, 2010; Mansbridge et al., 2012; Parkinson, 2006). It encompasses “all governmental and non-governmental institutions, including governance networks and the informal friendship networks that link individuals and groups discursively on matters of common concern” (Mansbridge et al. 2012, 8). The term ‘deliberative system’ conceals the extent to which these scholars are similarly agreed that the approach is intended to be a theory of participation just as much as it is a theory of deliberation. The term was coined by Mansbridge in an attempt to expand deliberative democracy to take account of everyday political talk, in an essay where: “The analysis calls throughout for a democratic theory that puts the citizen at the center” (1999, 212). If the deliberative system already encompasses participation in public administration, then a new approach would be unnecessary. However, there are question marks over how well a theory originally intended to explain the political/legislative process translates to the policy/administration process. How does deliberative governance conceive of public administration, and what forms of participation does it prioritise? This section argues that in both cases the deliberative systems approach inscribes a synecdochic conception: it reduces public administration to governance networks and public participation to talk and deliberative influence.

The deliberative system may include ‘all governmental institutions, including governance networks’, yet the position of governance networks, public bureaucracies and the roles of public administrators within the deliberative system are left unspecified by Mansbridge et al. (2012). Most of the empirical examples of deliberative innovations analysed by Parkinson (2006) are from the NHS, so we may expect a more detailed account of deliberative public administration therein. Nonetheless, whilst Parkinson’s specification of the deliberative system expends a great deal of effort on reconceptualising the representative relationship, there is no such treatment of the bureaucracy. Bureaucrats

are neutral functionaries who manage, monitor and implement but play no role in decision-making (2006, 169). Given the context of the empirical work in the NHS, this is a surprising omission considering the number of appointed officials taking binding decisions on matters of common concern in this domain is likely much greater than the number of elected officials with a representative relationship to the public. It is guilty of common tendency amongst deliberative democrats to slip into a stylized distinction between democratic politics as the locus of will-formation and public administration as a process of neutral translation of democratic will into output (Boswell 2016). It is no surprise that deliberative democrats have viewed politics through the lens of will-formation, given that this is the function that deliberation best serves (Warren 2012). Still, the focus on inputs characterised by reflective will-formation and the neglect of how this will is translated into outputs is problematic for applying the deliberative systems approach to public administration, which is exactly the realm of this translation. It is especially problematic given deliberative democrats increasing propensity to view the process of will-formation as one of reaching ‘incompletely theorised agreements’, since it neglects the ways that such agreements are contested and interpreted in translation, including the ways that those with power and access can manipulate this translation process to their advantage (Boswell 2016).

The idea of the public administrator as neutral functionary is of course compatible with the classical public administration conception of bureaucracy, but, as has been noted throughout this thesis, this conception has been subject to extensive critique from diverse traditions of public administration scholarship, which have attempted to establish new perspectives on public encounters between citizens and bureaucrats (K. Bartels 2013). New Public Management (NPM) has emphasised the importance of such interactions to enhance the power of consumers over an inefficient, over-regulated and unresponsive bureaucracy. Critical Theorists have argued that administrators should not be seen as inhumane cogs in the political machine and stress the necessity of re-founding the moral agency of public officials in their interactions with citizens. In addition, participatory governance has called for public encounters of shared decision-making in order to reverse the alienation of citizens from officials and find more effective policy solutions (K. Bartels 2013). Is there a distinct deliberative conception of the bureaucrat? Boswell’s (2016) suggestion that the process of policy implementation should be characterised by a number of mechanisms that force those who have exercised discretionary power to account for their actions implies that there is, and it is one in which the bureaucrat is both a decision-maker and a

participant in deliberations about what is to be done and what has been done. This is a marked shift away from the ‘Whitehall public service bargain’ of classical public administration, whereby bureaucrats give-up their public profile and partisanship in favour of loyalty to their political masters, and in exchange for permanence in office (Hood and Lodge 2006). It is difficult to see how bureaucrats could regularly engage in public justifications surrounding the politics of administration without embroiling themselves in the kind of political arguments that have traditionally been viewed as the domain of politicians.

The few proponents of the deliberative systems approach that have elaborated the role of public administration in more detail (Boswell 2016; Dryzek 2010) have equated public administration with governance networks. This is again perhaps not surprising given that network governance is arguably the most compatible mode of public administration with the deliberative systems approach. It too is based around relationships of horizontality rather than hierarchy, and persuasion rather than coercion (Rhodes 2007; Sørensen and Torfing 2005). Nonetheless, there are a number of doubters of the supposed hollowing out of the state and public administration’s inexorable march towards governance through decentred networks (Goldfinch and Wallis 2010; Lodge and Gill 2011; Marinetto 2003). Indeed, it has been argued that the advent of digital technologies has created pressures to reverse the trend of fragmentation and agencification in favour of re-integration and re-governmentalisation (Dunleavy et al. 2006; Margetts and Dunleavy 2013). Even Rhodes (2007), one of the originators of the shift towards thinking about administration in terms of governance networks, admits that public administration is not equivalent to governance networks. They are only one component and administration is pursued through a mix of bureaucracies, markets and networks. Similarly, Torfing and Triantifillou (2013) have argued that their ‘New Public Governance’ (network-oriented) co-exists alongside New Public Management (market-oriented) and Classical Public Administration (bureaucracy-oriented), and that this co-existence will continue into the future. The non-equivalence of public administration and governance networks poses some difficult questions that deliberative theorists are yet to answer. Does the deliberative system encompass the entirety of public administration, or just networks? If the former, then there is a need to elucidate the implications of the deliberative system for markets and bureaucracies, particularly since deliberative principles do not mesh as neatly with the logics of markets and bureaucracies, as is apparent from the dissonance between the deliberative bureaucrat and the Whitehall public service bargain noted above. If deliberative governance only



encompasses networks, is this due to the limitations of deliberative theory, or because networks are normatively superior from the deliberative perspective, thus public administration *should* replace bureaucracies and markets with networks?

The ways that public administration is conceptualised within the deliberative system filters into the conceptualisation of public participation too. Dryzek's (2010) focus on networks, which he claims are easy to exit and have an ill-defined demos, leads him to reformulate the usual preoccupations of participatory governance: popular control and political equality. Popular control becomes "participation in deliberation about a decision on the part of all those affected by it" and political equality becomes inclusion in deliberation in proportion to affectedness (Dryzek 2010, 126). These reformulations are unlikely to impress participatory democrats for whom participation in governance has always been about sharing in decision-making through the assumption of formal powers. Whereas for Arnstein "citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power" (Arnstein 1969, 216), for Dryzek citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen deliberation. Parkinson (2006) is also sceptical of placing decision-making powers in the hands of citizens, reserving them for elected representatives. In his deliberative system bureaucrats act on behalf of citizens to provide a check on strategic action in the political process. This is a direct inversion of the Weberian and Habermasian conception of the political-administrative relationship, in which politics provides a necessary check on the totalising power of administration. It is unclear why bureaucrats over whom citizens have no direct mechanism of control would be better at acting on their behalf than the politicians over whom they at least wield electoral power. Accordingly, this conception also misses the impetus that drives proponents of participatory governance – a desire for citizens to have some direct control over administrative decisions.

There are a number of other forms of public participation in administration that are aligned with the logics of bureaucracies and markets and that could only loosely be described as deliberative; notably individualised, market behaviours aimed at driving competition between service providers (R. Dean 2016; Papadopoulos 2012; Warren 2012). Deliberative democracy is founded in a rejection of the liberal democratic concern with aggregation of pre-political, individual preferences (Dryzek 2000), and it appears deliberative governance is also sceptical of NPM and the consumer-orientation to governance (Parkinson 2006; Boswell 2016). It is possible that these non-deliberative acts could be integrated into the deliberative system in the same fashion that Mansbridge et al. (2012) integrate protest – that is, they may violate deliberative norms yet still contribute to

the system-level functions. Still, it feels counterintuitive to assess something according to functions that it was never intended to realise ahead of the functions that it was instituted to serve. In the case of consumer choice, for instance, the intended functions would be individual autonomy for the consumer and an accountability sanction on providers, neither of which feature as important functions of the deliberative system.

The way that the deliberative system interprets non-deliberative acts, only valuing them to the extent they contribute to deliberative functions, suggests it is wedded to a specifically deliberative ideal of legitimacy that takes no account of the procedural value pluralism described above. As Mansbridge et al. note, “the legitimacy of a democracy depends *in part* on the quality of deliberation that informs citizens and their representatives” (2012, p. 1, emphasis added). However, in analysing all political activity according to deliberative ideals, the deliberative systems approach makes the deliberative conception of legitimacy the whole rather than part of the story. The deliberative system encounters problems because it attempts to theorise a system from within a single model of democracy and, as Warren (2012) has argued, models-based approaches always result in functional over-expansion. The consequence is three forms of synecdoche: public administration is reduced to governance networks; participation is reduced to talk; and political legitimacy is reduced to deliberative legitimacy. The insight that functions can be distributed across different deliberative arenas remains a useful one for thinking about participation in a policy system. Nonetheless, to develop a systemic approach to participation in public administration it is necessary to broaden the conception of participation, the conception of public administration, and the functions that participation can serve. The rest of this chapter outlines such an approach.

## **6.2 Three Functions of Participation in Public Administration**

Participation is a foundational concept of democratic government. The very term ‘democracy’ denotes that there must be an avenue for mass rule. As such, in adapting the deliberative systems approach, it is tempting to build a grand theory of participatory governance that explicates what a system of public administration should look like to count as participatory, thus democratic, in nature. This project is, nevertheless, complicated by the very different interpretations concerning the extent and type of participation that is

necessary for a regime to count as democratic. At one end of the spectrum, it is sufficient that citizens participate in periodic elections and then leave governing to representatives and experts (Schumpeter 1976). At the other end of the spectrum, citizens should be involved in decision-making in most if not all domains of their everyday lives (Pateman 1970). Though participation may be foundational, it varies in importance. A theory of a ‘participatory governance system’ that assessed all public administration activity in terms of participatory functions would therefore commit the same error as the deliberative systems approach, which assesses all political activity in terms of deliberative functions. This section instead turns the systemic question upon its head. It eschews the temptation to develop a theory of a participatory governance system from a single model of democracy and public administration in favour of a problem-based approach (Warren 2012) that is more ecumenical with regards to the functions a policy system has to serve (G. Smith 2009; Owen and Smith 2015). It asks not whether a policy system is participatory in nature, but instead considers the diverse roles that participation can fulfil within a complex policy system. The systemic questions then become what functions does a policy system have to realise; followed by, which forms of participation can best serve these functions?

The typology of participation presented in Chapter 3 provides a useful starting point for identifying these functions. The presentation of the four modes of participation was intended to clarify the often hidden normative assumptions that characterise struggles over the meaning of participation in order that these struggles could continue on a clearer terrain free from some common misconceptions. It stressed, however, that these modes of participation should not be viewed as models of participatory governance. They are not different, fully self-sufficient answers to the problem of democratic policy-making. Each mode of participation is better viewed as a set of practices oriented towards responding to a particular problem of governance. Participation as knowledge transfer is primarily oriented to solving the problem of how in highly differentiated societies all the relevant expertise can be brought to bear on developing optimally effective policy solutions. Participation as collective decision-making is about empowering those who are affected by a decision to wield some control over it. Choice and voice is primarily oriented towards ensuring the responsiveness of decisions and services to the wants and needs of users. Finally, arbitration and oversight is about demonstrating that where power is wielded it is done so accountably. The four modes of participation therefore each provide a particular function for participation in governance: *effectiveness* (from knowledge transfer); *autonomy*

(collective decision-making); *responsiveness* (choice and voice); and *accountability* (arbitration and oversight).

Three of these functions – effectiveness, autonomy and accountability – will be described in detail below (the fourth function of responsiveness is merged into effectiveness, as will become apparent in the discussion). Since these functions are derived from the different modes of participation, they are associated with a broad range of competing conceptions of democracy and public administration. They do not reify a single, normatively contentious theory, thus a system that realises all three functions may have what Sen (2010) has called a ‘plural grounding’. It could be supported for a number of different reasons without agreeing on the relative merits of those reasons. As such, the system could embody the kind of ‘clumsy solution’ that is attractive when people hold a range of competing procedural preferences.

The modes of participation do not only converse with multiple variants of normative political theory; they were also developed in consideration of the ways that participation has been justified in practice. As such, the functions engage with the important expectations that underpin people’s assessments of participatory decision-making. There was extensive evidence from the empirical work with key informants that these functions are important aims for participatory policy-making. Chapter 4 described how, for participants in this research project, the value of public participation was universally linked to improving the effectiveness of policies, through harnessing citizens’ valuable expertise to produce better outcomes. It was noted how for some participants recognising citizens’ expertise was itself a way to recognise their autonomy, and a large number of participants also valued participation to realise communal autonomy as collective self-government. Accountability has been less discussed in this thesis until now, but it was frequently referenced by participants. Mostly participation was framed as a process of communicative accountability through the opportunities for challenge that are created as a result of transparent decision-making. This grounded approach, which asks what are the problems participation is intended to solve and what are the values this problem-definition embodies, is one alternative for bridging the gap between normative political theory and empirical social science that Smith (2009) argues has stymied the development of this field of research.

The three functions have only been adumbrated above, so a more detailed explication of each will now follow. Concepts such as effectiveness and autonomy can be construed in multiple ways, so it is important to clarify how they are being used here.

Moreover, though each function is primarily associated with one mode of participation, there is not a direct one-to-one relationship between modes and functions. In clarifying the content of the three functions, it will be possible to outline the extent to which different modes of participation are attuned to serving these functions, and thus how they perform different labours within the policy system. These explications will be illuminated throughout with examples of participation in the English National Health Service (NHS). The NHS is a complex system of multi-level governance with a wide range of opportunities for participation both individualistically as a consumer of health services and collectively as a citizen. It presents an ideal case of a complex but bounded policy system in which participation is employed to serve an array of functions. As such it is worthy of study as a system in its own right, so it is important to stress that the purposes here are only to illustrate the systemic approach, not provide a comprehensive systemic analysis of participation in the NHS.

### *6.21 Effectiveness*

Effectiveness in producing good outcomes is a core function of any policy decision-making process. For JS Mill the merit of any set of political institutions is to be judged “by the goodness or badness of the work it performs for [the people], and by means of them” (1861, 43). Epistemic theories of democracy have similarly attempted to root the superiority of democracy in actual democracies’ propensity to produce better decisions (Anderson 2008; Estlund 2008a; 2008b). The epistemic function of the deliberative system is related to these ideas. For Mansbridge et al. (2012) it is partly about whether decisions are informed by facts, logic and the relevant reasons, but stops at the domain of opinion and will-formation, so is output- rather than outcome-focused. Participation in governance has tended to be favoured more for its ability to potentially improve policy outcomes (Barnes, Newman, and Sullivan 2007; Cabinet Office 2002; Fung 2003; 2006; Involve and National Consumer Council 2008; Papadopoulos and Warin 2007; Parkinson 2004). The role of citizens in improving policy outcomes through improving the quality of decisions, implementation and delivery has been primarily focused on the distinctive but complementary knowledge that non-professionals can contribute to the policy process. This can be because they bring specialist technical information and/or novel perspectives rooted in their experience of a phenomenon, or new perspectives simply because they may

be free of the blinkers of received professional wisdom (Fung 2006). The importance of outcomes is rejected by pure proceduralists, who question the extent to which it is possible for there to exist procedure-independent standards of goodness (Peter 2008). Nonetheless, people find it difficult to separate process quality from outcomes, so much so that their assessments of the quality of the same decision process alters substantially when associated with different quality of outcomes (Arvai and Froschauer 2010).

The theoretical literatures' concern with effectiveness is mirrored in practice. The facility for participation to improve health policy outcomes is at the heart of the NHS's participation strategy, "Patient and public participation is important because it helps us to improve all aspects of healthcare quality" (NHS England 2015). There are a range of opportunities for the public and patients to involve themselves in NHS decision structures in order to contribute their perspectives and expertise. At the national level, NHS England's public voice team conducts a number of initiatives, most prominently the NHS Citizen process which combines an online platform for raising and collaboratively solving issues with a biannual, national citizens' assembly. At regional and local level:

- NHS Trusts have patient and public voice teams that often mostly deal with complaints but also run *ad hoc* participation initiatives such as 'Experts by Experience' groups;
- local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have a duty to involve and consult on plans and decisions, and a number of them have set up patient participation groups (PPGs) and/or other involvement mechanisms such as citizens assemblies;
- general practitioners are now statutorily mandated to set up PPGs for their practices;
- and independent local Healthwatch networks also organise extensive patient and public participation (see Table 6.21 below for a summary of NHS participation mechanisms).

Though local practices vary it is common for these initiatives to be framed as means for working collaboratively with professionals to improve services, namely as knowledge transfer activities. PPGs in general practice, for instance are described as "patients and practices working together... to bring about positive change to the benefit of all patients and practice staff" (Royal College of General Practitioners 2014, 3).

It is noteworthy that only patients and carers, particularly those dealing with long-term conditions, are painted as 'experts by experience' throughout NHS participation

literature<sup>27</sup>. There is little consideration of the expertise the public more generally may bring, who are instead involved to ensure their views, needs and preferences are reflected in services provided (Department of Health 2008; NHS England 2015; NHS England 2013). Patients and carers are also involved as service users to provide feedback that can improve outputs through a range of consumer insight mechanisms. One of the most prominent is the Friends and Family Test, which is administered to patients after they have received care and asks if they would recommend the care they have received, but there are also a number of additional surveys conducted by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and avenues for patients to complain about poor care. There is frequently little distinction between the ways that public participation and consumer insight are described as improving outputs in the NHS; both are seen primarily as ways to ensure services are responsive to the needs of those they serve (see, for instance, NHS England, 2013). As such we find knowledge transfer type activities, where the public is asked to provide its input on public priorities for the NHS, and choice and voice type activities, where service users and public are asked to provide input on what they expect for their own care, both employed in service of the idea of effectiveness as responsiveness, to public values and patient needs. In practice then, effectiveness contains two distinct ideas that are often pursued in tandem: outcome quality and output responsiveness.

### 6.22 *Autonomy*

The idea of autonomy is key to democratic legitimacy. Democracy's respect for autonomy is a common justification for its superiority to other forms of government, and it has been argued that some conception of autonomy is at the heart of all democratic thought from ancient Athens to our contemporary representative democracies (Lakoff 1996; Held 2006). Lakoff (1996) stipulates three different conceptions of autonomy that have underpinned democracy. *Communal autonomy* is the ability of a collectivity to determine the rules and structures by which it operates, which Lakoff associates with Athenian democracy but also informs participatory democracy and the civic republican tradition.

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<sup>27</sup> This is perhaps not surprising as patient and public involvement has risen alongside an agenda to involve patients more fully in decisions about their own care, on which they are viewed as expert (Department of Health 2012; NHS England 2013). This agenda often appears to be a latent influence on patient and public involvement in somewhat inappropriate ways, given that patients are intended to be acting publicly not privately. It is, for instance, stressed that PPGs in general practice are not venues for personal issues or patients to receive additional care, but also that they “enable patients to look after their own health, with the support of their GP and practice staff” (Royal College of General Practitioners 2014, 3).

*Plural autonomy* is the ability of social sub-groups to regulate their own affairs and share in power, which Lakoff links to the Roman Republic and is also realised in modern forms of corporatism. Finally there is *individual autonomy*, which concerns individual citizens' ability to pursue their own will, and is primarily associated with liberal democracy.

Autonomy in its various guises has been a key idea in other accounts of the functions of participation and deliberation (Mansbridge et al. 2012; G. Smith 2009; Warren 2012), which is unsurprising given the centrality of the concept of autonomy in the democratic thought from which they are drawn. Warren describes his "collective decision-making" function as "about collective empowerment, which occurs when collectives have the capacity to make and impose binding decisions upon themselves" (2012, 9–10). This closely mirrors the idea of communal autonomy, as does Smith's (2009) "popular control" function. The idea of plural autonomy is captured in Smith's (2009) "inclusiveness" function and the "democratic" function of Mansbridge et al. (2012). However, it takes a more individualistic bent in that it is focused on "participation by citizens from across different social groups" (G. Smith 2009, 21), rather than the participation of different social groups as social groups. Warren's (2012) "empowered inclusion" function is about distributing powers to individuals so that they can demand and enforce their inclusion, justified with regards to respect for the individual autonomy of those who will be affected by a decision. Individual autonomy also underpins the "ethical" function of promoting mutual respect of Mansbridge et al. (2012), which is based upon respect for citizens as autonomous agents.

It may be uncontroversial that democracy should function to promote autonomy, but the question of whether participation in public administration should do the same is more contested. For classical public administration, autonomy is realised through politics and the legislature, thus is unnecessary in administration. It has already been noted (Chapter 4) that a number of participants in this study made similar arguments. Moreover, whilst individual and collective empowerment was a key objective of participation for some participants, others questioned whether the public actually wanted to be involved in decision-making or would prefer technocrats to perform this role.

The extent to which electoral mechanisms realise effective popular control over public services has become questionable, nevertheless, as government has shifted towards governance, weakening the connection between elected politicians and the provision of public services. Sorenson and Torfing (2005), for instance, have pointed to concerns regarding the lack of democratic control over governance networks and the need for such



networks to be democratically anchored. The NHS is no exception. Successive reforms have weakened the control of national and local politicians over health provision. One of the main charges against the much criticised 2012 Health and Social Care Act was that it transferred the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Health to commission local NHS services to local CCGs. Accordingly, the Secretary of State no longer has responsibility to answer for, nor power to intervene in, local commissioning decisions. The NHS is now made up of a number of relatively autonomous bodies – for example, commissioners like NHS England and CCGs, and service providers like Foundation Trusts and General Practices – that make decisions about provision of health services without the traditional forms of democratic control.

This fragmentation of democratic authority in the NHS has been accompanied by a trend towards distributing empowerments directly to citizens. These empowerments have primarily been construed as forms of plural autonomy. Citizens have been seen as one of a number of stakeholders that need to be represented in governance structures, and there are number of NHS organisations that include lay representatives on boards. CCGs must have two lay members, who “ensure the public voice of the local population is heard and that opportunities are available for PPE [Patient and Public Engagement]” (Gilbert 2012, 6).

Foundation Trusts are membership organisations that combine forms plural and communal autonomy. Plural autonomy is again through representation on the board. The board of governors consists of four groups: public governors, patient governors, staff governors and appointed stakeholders. Communal autonomy is through the membership process. Trusts are tasked with creating their own public by recruiting a membership, taking steps to ensure it is broadly representative of the community they serve. Membership is open to anyone who works at the trust, has been treated by the trust or lives in the area served by the trust. Members are consulted on development plans, can stand for election as a governor and vote to elect the public, patient and staff governors<sup>28</sup>.

Attempts to realise communal autonomy through processes of collective decision-making are rarer, yet there are some nascent initiatives to institutionalise forms of

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<sup>28</sup> As of 2011 there were close to 2 million members of foundation trusts. However, this is quite a low (and declining) number per Trust – on average 13,962 members per trust. Election turnout had also declined from 48% in 2004 to 25% in 2011, which is low but in line with other membership organisations. There were on average 2.76 candidates per seat and significant numbers of uncontested elections, though this was a bigger problem for staff rather than public and patient seats (all statistics from: Monitor et al., 2011). As such, though the governance structure of foundation trusts embody the value of autonomy it is questionable whether it is successfully realised. The same argument could be made about the other examples cited in this section. However, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to assess whether all of these institutions are successful in their intentions.

participatory co-governance. One example is the NHS Citizens' Assembly described in Chapter 3, a two-day public meeting with the NHS England Board to decide on key priorities; another is the regional citizens' senates, which have been founded to complement the regional clinical senates of healthcare professionals. These citizen senates consist of up to 35 members of the public who, in consultation with other public and patient forums and organisations, independently determine their own priorities for strategic healthcare developments. They then work alongside the clinical senates in strategic clinical networks to try to implement their agenda for regional health improvements.

Respect for individual autonomy has also been a key driver of changes in the governance structure of the NHS, though mainly focused at the level of individual care. This has been concerned with transforming the relationship between patient and professional, so that patients are not passive recipients of the decisions of professionals but active participants in decision-making about their own care (Department of Health 2012; Le Grand 2003; NHS England 2013). The most prominent approach to fulfilling the principle of individual autonomy has been the institutionalisation of patient choice. Advocates of choice have explicitly viewed it as a means for distributing individual empowerments in order that patients can demand inclusion in decisions about their health when faced with paternalistic professionals (Le Grand 2008; Le Grand 2003).

### *6.23 Accountability*

The final legitimacy function to be considered here is accountability. Accountability has been described as “the buzzword of modern governance” (Bovens, Schillemans, and Goodin 2014, 1). Following Pitkin's (1967) influential account, the representative relationship has commonly been conceived as one of authorisation and accountability through elections (Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999b; Mansbridge 2003). This has primarily been constructed in terms of a principal-agent relationship, as Warren and Castiglione neatly summarise:

Democratic representation involves a representative X being held accountable to constituency Y with regard to interest Z. Accountability means that X provides, or could provide, an account of his/her decisions or actions to Y with respect to Z, and that Y has a sanction over X with regard to Z. (2004, 20)

In this description accountability has two elements. There is a communicative element, namely providing an explanation or justification (which could be about decisions or actions but can also be extended to include inputs, outcomes, or performance), as well as a process of interrogation of the principal rendering this account. Then there is an element of judgement whereby the agent assesses the account and rewards or sanctions the principal accordingly. Theories of democratic representation and accountability have moved beyond this simple principal-agent model of electoral accountability becoming more complex and diverse (Mansbridge 2003; Warren 2014); yet despite the diversity, Bovens, Schillemans and Goodin (2014) argue that there is an underlying conceptual consensus in public administration and political science on these two constituent elements of public accountability.

The notion that bureaucracy could be made directly accountable to citizens is a relatively new one. Whether at the coal-face or walking the corridors of power, bureaucrats have traditionally been held accountable vertically through hierarchy and horizontally through professional self-regulation (Peters 2014). They were only indirectly accountable to the public, through the elected politician at the head of the hierarchy (Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999b). Nonetheless, a number of issues already documented above such as the recognition of network governance and the discretion that bureaucrats have in interpreting legislation, as well as a perceived lack of bureaucratic responsiveness to both politicians and public, have driven attempts to institutionalise new accountability mechanisms. In the UK this has included publicly reported performance target regimes, increased performance audit and inspection, increased competition between public service providers, and increased participatory accountability. Damgaard and Lewis (2014) have described five levels of citizen participation in public accountability, which mirror the rungs from Arnstein's ladder. Each level progressively broadens the extent of communication with citizens, with their highest mode of "joint ownership" also including the power of citizens to sanction public servants, for example, holding power over which staff to hire and fire.

The largest experiment to provide individuals with powers of sanction over public servants in the NHS has been the introduction of choice and competition through a quasi-market in providers of health services. As Le Grand (2008) notes choice only becomes a sanction when there is competition between providers, otherwise the choice to exit does not have any consequences for the provider. Despite noting its growth across multiple policy areas and countries, Damgaard and Lewis strangely exclude this from their

framework of participatory accountability in an effort to retain the form of Arnstein's ladder (2014, 268). Nonetheless, competition is commonly conceived of as an instrument of accountability (Peters 2014), and, with the questionable proviso that the quasi-market functions effectively, this is quite a substantial transfer of public accountability to consumers of health services.

Participatory accountability also echoes through the terms of reference of a number of other NHS institutions. These efforts, however, have mainly revolved around citizen oversight, focused on increasing instances of direct communicative accounting of health professionals to citizens, with the opportunity for citizens to pass judgement though without the power to directly sanction. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) now advertises for 'experts by experience' to assist its inspections of health and social care services by providing a patient's perspective on service performance through talking to current service-users and staff and observing service delivery. Healthwatch draws its name from the oversight metaphor of the consumer watchdog. One of its three core functions is enabling people to hold local services to account by monitoring and reviewing provision (Local Government Association and Healthwatch 2013). It uses a number of tools to carry out these functions and understand quality of performance from local people's perspective, including 'enter and view' inspections, 'patient-led assessments of the care environment', and '15-step challenge visits' (Gilbert, Dunn, and Foot 2015). Similarly, one of the "two simple questions" that the NHS Citizen process is intended to solve is "How can the board of NHS England be held to account by the public which it serves?"<sup>29</sup> The NHS Citizen website has an entire section on accountability, and the Citizens' Assembly that is the culmination of each process cycle has a dedicated "accountability and reporting phase"<sup>30</sup>. Once again, this is a strengthening of direct communicative accountability between NHS England and the public in which the Board gives account of its actions with opportunities for those present to pose questions, but citizens have no formal powers over the Board to compel action.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.nhscitizen.org.uk/design/what-is-nhs-citizen/introduction/what-problem-will-nhs-citizen-solve/> Accessed 25 May 2016.

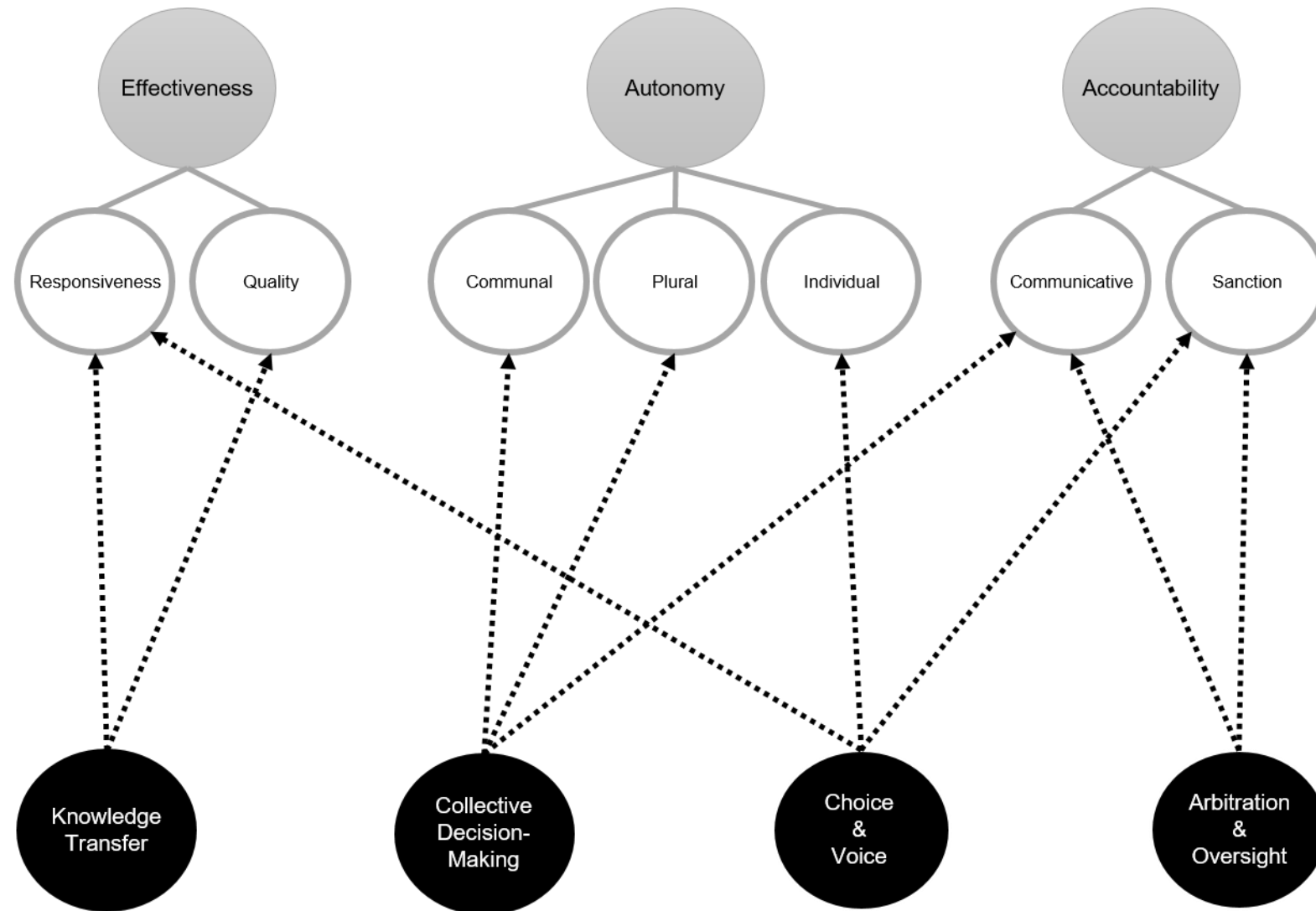
<sup>30</sup> <https://www.nhscitizen.org.uk/design/what-is-nhs-citizen/governance-and-democracy/accountability-within-the-system/> Accessed 25 May 2016.

Table 6.21: NHS participation mechanisms and their primary functions

<b>NHS mechanism</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Function(s)</b>
<b>NHS Citizen (NHS England)</b>	NHS England is the national level commissioning body responsible for distributing the NHS budget.	
<b>a) Online Issue Raising</b>	Online platform for raising and collaboratively solving issues about the English health service.	Effectiveness (responsiveness & quality)
<b>b) NHS Citizens' Assembly</b>	Biannual two day public assembly to discuss priorities for NHS England.	Autonomy (communal) Accountability (communicative)
<b>Foundation Trust</b>	Foundation Trusts are the main providers of secondary and tertiary healthcare services.	
<b>a) Expert by Experience Patient Groups</b>	Groups of volunteer patients and carers who give a patients perspective to influence strategy and provision.	Effectiveness (responsiveness and quality)
<b>b) Foundation Trust Governors</b>	Elected public governors and patient governors sit on the board of the Trust and represent the perspective of these respective groups in decision-making.	Autonomy (plural)
<b>c) Foundation Trust Members</b>	Foundation Trust members vote in elections for governors, can stand for election and are consulted on development plans.	Autonomy (communal)
<b>Clinical Commissioning Group</b>	Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) are responsible for distributing the NHS budget to local services.	
<b>a) Patient Participation Groups</b>	Patient participation groups provide a patients perspective on local services to influence commissioning decisions.	Effectiveness (responsiveness and quality)
<b>b) CCG Lay Members</b>	Two representatives on the CCG board who represent the patient and public perspective in decision-making and engage in patient and public engagement activities.	Autonomy (plural)

<b>General Practice</b>	General Practices are the main primary care providers.	
<b>Patient Participation Groups</b>	Patient participation groups provide a patients perspective on services to influence provision.	Effectiveness (responsiveness and quality)
<b>Friends and Family Test</b>	A satisfaction survey administered to patients after they have received care.	Effectiveness (responsiveness)
<b>Regional Citizen Senates</b>	A group of up to 35 members of the public that work alongside clinical senates to decide upon priorities for regional healthcare strategy.	Autonomy (communal)
<b>Patient Choice</b>	The ability of the patient to choose between competing providers of healthcare services.	Autonomy (individual) Accountability (sanction)
<b>Care Quality Commission (CQC)</b>	CQC is one of the main regulators of healthcare services.	
<b>Experts by Experience Inspectors</b>	‘Experts by experience’ are service users that conduct inspections alongside professional inspectors to provide the patient perspective.	Accountability (communicative)
<b>Healthwatch</b>	Network of statutory bodies performing role of local consumer champion.	
<b>a) Information gathering</b>	A range of independent engagement activities to assess local views and experiences of healthcare that are fed to providers to influence provision.	Effectiveness (responsiveness and quality)
<b>b) Inspection</b>	Monitors and reviews local healthcare services from the perspective of local people, with a number of tools to enable public inspection of services.	Accountability (communicative)

Figure 6.21: Diagram of the primary functions of the four modes of participation



### 6.3 Structuring Participation Systemically

The previous section of this chapter has argued that participation can play an important role in promoting effectiveness, autonomy and accountability within a policy system. Furthermore, different types of participation are differently suited to serving these functions (Figure 6.21), so, in order to realise them through participatory governance, it is necessary for the system to be comprised of a range of different avenues for participation. The presence within the English NHS of a vast number of participation opportunities employing a variety of modes of participation to contribute to different functions demonstrates that this is not simply an abstract theory but also has some purchase for describing how complex policy systems are actually functioning. Since it would be misleading to claim that participation in the NHS (or anywhere else) has been explicitly designed as a system, a systemic analysis can improve our understanding of how well participation is functioning in these complex policy systems, and how it might be improved.

A systemic analysis would pose some questions concerning the individual participation initiative, as well as how the system is functioning as a whole. At the level of the individual initiative, the identification of the relationships between modes of participation and functions provides the tools to question whether a particular approach is well-suited to realising its intended function. Is there a good match between the type of initiative and the type of function being pursued, or is there a mismatch? Is there a functional over-expansion whereby one type of participation attempts to achieve a combination of functions that go beyond its particular strengths, resulting in failures or tensions? At the level of the system, there should be a consideration of comprehensiveness and parsimony: does the system realise all of the requisite functions, and do different participatory initiatives simply replicate the same function creating unjustifiable redundancy? A further analysis of some of the NHS participation initiatives described above can again help to illuminate the utility of the questions prompted by the systemic approach.

A full analysis of the functional comprehensiveness and parsimony of the NHS at the system-level is beyond the scope of this chapter, since its intention has not been to give a comprehensive account of all participation in the NHS, only to use examples from the NHS for illustrative purposes. The many participation initiatives reviewed herein are



suggestive of comprehensiveness. On the surface, the two forms of effectiveness, three forms of autonomy and two forms of accountability were all targeted by at least one example of participatory governance (see Table 6.21), though the question of whether the NHS is in practice successful at realising these functions remains open. There is a preponderance of opportunities to participate in the service of effectiveness, and only one means of sanction. Still, there does not appear to be superfluous replication of functions. The many opportunities to participate in knowledge transfer and voice activities to improve effectiveness is linked to the fact that the NHS is a multi-level system with national, regional and local administrative units as well as different levels of service provision, for instance; general practice and foundation trusts. The replication thus takes place due to the need to involve the public at different levels. These multiple levels, however, pose a further question of whether the system is comprehensive at each level, which would again necessitate additional analysis in order to determine.

Issues pertaining to the relation between functions and modes of participation at the level of the individual initiative are easier to diagnose. The creation of unproductive tensions through an attempt to serve multiple functions has been a consistent problem across different NHS participation mechanisms. This is particularly apparent concerning NHS Citizen and Healthwatch's efforts to combine collaborative partnership for increasing effectiveness along with the production of accountability, which is often interpreted by participants as adversarial. Local Healthwatch organisations have struggled to balance these alternative functions, instead opting to act as critic or friend (but not both) to other local health institutions (Gilburt, Dunn, and Foot 2015, 36). This has led to quite distinct practices between different localities. 'Friendly' Healthwatch organisations, with the perception that other local institutions are doing their best, have focused on acting as a strategic partner providing support to improve services. 'Critical' Healthwatch organisations have focused on being an independent public voice that holds to account by rattling the cages of other local institutions. Both types have rejected the practices of the other as ineffective (Gilburt, Dunn, and Foot 2015). NHS Citizen has suffered from similar problems. The process has also been presented as both a way to work collaboratively with the NHS England Board to set priorities for the NHS and a means to hold the Board to account. The difficulties of forcing participants into a solidaristic mode of participation, particularly when it has been presented as a means of challenge, are apparent from even a

passing glance at the NHS England Gather Space<sup>31</sup> (a kind of online forum) where there are frequent rebellions from more adversarial contributors against the organisers of the process.

Part of the appeal of the ‘clumsy solution’ for participation in policy systems, which encompasses a combination of seemingly contradictory modes of participation, is that it can productively exploit such tensions. This is achieved through the dialectical relationships between different ways of organising that both support and constrain one another. Solidaristic ways of organising based upon trust are effective for producing collaboration at low cost. However, the more solidaristic and trust-based they become, the more opportunity there is for corruption and free-riding. Accordingly, some agonistic mechanisms based on distrust are necessary to prevent solidaristic modes of organisation destroying themselves in complex and diverse societies. The same arguments can be applied to modes of participation. Participation as knowledge transfer is a relatively low-cost means for improving the effectiveness of policy outcomes by bringing to light new knowledge, hence its attractiveness in the NHS. However, the value of democracy is not simply in bringing to light all relevant information. Its broad distribution of powers is intended to give individuals and groups the power to ensure their perspective is actually taken account of – either through accountability relationships that discipline decision-makers when they go awry, or through the autonomy to participate in the decision itself. Even though it may undercut the trust in the decision-maker characteristic of collaborative knowledge transfer, participation for autonomy or accountability’s sake can reinforce effectiveness by ensuring that information is not just brought to light but also heeded. Nonetheless, this does not entail that all opportunities for knowledge transfer must include powers to ensure autonomy or accountability. These different labours can potentially be performed at different sites, or in sequence.

The problem with the Healthwatch and NHS Citizen examples then is not so much that there is a tension between the collaborative pursuit of effectiveness and the adversarial pursuit of accountability, but that there is insufficient functional differentiation between these two pursuits within these two initiatives. Interestingly, both initiatives could themselves be viewed as subsystems of participation given they each contain multiple avenues to participate, so in theory it would be possible to distribute the different functions

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<sup>31</sup> See: <https://gather.nhscitizen.org.uk/>. Accessed 25 May 2016.

to different parts of their own processes. Instead, it appears that specific Healthwatches have been characterised by functional myopia whereby the pursuit of either effectiveness or accountability has come to dominate; whereas for NHS Citizen a lack of specificity about objectives for particular components has set-up contradictory imperatives for behaviour for participants throughout the process, since they are attempting to be both collaborative and adversarial. The failure of both Healthwatch and NHS Citizen to adequately distribute functions across sites poses a question of whether small organisations, relying on voluntary participation, can realistically foster such different institutional practices. The need for a coherent organisational identity may prevent Healthwatch, for instance, simultaneously engaging in both collaborative and adversarial interactions with other local healthcare institutions, in which case different functions would need to be distributed to different organisations.

An additional means for distributing functions is to sequence them. Warren (2012) has claimed that all single model-based approaches to organisation lead to the functional over-expansion of a single mechanism, such as deliberation or voting. This over-expansion was particularly apparent in choice theorists' argument, introduced in Chapter 3, that there should be a non-negotiable, market-based rule to determine the closure of hospitals. If an insufficient number of patients choose to use a hospital so that it becomes financially unviable, then it should close and there should be no interference from the democratic process. This argument uses a single mechanism (choice) that is appropriate for realising individual autonomy and over-extends it to a domain that is properly the concern of communal autonomy. Whether a hospital should close clearly has implications for the community in which it is situated and there should be avenues for the community to influence this decision, as opposed to it being decided indirectly through the aggregated choices of individuals concerning a different matter, their own care. A more appropriate balance of participatory activities would be for market-failure to trigger a community decision process in order to decide whether the hospital should close and, if not, to generate viable solutions for keeping it open. This sequencing enables choice and competition to do its work in serving individual autonomy and sanctioning poorly performing hospitals, whilst using a more appropriate process to realise communal autonomy on a matter of community concern. Given that NHS Citizen operates on a

regular cycle, where online issue raising feeds into a biannual citizens' assembly, a greater attention to how functions are sequenced could help to solve its difficulties.

Context is also an important consideration in determining the right balance of functions within a system. Accountability, for instance, does not have to be agonistic in orientation. Mansbridge (2014) has lamented our increasing propensity to equate accountability with sanction and neglect the more trust-based, communicative forms of accountability. She has called for a contingency theory of accountability with more communicative forms of accountability prevailing in circumstances of justified trust, and with sanction-based accountability dominating when there is justified distrust. NHS Citizen provides a useful lesson in this regard. It was heavily advertised as a means to hold the NHS England Board to account. Participants were then offered a trust-based, communicative means of accountability that is rather vaguely stated<sup>32</sup> and which many of them have been sceptical of. To put this in context, NHS England was created as a result of the much derided 2012 Health and Social Care Act. It is a relatively remote, national-level policy body. The Board consists of political appointees by a Government that has a historical issue with public distrust over its commitment to the NHS. This is not a good starting point for assuming the high levels of public trust required for communicative accountability to be unproblematic. A systemic approach should enquire whether the missing sanction-based accountability is justified by its presence elsewhere and the NHS England Board is legally accountable to the Secretary of State for Health, meaning there is another appropriate authority with power to sanction. However, this will be of little comfort to those who, as aforementioned, do not trust the Government on the NHS. It was also noted how sanction through patient choice pervades the NHS as a system, yet this only acts as a sanction on providers, not on commissioners like NHS England. The distrustful thus have few options but to hijack what is intended to be a solidaristic process in order to express their distrust, which casts some doubt on the comprehensiveness of the system at the level of commissioning.

The importance of understanding context goes beyond the consideration of the right forms of accountability to encompass the appropriate systemic balance between different modes of participation and the pursuit of effectiveness, autonomy and accountability. In

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<sup>32</sup> See: <https://www.nhscitizen.org.uk/design/what-is-nhs-citizen/governance-and-democracy/accountability-within-the-system/>. It is notable that much of this description focuses on accountability of participants rather than accountability of the Board. Accessed 25 May 2016.

circumstances where there is a group of decision-makers who are motivated to act in the public interest, trusted and competent but information is scarce, then participation may predominantly comprise knowledge transfer activities in the pursuit of effectiveness. Mechanisms for ensuring autonomy and accountability would still be necessary but may be relatively light-touch. Circumstances where relevant information is widely available and interpretable by all are more amenable to collective decision-making in the service of autonomy, and knowledge transfer type activities become less important. When decision-makers are untrustworthy or incompetent then the pursuit of accountability grows in relative importance, thus choice or oversight may come to predominate. An assessment of context is therefore an essential component in gauging the comprehensiveness of a system.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has proposed a new approach for thinking systemically about participation in public administration. It has retained the insight of the deliberative systems approach that important system-level functions can be distributed across different initiatives, but argued that it is necessary to go beyond the deliberative system given its partial conception of public administration, participation, and the functions it can serve. In doing so it has proposed a new set functions that engage with multiple variants of democratic and public administration theory, as well as the expectations that underpin people's assessments of participatory decision-making. This openness to multiple, potentially competing, functions reflects the inescapable plurality in citizens' notions of political legitimacy, which is represented in the heterogeneity of preferences for political decision-making. It holds out the possibility that a system which realised all of the functions could generate widespread support amongst people with heterogeneous preferences on the basis of what Sen (2010) has called 'plural grounding'. The system could be supported for a number of different reasons without agreement on the relative merits of those reasons. Heterogeneity of preferences does not render institutional engineering impossible; rather, policy-making institutions should be analysed as systems incorporating diverse practices that serve diverse functions. The range of examples from the English NHS suggests that a system of different types of participation that appeal to

diverse procedural preferences is feasible. To achieve broad-based participation from across society in processes of public administration it is also necessary.

The chapter has also made a case for the value of this systemic approach in order to better understand the current practice of participatory governance, as well as to improve our future participatory designs. It demonstrated how the questions posed by the approach could illuminate problems of particular participatory initiatives in the NHS and suggest potential remedies. There is however scope to build on this initial presentation. The three functions are an appropriate place to begin a systemic analysis of participation in public administration given their prominence in the theoretical literature and empirical work with key informants. This of course does not mean that they are necessarily comprehensive and that these three functions are the most important in all circumstances. One of the advantages of this approach is that it would be quite simple to add or substitute new functions as appropriate, though it is unlikely that in contemporary democratic societies a political system could retain legitimacy long-term whilst missing any of effectiveness, autonomy or accountability. In addition, more remains to be done to develop an understanding of the different ways that modes and functions can be effectively structured within the variety of contexts that obtain in complex policy systems. The above example of market-based choices triggering a collective decision-making arena to decide on the future of a hospital illustrates that there are theoretically sensible ways to sequence very different forms of participation. Still, it will be necessary to understand the likely tensions at the points different modes of participation interact in order to make them work in practice.

The next, and final, chapter of this thesis draws out the implications of the preceding chapters and situates them in the literature. It considers the lessons of the research for the ways that we think about participation, the ways that we do participation, and sets out some directions for future research.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Re-thinking Theory, Improving Practice**

This thesis has proposed a new typology aimed at improving our understanding of the different ways of approaching public participation in policy decision-making. It then reflected on empirical work that used a novel mixed model design to analyse how closely people's participation preferences match the four modes of participation, as well as to explore the nature of these procedural preferences. The previous chapter outlined a systemic approach to participation in governance that attempted to take account of this heterogeneity in preferences for participation. This final chapter draws out the implications of this research. It is divided into three sections. The first section primarily considers the implications for the academic literature, with particular attention to existing typologies of participation and common ways of thinking about participatory governance. The second section concentrates on how the lessons of the research may be employed in improving participatory practice, emphasising the need for a flexible understanding of citizens and officials' roles and relationships in participation initiatives. The concluding section then suggests some potentially fruitful directions for further research, detailing some ideas for extending the research empirically and analytically.

#### **7.1 Re-Thinking Participatory Theory**

The early part of this thesis critiqued a common approach to classifying participatory policy-making techniques, which ranked types of participation based on contentious normative assumptions that were more or less explicit (Arnstein 1969; Pretty 1995; White 1996) or concealed (Involve 2005; IAP2 2014; NHS England 2013), and which are still influential in shaping debates about, as well as the practice of, participation today. The empirical findings from this research bear out this critique. The discovery of normative heterogeneity between individuals' with different perspectives on participation, alongside heterogeneity within an individuals' perspective, poses serious problems for

typologies of participation that are rooted in one normative basis. For Arnstein “citizen participation is citizen power” (1969, 216), and anything less is ‘tokenism’ or ‘non-participation’. However; this is not so for around half of the participants in this study, who saw participation more as a means to broaden the inputs into policy decisions, rather than redistribute power to citizens. Though such forms of participation may seem illegitimate to participatory democrats, participation as knowledge transfer fits neatly within a common alternative understanding of democracy and public administration, the Westminster model, which provides us with an alternative framework for thinking through the legitimacy of participatory processes. It is true that consultation, labelled a form of tokenism by Arnstein, is not the best means for realising citizen power. Nonetheless, if one’s aim is to improve policy outcomes by accessing the widest information, it can be a useful and legitimate tool. The identification of a range of understandings of participation by this study thus supports Fung’s (2006) contention that there is no canonical form of participation in contemporary governance; that it may be used to advance multiple purposes and values.

The four modes of participation developed throughout this thesis provide a means for understanding the alternative normative orientations to participation, but the typology is not intended to replace all other classificatory schema. Participation’s association with multiple purposes and values does not preclude us from asking how it ought to be done. This is the question that preoccupies a number of the continuum typologies, such as Arnstein’s ladder. Arnstein is arguing participation ought to be instituted as citizen control. The ladder thus provides useful information both intellectually, in showing which forms of participation are most attractive for one particular normative orientation, and pragmatically, to guide action for those who share this normative orientation. It has to be recognised, however, that this approach is only a partial account, since it only embodies a single purpose and value. Arnstein’s ladder could arguably be encompassed within the collective decision-making quadrant of the typology of four modes of participation. It is only a quarter of the picture so it becomes an obfuscation when taken to be comprehensive. Three alternative ladders, one for each of the three alternative modes of participation could help to further elucidate the forms of participation that are most attractive to these alternative normative orientations.



The typology of four modes operates at a higher level of abstraction than the classifications of participation mechanisms by features of their institutional design, such as the way participants are selected or the mode of communication (Fung 2006; 2015; G. Rowe and Frewer 2005; G. Smith 2005). The two approaches could be usefully employed in conjunction with one another. It would be unwise to strictly map, for example, the 57 types of democratic innovation identified by Smith (2005) onto the four modes of participation, given the variety of purposes for which the same mechanism could be used. Still, as demonstrated in Chapter 6, the modes of participation can assist analysis of what purposes and values might be realised by different participation mechanisms, analysis of the functions that participation is used to serve, and how mechanisms may complement or detract from each other. The same can be said for the three-dimensional conceptual space encapsulated by Fung's (2006; 2015) democracy cube. The four modes can help envisage which parts of the cube are compatible with which normative orientations. The classifications of different mechanisms can be viewed as a menu of participatory options, while the typology of modes of participation is more akin to a good waiter, who helps you understand which option is most likely to sate your particular participatory hunger according to your preferred tastes.

The approach developed through this thesis raises some questions for the ways that participation has been understood in the academic literature that go beyond contesting existing participation typologies. It challenges the usefulness of New Public Management (NPM) as a lens for thinking about participation. Participatory initiatives that do not live up to participatory or deliberative democratic standards are frequently described as NPM (Papadopoulos and Warin 2007; Parkinson 2004; R. Rowe and Shepherd 2002). Rowe and Shepherd (2002) even claim that NPM conceptions of participation were hegemonic amongst the members of NHS Primary Care Group Boards they surveyed. NPM was deliberately eschewed as a label for one of the four modes of participation because it is debatable whether it furnishes us with a coherent conceptual apparatus for analysing participation initiatives. The NPM approach is often equated with 'consumer involvement' (Papadopoulos and Warin 2007; Parkinson 2004), yet it has been persuasively argued that NPM combines contradictory elements of hierarchism, egalitarianism and individualism (Hood 1995), making it unclear what any NPM approach to participation would look like. For Rowe and Shepherd (2002), for instance, it is characterised by an instrumental focus

on improving outcomes. However, the perspectives of those participants in this study who primarily saw participation as a means to improve outcomes were more aligned with classical conceptions of public administration than NPM. Moreover, the idea that participation should improve policy outcomes and make services more efficient and effective was widely shared across the participants in this study – the disagreement concerned the extent to which this should be the primary focus of participation. In their study of tenant participation in social housing management, Cairncross, Clapham and Goodlad (1997) report a similar consensus on this point. Long-standing traditions of organisational practice are not simply displaced by new theories of governance. Actors will bring the logics of these traditions into new governance practices. This is not to say that NPM as a management trend has not had an impact on the way that participation has been conceived, nor that there is no consumerist element to views of participation. Policy documents and the research interviews conducted for this study clearly indicate the notion of participation as consumer voice is prevalent. Nonetheless, to call this an NPM approach to participation creates an ambiguous signifier given the multitude of ideas encompassed by NPM, and this can result in the elision of quite different modes of participation. The evidence of this study suggests we should think more carefully before classifying any participatory policy initiative that does not meet the standards of participatory or deliberative democrats as an instance of NPM. More conceptually precise analytical categories, such as the four modes suggested above, would effect a more precise analysis.

The move away from models-based thinking, following Warren (2012) and outlined in the previous chapter, could also hold lessons for some of the debates addressed by this thesis. The procedural preference literature has often implicitly framed preferences like models, as self-sufficient alternatives. Citizens have a preference for expert-led, representative-led or citizen-led decisions (Bengtsson 2012; Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015). Populations have a general tendency towards stealth democracy or sunshine democracy (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Neblo 2015). Prescriptions for public administration reforms have been similarly framed as alternatives. Bureaucrats can be disciplined through command and control or choice and competition (Hood 1998; Le Grand 2008). An institution operates on the principles of classical public administration or NPM. The same approach has been used to classify institutional attempts at participation, for instance; whether a democratic, technocratic or consumerist model is being employed

in participatory housing or healthcare exercises (Cairncross, Clapham, and Goodlad 1997; Hickman 2006; R. Rowe and Shepherd 2002). The modes of participation herein were not presented as fully-fledged, alternative models of participatory governance, but as sets of practices responding to particular problems of contemporary governance. They are not in direct competition with one another as they perform different functions. Using one does not preclude using another. They are in tension but can also compensate for each other's weaknesses and reinforce strengths. Institutions and preferences will thus comprise more than one logic. Applying this insight to procedural preferences helps to make sense of what have been presented as seemingly incongruous findings, that support for citizen engagement is compatible with a preference for decision-making by experts (Bengtsson 2012; Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015). Understanding different forms of participation not as alternative models of governance but as responses to specific problems of governance, with particular strengths and appropriate uses, may also help to remedy the neglect of agonistic approaches to participation. If a less favoured form of participation is not viewed as necessarily displacing one's preferred form, then people may be more open to a diversity of practices.

The neglect of agonistic participation in the academic literature was pointed to early in this thesis. It was also reflected in the findings from the empirical research. The Q-sorts were overwhelmingly solidaristic in nature, spurning agonistic statements. Further analysis of the interviews suggested that particularly those with a preference for the collective decision-making mode of participation often minimised the extent of agonistic social practices in order to justify their preferences, as opposed to having a clear idea of how this mode of participation can function in circumstances characterised by conflict and competition. Similarly, just as in the academic literature where neither its advocates nor critics have unpacked choice as a theory of participation, a number of study participants rejected the notion that choice is participation. Part of the value of this thesis is to broaden what counts as participation, so that there are viable options for doing participatory policy-making even when agonistic social practices predominate. Presently, in the rare instances that the literature considers 'non-democratic' approaches and judges that they have some value they are still described with a tone that suggests they are reprehensible. Goodin and Dryzek, for instance note that mini-publics are useful as a means of 'shaping policy by market testing' (2006, 229). Still, their description paints this solely as a process for policy

actors to refine their sales pitch to the public, whereas civil servants in this study presented their ‘market testing’ more as a process of learning whether their policy products work for their intended recipients and where they could be improved. This underlines the importance of attempting to thoroughly understand modes of participation from within their own perspective in order to guard against a partial understanding or misunderstanding.

This thesis has attempted to understand modes of participation from a variety of perspectives. It has made few normative prescriptions for what participation should look like, except that in complex policy systems avenues for participation should be diverse. There is no radical proposal to transform social relations through participation so that they non-hierarchical, free of coercion, characterised by popular power and mutual respect and understanding. A critic might argue that such an approach blunts the transformative potential of participation. It does exactly what Pearce warned of, appropriates the discourses and concepts of participatory democracy and turns their emancipatory hopes into new tyrannies (2010, 15). However, the intention is to go beyond the radicalism and resignation of a field in which idealists outline their radical intentions for participation and sceptics bemoan how these intentions do not translate to the messy reality of practice.

This does not mean the approach has no radical implications. If the intention is to get more of the public participating in governance, rather than to get more of the public participating in governance in a particularly prescribed way, then broadening our horizons as to what participation can achieve and where is vital. Knowledge of how participation can serve the myriad functions demanded by complex policy systems can assist with making the case for embedding participatory practices at the heart of government institutions and policy networks. Rather than viewing participation as a means to supplement the deficiencies of the status quo (Fung 2006), participatory techniques can begin to be viewed as a viable alternative to these arrangements. This itself is a radical agenda when so much participation remains on the margins of the actual processes of governing. In addition, a systemic analysis of participation could help us to appreciate systemic deficiencies that demand more radical systemic solutions. While participation is localised in specific, marginal projects it remains easy to blame these projects for their failures at addressing what are often structural problems. A project can be blamed for poor recruitment practices if it fails to attract disadvantaged groups, rather than considering the

structural barriers to participating that these groups may face. A systemic analysis that demonstrated a group was failing to participate across the board, would help in making a democratic case to press for structural reforms to address the underlying problem, whether that is poverty, apathy or some other issue.

Rejecting a strong normative orientation to thinking about participation poses a further question concerning the standards by which we should judge participatory policy-making. Even scholars sympathetic to the idea that legitimacy is complex and multifaceted, “that to pursue perfect legitimacy is to pursue a chimera... because legitimacy's elements cannot all be present at once” (Parkinson 2006, 43), tend to retain their attachment to normative prescription. Parkinson, for example, continues describing his project for a deliberative systems theory as follows,

It may simply be a fact of life that all our categories, all our standards, have such tensions within them, that all utopias are contradictory (Hood 1998: 47). Nonetheless, simply because existing institutions cannot be perfect does not mean they cannot be improved, and utopias provide useful critical standards for measuring the improvements. In that spirit I use the critical standard established here to explore the real worlds of deliberative democracy, suggesting reforms in the concluding chapter to move current deliberative institutions in a more legitimate, democratic direction. (2006, 43)

The notion that we can accept the contradictory nature of legitimacy yet still engage in utopian theorising that provides a critical standard with a single direction of travel is mistaken. If legitimacy is in tension then it entails there is more than one way of achieving it. As Nozick recognised, once the inescapable plurality of competing legitimate principles is accepted, then “Utopia will consist of utopias, of many different and divergent communities in which people lead different kinds of lives under different kinds of institutions” (1974, 312). The feasibility of Nozick’s vision that there will be entire communities with distinctly different sets of institutions is questionable, particularly given it says little about the relationships and interdependencies that must exist between them. Nevertheless, the previous chapter demonstrated how it is possible to incorporate distinct sets of practices within a system of institutions.

Abandoning utopia in order to recognise plurality does not have to result in a descent into relativism in which all solutions are equally legitimate. It means that when we design institutions we will need to make trade-offs between competing goods, rather than move closer to a pre-determined utopian ideal. As Sen (2010) has argued, a transcendental

critical standard is neither necessary nor sufficient for making these kinds of comparative judgements. If there are many ways to diverge from perfection, then a utopian standard of participation does not give us any guidance concerning how to rank two non-perfect alternatives for participation that diverge in different ways. Neither is it necessary to have an idea of the perfect participation process in order to judge between two non-perfect participatory arrangements, which can simply be assessed on their own merits. In the previous chapter these merits were whether the particular arrangement promotes effectiveness, autonomy and/or accountability in decision-making. Rather than providing a single participatory standard to aspire to, this thesis is intended to provide some tools for carrying out the kinds of comparative assessments that characterise real world institution building. The goodness of participation is thus not measured against a particular normative ideal of participation. It is assessed in terms of: whether there is a good match between the mode of participation and the intended function; whether the participation actually realises its intended function – for example; are the relevant policy outcomes more effective, or decision-making processes more accountable; and whether it is perceived to be legitimate – do people think outcomes are better and decision-making is fair and takes account of their concerns? The next section considers how some of the insights from previous chapters could help to improve participation in these ways.

## **7.2 Improving Participatory Practice**

Although this thesis does not prescribe what participatory policy-making should look like, and instead claims that this is a debate that must be conducted within context, through actual politics, the insights generated by the research can be employed to improve participatory practice and avoid governance failure. Its chief contribution is in giving officials, practitioners and citizens a number of different frames for thinking through the variety of legitimate objectives and associated practices that can be realised through different participatory initiatives. When we create opportunities to participate, or when we decide to participate, we often do so with complex, even contradictory, assumptions about what participation means underpinning our decisions. The civil servant who has convinced her sceptical colleagues to incorporate extensive public participation in their policy design

process has to make some tough choices. Who is going to participate, for instance? If the process is kept open to all, then it may be criticised within the department for just involving the usual suspects. If participation is restricted, say, to a randomly selected group, then influential policy NGOs may be vocal about their exclusion. Similarly, the citizen deciding to get involved in participatory governance needs to be able to appraise what she is letting herself in for. She may have been told that she has an opportunity to hold policy-makers to account, only to find the process is more about sharing her experiential expertise. She has to decide whether to play by the rules of the space, try to shape them in a different direction, or simply stop participating altogether. This research helps to illuminate the strategic choices and compromises we have to make when designing and engaging in participatory activities<sup>33</sup>. The civil servant puzzling over who should participate in her process would come to a different answer based on whether she is trying to collect experiential expertise, in which case including important NGOs would most likely prove useful, or break through an interest group deadlock, in which case they should most likely be excluded. The citizen deciding whether to participate or not could make a much clearer assessment of the type of participation she is engaging in, whether it is a legitimate example of that type, and in what other directions it could potentially be taken.

The explicit foregrounding of what are usually implicit assumptions about participation should result in more clear-sighted participatory designs, as well as a better fit between the rhetoric and practice of participation. This could help to reduce the feelings of frustration and powerlessness amongst both citizens and officials that Newman et al. (2004) claim have often resulted from moves towards more collaborative governance in the UK. The admission that citizen power is only one objective of participation and there are other legitimate objectives provides practitioners with multiple ways for thinking through the legitimacy of their processes. This could produce participation that is better tailored to meeting its real objectives. In addition, if citizen power is not considered the only legitimacy criterion for participation, it may also help to increase the honesty around a process' real objectives and lead to a better match between the rhetoric and practice of participation. There is no monolithic public just waiting to be consulted or represented;

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<sup>33</sup> The typology of four modes of participation has been disseminated to public officials, participation practitioners and civil society groups through presentations and blogs, and a number of people have reported that they found it useful for these purposes.

publics are continuously brought into being, forming around specific issues or opportunities (Mahony, Newman, and Barnett 2010). Therefore, presenting novel consultation techniques as collective decision-making opportunities will have consequences for the kind of public and expectations that form around that opportunity. Mis-presentation is likely to lead to frustration on both sides of an initiative.

There are lessons concerning potentially effective rhetorical strategies for those who want to demand more participation or push the boundaries of citizen power, as well as for those who want to promote their participatory opportunities. The analysis of how participants in the study discursively justified their participation preferences (Chapter 5) demonstrated that civil servants opposed to the transfer of decision power are sensitive to the idea that they are overly hierarchical and possessed nuanced techniques to defend themselves against this charge. Some skilled activists appeared at least implicitly aware of this. They challenged policy-makers on their own terrain, basing their arguments for a more equal distribution of decision power in pragmatic arguments about the exclusion of expertise from the decision, and eschewing more idealistic concerns with consensus decisions.

Taking seriously the alternative understandings of participation should force us to recast the roles of public officials and citizens and the relationships between them. There is a long tradition and extensive academic literature theorising the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats, which has documented the departure from the Weberian ideal with bureaucratic work becoming more politicised and more public (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981; Hood and Lodge 2006; Grube 2014). The relationship between citizens and bureaucrats is less explored and remains what Hajer (2003) has called an 'institutional void' without clear rules and norms by which policy-making is conducted. There have been moves, as noted earlier in this thesis, to better understand 'public encounters' between citizens and bureaucrats (K. Bartels 2013). Still, these have been focused on encounters between citizens and street-level bureaucrats, for instance; welfare officers' role in the regulation of the poor (Dubois 2010), local government officers' increasing civic entrepreneurship (Durose 2011), and police officers co-production of public safety with local communities (Fung 2004). The public participation work of bureaucrats in central government departments and agencies that comprise the majority of the public officials who participated in this research has received little attention.



More than 35 years ago Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman remarked on “the demise of what we may call the Weberian epoch of government” (1981, 19). Nonetheless, it was apparent in Chapter 5 that though public officials’ professional self-identity is complex it retains a strong Weberian overtone. This self-identity as a neutral technocrat posed problems for these bureaucrats and their understanding of their relationship to participatory policy-making. Given the fragmentation of public service bureaucracies into agencies and networks that have to perform both administrative and political functions, the spaces in which civil servants can play the role of impartial decision-maker have shrunk. Their doubts about their own role are thus likely to persist. Accordingly, it would improve the capacity of the civil service and the prospects for participatory governance if the connection between civil servants’ sense of positive professional identity and their role as neutral, expert decision-makers was weakened in favour of a more flexible identity. In order to make use of all four of the different modes of participation, the public official would need to possess this kind of flexible professional self-identity that enables her to feel comfortable performing multiple roles with different relationships to the public. The neutral technocrat persona is appropriate for knowledge transfer activities, but does not sit well with the other participation modes. In the collective decision-making mode, the bureaucrat needs to become a deliberator on equal footing with the citizens involved in the process. In the choice and voice mode, the bureaucrat must play policy entrepreneur. In the arbitration and oversight mode, the most appropriate role for officials is as a neutral guardian of the legitimacy of the process.

A number of the officials that took part in this research did implicitly have a multifaceted understanding of the role of the bureaucrat but this often resulted in cognitive dissonance. Only one participant, perhaps facilitated by previous experience as a community organiser, appeared to move effortlessly between identities as a neutral decision-maker weighing up interests, a convenor of collective conversations and a participant in such conversations. This may suggest that civil servants only need to be exposed to new ways of thinking in order to develop the required flexibility, however; this would be to oversimplify the task. Another two participants had previous experience working in civil society organisations that promote participation, yet rather than drawing on this experience to enable them to take on multiple roles they rejected their former-selves as naïve. This perhaps suggest that there is an institutional culture within the civil service

that mitigates against a plural self-understanding; a suggestion reinforced by the fact that the one flexible official frequently defined herself against the dominant institutional culture. It should also be remembered that the motivations of officials are complex and, like everybody else, are egoistic as well as public-spirited (Dunleavy 1991). The role of expert technocrat carries significantly more power and prestige than that of deliberative equal with the great, unwashed masses; thus officials may be expected to resist the latter in favour of the former.

There are also genuine risks in changing these well-established institutional practices. Public statements by bureaucrats can lead to perceptions that they are compromised and partisan (Grube 2014). Once politicised, however, to attempt to regain credibility by retreating into impartiality is futile. It was described in Chapter 5 how the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was perceived by some participants as implicated as a cause of poverty and stigma of poor people. DWP consultation processes were viewed as a sham that were not worth participants' time, and their alleged refusal to take part in a participatory poverty initiative because it would be too political was seen as further confirmation of their politicised agenda. This highlights the need to think more creatively and flexibly regarding the relationship between public officials and citizens in order to improve the practice of participatory policy-making. The typology of four modes of participation can provide a starting point for this project. The DWP, for instance, would be well advised to adapt its participatory opportunities to recognise the distrust of its officials rather than persisting with a pure knowledge transfer approach that assumes trust. One way would be to add an oversight dimension in order to ensure accountability.

The way that the participating public is conceptualised has received considerably more attention than the role of officials. It is common to make a distinction between whether the public participates as citizens or consumers (Cairncross, Clapham, and Goodlad 1997; Callaghan and Wistow 2006; Jung 2010). There are those who have argued in favour a conceptualization of the public as co-creators or co-producers (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001; Boyte 2005), and others who have documented the multiplicity of conceptions implied by different governance practices (Barnes, Newman, and Sullivan 2007; Frederickson 1991). This thesis does contribute an additional theoretical insight to the literature on this front. It is rare to see the public conceptualised as a neutral arbiter between interest groups, as is the case for the arbitration and oversight mode of

participation. Moreover, the alternative conceptions of the participant that accompany different modes of participation can also help us to recast some common issues in the practice of participation.

Authorities often interpret the lack of enthusiasm for participation among many citizens, or certain groups of citizens, as meaning they are apathetic or hard-to-reach (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2001) – the citizens themselves are problematized. Whilst this may seem appropriate logic for participatory spaces conceived as democratic opportunities, it appears less appropriate when they are conceived as knowledge transfer opportunities, whereby decision-makers invite the public to contribute their expertise. Few people would characterise a technical expert who spurned a vague invitation to share their expertise without recompense as apathetic or hard-to-reach. If we want ‘citizen experts’ to join knowledge transfer opportunities, perhaps they should be treated like any other kind of expert – flattered with personal invitations, even paid for their time. Direct invitations and other incentives have been advocated as a means for encouraging the participation of those who wouldn’t usually engage (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2001), but the study participants who discussed this in interview saw them more as a demonstration of the value of their participation rather than as an incentive to participate. For certain types of participation there does appear to be a normative as well as an instrumental case for practices such as paying participants.

The thesis, unlike much of the literature, does not make the argument that the public participating as citizens is preferable to participating as consumers, or that participating as co-producers is the best form of participation. Instead it proposes that heterogeneous participation opportunities would respect the heterogeneity of citizens. Some citizens on some issues may want deep and ongoing engagement in collective decision-making, as for instance in the Chicago community policing forums documented by Fung (2004). Other citizens (or even the same citizens on other issues) may simply want a convenient means for voicing some concerns to a trusted public organisation. Often different groups and different circumstances call for different types of participation (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2001; Neblo 2015). Choice and voice type activities that are usually maligned by participation advocates are, for instance, a way to widely distribute power and influence to people without imposing heavy participation costs on participants. As such they may be particularly attractive to those with little time, or those

without confidence to engage in lengthy deliberations. Engaging those who distrust institutions in oversight activities may prove a more productive way to harness that distrust than forcing them to participate in more solidaristic processes. Designing a range of different interacting avenues of participation into a policy system, which take account of the different preferences that people have for participation, as well as their different personal circumstances, such as the time and confidence they possess, could therefore prove to be a means for addressing the perennial problem of how to make participation in governance more inclusive.

Though it is important to be aware of agonistic modes of participation for use in agonistic contexts, the appetite for these forms of participation should not be overestimated. As aforementioned, the participants in this study mostly shunned agonism in favour of solidarism. Given the particular nature of the sample it is not possible to generalise this finding to the broader population, however; other research with representative population samples has found similar results. Much of the debate between stealth democracy and sunshine democracy has revolved around whether citizens have a preference for leaving decisions to elites but are mobilised to participate out of distrust for, or dissatisfaction with, contemporary institutions, or whether they have a preference for participation but are demobilised by their negative feelings about the status quo (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Neblo 2015). Neblo (2015) has shown that there is more evidence for the latter and that people's willingness to participate in deliberate politics increases along with an increase in positive perceptions of institutions. If this preference for more solidaristic participation holds in general then this would constitute grounds for adopting what Parkinson has called 'stepped pluralism' (2012, 158). Solidaristic practices should be the default setting for attempts to institute participatory policy-making opportunities, only moving to agonistic practices if the specific context demands it.

### **7.3 Directions for Future Research**

This research employed a novel mixed methods approach that provided a fresh perspective on the topic of procedural preferences by collecting quantitative and qualitative data from the same participants. The rich data this provided enabled a more in-depth

examination of the nature of procedural preferences that throws new light on some important questions in this field. It challenged the conceptualisation of procedural preferences as a generalised orientation towards either representative-led, citizen-led, or expert-led decision-making, demonstrating, for example, that such preferences were bound by context. Existing survey research on procedural preferences has often found evidence of ambivalence in preferences amongst a large number of people through the particular patterning of their survey responses, but has then only been able to speculate that this complexity is not simply measurement error (Bengtsson 2012; Font, Wojcieszak, and Navarro 2015; Neblo 2015). This research confirms that these findings are more likely a reflection of the dilemmatic nature of procedural preferences rather than random noise. They are indicative of understandable ambivalence on difficult questions, and reasonable preference complexity related to context. The research also began to describe the sources of this ambivalence, linking it to three of Merton's (1976) six types of sociological ambivalence, as well as specific features of the context that influence preferences, such as the geographical level of decision-making or the particular type of policy issue. However, the aim of this study was to investigate the broad nature of preferences, not to provide a detailed map of all the sources of ambivalence and the ways that context binds preferences. Therefore, further research to comprehensively identify them would help develop understanding of the complexity of people's preferences for their political and social institutions.

The empirical findings from this PhD also suggest an avenue for explaining the complex relationship that has been discovered between people's procedural preferences and their political actions (Bengtsson and Christensen 2016; P. Webb 2013). The interviews with some participants showed that the relationship between their preference for how institutions should work and their actual behaviour was mediated through their appraisal of how those institutions are working. Some of the participants who subscribed to the knowledge transfer approach to participation bemoaned that policy-makers had abdicated their responsibility to stand back, look at the bigger picture and make a fair decision, and it was this that had pushed them into more antagonistic activist campaigning. This notion that political behaviour is determined by ideal preference plus appraisal of reality has analytical purchase, and it is at the heart of the debate between stealth and sunshine democracy described above. In this case it has been conceived solely in terms of

mobilisation and demobilisation – negative appraisals of the status quo either drive people to or from participating (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Neblo 2015). However, the findings from this PhD were not so much a process of mobilisation or demobilisation but a process displacement of political activity from one sphere to another. People’s perceptions of existing institutions may play a more complex role in mediating between preferences and actions than influencing their willingness to participation. These perceptions may also affect the types of participation they engage in and further research could establish the prevalence of displacement of participation and whether there are other important effects of appraisals. This insight, as well as the findings on ambivalence, demonstrate the value of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data on the same person’s preference in order to fully understand this complex and multifaceted phenomenon. This combination is rarely pursued and future research should be mindful of the additional understanding it can bring.

The empirical research conducted for this thesis attempted an in-depth exploration of ways that participatory policy-making can be understood, thus sampled a small but diverse group of key informants who were most adept to answer this question. This makes the research subject to the limitations of any research that is conducted with a small population of key informants. As it was undertaken with key informants involved with participatory policy-making in health, housing, poverty and social security policy in the UK, care must be taken when generalising the findings beyond this population. There are a number analytical reasons, however, for thinking that the findings may apply more broadly (see Section 2.34 for a full discussion of the strength of inferences from this research). Each of the four modes of participation are rooted in widespread ideas from democratic and public administration theory that are pervasive in many countries and policy domains. Still, further empirical research in different contexts would help to test whether the confidence in these analytical generalisations is warranted. The author has conducted a similar study in collaboration with Catherine Durose and Liz Richardson of key informants in a different UK policy context, local and neighbourhood governance, which has found comparable results. Work is also ongoing to replicate the study in the US in order to have a basis for cross-national comparison. A significant portion of the data collection has been completed without problems, suggesting that the ideas that underpin the Q-sort statements

translate to this context despite the quite different political tradition. Further research that replicated this approach in other contexts would be valuable.

A further reason for sampling key informants was that the intensive nature of the Q-method approach meant it performed best with participants who had some knowledge of the subject. The key informants in this study do have important differences from other relevant populations. They comprise already active citizens who may have different views from those that are not participating, as well as civil servants with some interest in participation who may differ from their colleagues. The research could therefore be extended by recruiting broader samples of these populations. The piloting phase uncovered difficulties, however, when using this intensive process with a wider population. To extend the research, especially to a representative sample of the general public, would thus likely require some redesign to streamline the methods. The results from this study could help inform a less intensive survey since they demonstrate which kinds of propositions are most likely to identify differences in viewpoints. It is unlikely that a broader survey along these lines would result in the identification of new modes of participation, but it could address other important questions, such as the distribution of support for the different modes amongst officials and the general public, as well as comparing this to support for other non-participatory modes of decision-making.

The purposive sampling approach to the recruitment for this research resulted in a diverse group of participants involved with participation in different policy areas in different ways. The small number of participants meant it would be premature to draw any robust conclusions from analysis of subgroups within the sample that this approach naturally created. There were, however, a number of differences between subgroups that merit further study. One noteworthy discovery from the research interviews is that distrust of institutions appeared more closely related to one's position in social relations than to one's normative view of participation. The participants in the study who were experiencing poverty or in receipt of social security benefits had little trust in policy-makers whether they favoured the collective decision-making or knowledge transfer modes of participation. In contrast, well-networked and more affluent participants favouring the collective decision-making approach, thus who may be expected to have some distrust of institutions that rarely function in this fashion, instead tended to have relatively high trust that public officials were trying their best to act in the public interest. It is not clear whether this is a

result of the current UK policy environment in which people with disabilities and/or experiencing poverty feel stigmatised and attacked by government, or is representative of a more permanent socio-economic gradient in institutional trust, which would challenge existing research that suggests political trust in Britain is not correlated with social group (Newton 1999). Establishing this finding more generally would have important consequences for the way participation exercises should be conducted. It would suggest that any institution that wants to engage in collaborative policy-making with disadvantaged people may find it prudent to rethink the role of the policy-maker in such exercises. It has already been noted how in the particular context of this study DWP attempts to present themselves as neutral functionaries fed into this distrust.

Alongside the potential empirical extensions to the research agenda pursued throughout this thesis, there are also potential analytical extensions. The research has taken something of a deliberately naïve approach in focusing on ideal types of legitimate participation and how they can serve important, uncontroversial functions. There are those that have questioned the extent to which institutionalised participation is intended to realise such lofty ideals, or is instead more attractive as a process of governmentality aimed at regulating public conduct (Blakeley 2010; McKee and Cooper 2008). Participation in healthcare, housing and benefits policy has been viewed as an organisational practice that co-opts the agency of responsibilised citizens and civil society organisations, directing their conduct towards dominant stakeholders' ends (Flint 2004; Gilliat, Fenwick, and Alford 2000; Martin 2011). A concern with participation as a means for the public to understand the difficulties and agenda of professionals, to appropriately use health services, and to share responsibility for those services was apparent from NHS participation policy documents drawn on in the previous chapter (NHS England 2013; Royal College of General Practitioners 2014). Whether such practices constitute an abuse of participation is open to debate, but this thesis has remained silent on these issues. As emphasised throughout, the typology of four modes of participation provides a tool for assessing what genuinely is an abuse, as opposed to simply a form of participation that does not match one's own normative standards but may be viewed as legitimate from within a different perspective. In addition, the typology might be used to illuminate particular dysfunctions that are associated with different modes of participation. The knowledge transfer mode for instance only functions when decision-makers have a genuine



regard for the information and expertise that is provided by the participants. It is particularly susceptible to abuse by disingenuous policy elites. An ongoing collective decision-making procedure is not so vulnerable to this dysfunction, but is perhaps more prone to domination by a closed group of ‘super-participants’. The research is thus a potential point of departure for a deeper consideration of abuses of participation.

The previous chapter outlined an approach for thinking systemically about participation in complex policy systems. It described the potential strengths of the approach and how different modes could serve different functions. Nonetheless, this work is still in the embryonic stages and could benefit from further elaboration of the different ways that alternative modes of participation can be combined to strengthen each other. It could also benefit from a consideration of its downsides; the potential risks and challenges that accompany a systemic approach. It is possible that the contradictory assumptions that underpin the different modes would work to undermine rather than strengthen each other. It has already been noted how it requires both citizens and officials to flexibly negotiate between different roles and relationships with one another. It is also possible that, whilst a systemic approach may be attractive in that the system can address multiple functions, the complexity of the system may render it opaque to the users of the particular participatory spaces that comprise the system, thus undercutting the perceived legitimacy of the individual spaces with their users.

The author has observed this tension in the design of the NHS Citizen process, which has attempted to combine multiple, sequenced avenues for participation. It follows a cycle which begins with an open process of online and offline issue raising. These issues are then filtered through a citizens’ jury, which selects the five most important issues that will form the agenda for the NHS Citizens’ Assembly that marks the culmination of the cycle. The citizens’ jury was commissioned for the sound democratic reason that a closed, randomly selected group would enable minority concerns to be given equal weighting when compared to, say, an online voting process which would favour the issues with the largest constituency. Despite this, it was extremely poorly received by those who were already participating in the online discussion forum, as it was perceived to be a way for the process designers to exclude them and exert their control over the process. A potential paradox of the systems approach, then, is that the pursuit of broad-based legitimacy at the macro-level may undermine perceived legitimacy at the micro-level. Further research is

thus likely to bear fruit in developing our academic understanding of how participation can function in complex policy systems, as well as yielding useful guidance for institutional designers on the promise and pitfalls of the systems approach.

This thesis has remained silent on the distinction between face-to-face and digital participation. The invention of digital technologies has mostly been viewed as a boon for participatory organisation as a result of its potential to solve the significant problem of scale. Online participation means that huge numbers of people can participate in activities at low-cost to both the organisers and participants. It can enable people to easily access information, vote from their homes, or deliberate across geographical and temporal divides. Accordingly, many participation initiatives now take place online, or incorporate online elements (the NHS Citizen process just discussed is an example of the latter), often with great success. The Citizens Foundation, which developed the online participatory budgeting process for the city of Reykjavik in Iceland, for instance, reports that more than 70,000 of the 120,000 inhabitants of the city have taken part in the process<sup>34</sup>. These technological changes have spawned specific typologies of models of digital democracy (Dahlberg 2011; Paivarinta and Sabo 2006). In addition, it has been argued that public administration is shifting towards ‘digital-era governance’ with its own particular logic of organisation (Dunleavy et al. 2006; Margetts and Dunleavy 2013). This poses the question of how far the four modes of participation in public administration appropriately reflect this new digital reality.

Although online and offline participation can have important differences, it is unnecessary to have completely separate analytical schema to understand and analyse the two sides of this phenomenon. Models of digital democracy, for instance, have taken their cue from existing theories of liberal, deliberative and direct democracy (Dahlberg 2011; Paivarinta and Sabo 2006). Digital technologies provide institutions with new tools for addressing the problems of government, but it is questionable whether they transform the problems that government has to solve. The problem-based, systems approach becomes more relevant in the instance of complex participation processes that combine online and offline elements in order to unravel the functions of each component. Moreover, the four modes of participation can help make sense of digital-era trends. One of the attractions of

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<sup>34</sup> See: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/12RZZG2M3sCYP7-uBhpyI7MytzWlsumXgWcgfpxPewrY/edit#slide=id.g2a9cb345f\\_00](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/12RZZG2M3sCYP7-uBhpyI7MytzWlsumXgWcgfpxPewrY/edit#slide=id.g2a9cb345f_00). Accessed 5 May 2016.

the 'open data' movement has been that making government data easily accessible online would create opportunities for citizen audit, namely increase bottom-up participatory oversight of government. Some of the public officials that took part in this project emphasised this in their interviews, and Margetts and Dunleavy (2013) have attributed the closure of the UK Audit Commission to this claim. It has been argued throughout this thesis that the participation literature has paid little attention to more agonistic forms of participation such as oversight, yet open data may make this increasingly frequent and important.

Other trends in digital government, particularly the growth of 'big data' analytics, may have important consequences for the way certain modes of participation are understood. It has been described how participation as voice is about revealing consumer preferences and that certain forms of knowledge transfer are necessary to reveal citizens' needs and values. Big data holds out the possibility that asking people for this information could become redundant; their preferences may instead be inferred directly from their recorded behaviours. Institutions could engage in "pre-emptive needs analysis" (Margetts and Dunleavy 2013, 9) through real-time aggregation of healthcare or social security records. Sentiment analysis of social media conversations could realise the ambition of Mansbridge (1999) and Habermas (1996) that everyday political talk in a free-wheeling public sphere informs political decision-making. In addition, government by algorithm could reduce the spaces for collective decision-making. Consider, for instance, Fung's (2001; 2004) descriptions of community policing in Chicago, where police and citizens engaged in deep and ongoing collaborations to collectively agree neighbourhood policing priorities that harnessed citizens' knowledge of crime in their neighbourhoods. Are these kind of neighbourhood forums necessary in an age of 'predictive policing', where computers crunch crime statistics and distribute police officers accordingly, and when police forces have real-time systems that can listen for gun shots (Morozov 2013)? It is not impossible that the two could co-exist, but it is also easy to see technology replacing certain forms of participation, especially given the allure of new toys and the fact that interactions with citizens can be challenging and time-consuming. Another possibility is that participation is not completely replaced but is accommodated in specific ways. For instance, knowledge transfer processes may be employed in order to harness citizens' expertise to solve problems of data interpretation, or to provide information on phenomena

that are not well captured by data collection. In order to reassert communal autonomy over government by big data, there could be a growth of collective decision-making spaces devoted to critiquing algorithms, identifying any implicit biases and ways they might be remedied. The modes of participation thus remain pertinent in the digital-era. Still, it would be a fruitful endeavour for future research to conduct an in-depth analysis of their relation to digital government and how they may be adapted to this new context, as well as the ways to combine online and offline participation to realise systemic functions.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

This concluding chapter is being written shortly after arguably the most poorly conducted and traumatic attempt at participatory politics in recent UK history: the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. It would be tempting to see this event as confirmation that the public is best kept out of politics and policy-making. Decisions are best left to elites. There were prominent newspaper commentaries arguing just this even before the surprise result (Dawkins 2016; Mitchell 2016). If this were desirable, it is questionable whether it would be a realistic option given the rising tide of populism, as well as the plummeting trust in political institutions. On a more positive note, the EU referendum demonstrated the appetite of citizens to become involved in politics when they are given a chance to influence something that they think matters. The problem was that they were invited to participate in a process that was ill-conceived, poorly designed and conducted in bad faith. As such, the referendum is a demonstration of what happens when participation is conducted improperly, with little attention to likely wider systemic effects, rather than what must happen when the public participates. It reinforces the argument for careful thought in order to develop appropriate institutional designs for participatory policy-making.

The four modes and three functions of participation provide such a framework for carefully reasoning through the difficult choices that have to be made when designing or taking part in participatory governance activities. The systemic approach goes beyond the radicalism and resignation of much of the existing literature, affording a means for assessing participation without committing to one contentious normative orientation to

political organising. The thesis provides some suggestions for how this new approach can help to improve the practice of participatory policy-making, particularly with regard to reconceptualising the roles of officials and citizens and the relationships between them. The research has employed a novel mixed methods approach to investigating procedural preferences that demonstrates the value of collecting qualitative and quantitative data on the same person's preference in order to fully understand this multifaceted phenomenon. The findings add to existing empirical research on procedural preferences by demonstrating that ambivalent preferences are real and explainable, not just measurement error, and suggest fruitful avenues for future research on this subject, from the sources of ambivalence to a more nuanced comprehension of the relationship between procedural preferences and participatory behaviour. These theoretical and empirical insights therefore further the understanding of public participation in social policy in a number of ways that should be of interest to scholars of participatory governance as well as those involved with participatory policy-making activities.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Documents Subjected To Thematic Analysis

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## **Appendix 2: Coding Framework, Inductive Analysis of Documents**

### **1. OBJECTIVES OF PARTICIPATION**

#### **1.1 Means for producing greater accountability**

- 1.1.1 Accountability through a market mechanism
- 1.1.2 Accountability through transparency
- 1.1.3 Accountability through public pressure
- 1.1.4 Accountability through face-to-face dialogue
- 1.1.5 Accountability through citizen monitoring of performance
- 1.1.6 Accountability of interest groups through transparent decision-making
- 1.1.7 Accountability of lower levels to higher levels of government

#### **1.2 Building trust in public institutions/public figures & improving relationships with the public**

#### **1.3 Maximise information available to decision-makers**

- 1.3.1 Participation to capture lay expertise
  - 1.3.1.1 experiential knowledge from being on the receiving end of policy interventions
  - 1.3.1.2 experiential knowledge of particular ways of life
  - 1.3.1.3 different insights
- 1.3.2 Participation to capture public needs
- 1.3.3 Participation as market research/to capture public wants and demands
- 1.3.4 Participation to capture public values and opinion

#### **1.4 Produce improved public inputs**

#### **1.5 Democratic renewal**

- 1.5.1 More responsive representatives and institutions
- 1.5.2 share decision power outside the elite
- 1.5.3 building trust in public institutions and representatives
- 1.5.4 Improved citizens
- 1.5.5 Reduced exclusion

#### **1.6 Achieve responsiveness (to needs, wants, values)**

**1.6 Give the public/community a voice** (voice can be in terms of needs, wants, values, or expertise)

**1.7 Transfer formal decision power to the public/communities****1.8 Radically transform society**

1.8.1 Participation to achieve democratic self-government

1.8.2 Participation to remedy political/social exclusion

**1.9 Challenge the powerful****1.10 Create a new relationship between public organisations and the public**

1.10.1 a relationship between an active, demanding citizenry and a listening, responsive state

1.10.2 a partnership relationship, in which the state and citizens work together to solve intractable problems

1.10.3 the 'Big Society' relationship in which the state does less but facilitates citizens to take on more active roles to provide services in their communities

**1.11 Means to an end or an end in itself****1.12 Engage in collective deliberation****1.13 Improve decision outcomes**

1.13.1 Improvement in substantive outcomes

1.13.2 Increase in outcome legitimacy

**1.14 Improve process legitimacy**

1.14.1 Individual process legitimacy

1.14.2 Wider system legitimacy

**1.15 Legitimation tool****1.16 Participation as a right** (Human right; citizenship right; consumer right)**1.17 Achieve empowerment**

(See: Participation to transfer formal decision power to the public/communities)

(See: Accountability 1-5)

1.17.1 subjective feeling of empowerment within individuals

1.17.2 collective empowerment

1.17.3 community development

**1.18 Educate and inform the public****1.19 Fulfilment of personhood****1.20 Participation to 'make a difference'**



1.20.1 the input of participants must affect the output of the decision process

1.20.2 participation must add value when compared with non-participatory policy-making processes

**1.21 Improve services**

**1.22 Resolve complex or controversial issues**

**1.23 Resolve conflicts between competing interests**

1.23.1 Through public reason

1.23.2 Through arbitration

**2. CONCEPTIONS OF PARTICIPANT**

**2.1 A Representative**

2.1.1 selected representative

2.1.2 representative of an interest

2.1.3 representative of the population or some population characteristics

2.1.4 representative of ordinariness

**2.2 Activists'/Unrepresentative**

2.2.1 vested interests

2.2.2 awkward busybodies

2.2.3 Too well informed thus atypical of normal people

**2.3 Adjudicators**

**2.4 Anti-hierarchy**

**2.5 Change-makers**

**2.6 Collective**

**2.7 Community**

**2.8 Consumers**

**2.9 Decision-makers**

**2.10 Demanding participation**

**2.11 Differentiated**

2.11.1 Role differentiation

2.11.2 Social characteristics

**2.12 Experts**

2.12.1 in our own needs/wants

2.12.2 with experiential knowledge of certain specialised areas

2.12.3 in areas where no-one can claim expertise

**2.13 Impartial****2.14 In need of empowerment**

2.14.1 to fully participate

2.14.2 to address their marginalisation

**2.15 Individual and collective****2.16 Information units****2.17 Interest groups****2.18 Incentivised****2.19 Policy tool****2.20 Problem-solvers****2.21 Public reasoners****2.22 Realising full capabilities****2.23 Rights-holder****2.24 Self-determining****2.25 Self-governors****2.26 Self-reliant individuals/communities****2.27 Social****2.28 Stakeholders****2.29 Transform views vs aggregate preferences**

2.19.1 Malleable to changes in views

2.19.2 Fixed preferences

**3. CONCEPTIONS OF OFFICIAL PARTICIPANTS****3.1 Authorities as leaders**

3.1.1 Retain decision power

3.1.2 Example setters / community leaders

3.1.3 Enablers / facilitators

**3.2 Authorities as self-interested**

**3.3 Authorities as paternalistic**

**3.4 Authorities as ill-equipped**

#### 4. CONCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUTHORITIES AND PARTICIPANTS

**4.1 Battle**

**4.2 Participants in charge**

**4.3 Partners**

**4.4 Personal**

#### 5. CONCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS

**5.1 Conflictual**

**5.2 Equals**

**5.3 Mutually respectful**

#### 6. PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES (MACRO-FEATURES)

**6.1 Individual vs collective**

6.1.1 Individualised

6.1.2 collective empowerment

**6.2 Public interest / Private interest / Transform views vs aggregate interests**

**6.3 Top-down vs bottom-up / Negotiation vs prescription**

6.3.1 Initiation

6.3.1.1 invited spaces

6.3.1.2 informal spaces

6.3.1.3 counter-publics

6.3.2 Definition of the participatory space.

6.3.4 Power and accountability

6.3.4 Subsidiarity / Geographical

**6.4 Adjudication**

**6.5 Bargaining by interest groups****6.6 Choice and Competition****6.6 Dialogue****6.7 Information process**

6.7.1 Customer oriented

6.7.2 Expertise-led

**6.8 Independent****6.9 Partnership****6.10 Tailor forms****7. MICRO-FEATURES OF INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES****7.1 Accountability****7.2 Additional Support****7.3 Agenda-setting**

7.3.1 Prescribed or negotiated

7.3.2 Individualised or collective

7.3.3 Narrow or broad

7.3.4 Fixed or changeable

**7.4 Aggregation and Decision-making (Output)**

7.4.1 Individualised or collective

7.4.2 By whom

7.4.3 Type (e.g. recommendations)

**7.5 Communication medium**

7.5.1 Individualised or collective

7.5.2 Type (e.g. face-to-face)

7.5.3 Direct or representative

**7.6 Continuity of participation****7.7 Dissemination****7.8 Ground rules**

7.8.1 Prescribed or negotiated

7.8.2 Fixed or changeable

7.8.3 Permissible behaviour

### **7.9 Information provision**

### **7.10 Participant selection**

7.10.1 Open or restricted

7.10.2 Inclusive

7.10.3 Representative

7.10.4 Targeted

7.10.5 Prescribed or negotiated

### **7.11 Response type**

### **7.12 Role differentiation**

7.12.1 Prescribed or negotiated

7.12.2 Multiple publics

7.12.3 Professionalised vs laity

### **7.13 Transparent**

## **8. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

### **8.1 Accountability & Transparency**

8.1.1 Representatives to represented

8.1.2 Process to wider public

8.1.3 Participants to sponsors

8.1.4 Sponsors to participants

8.1.4.1 Clearly defined purpose

8.1.4.2 Honesty about limits

8.1.4.3 Transparency about influence on decisions

### **8.2 Agenda-based/Objectives-focused**

8.2.1 Achieves intended purpose(s)

8.2.2 Achieves purpose(s) efficiently

8.2.3 Most effective means of achieving purpose(s)

8.2.4 Appropriate participant selection

**8.3 Beyond evaluation****8.4 Clearly defined purpose****8.5 Conflict resolution****8.6 Cost-effectiveness****8.7 Counterfactual effectiveness****8.8 Decision Legitimacy**

8.8.1 Outcome oriented

8.8.2 Process oriented

**8.9 Decision quality****8.10 Dialogue Quality**

8.10.1 the extent to which the different participants (and participants and sponsors) genuinely engage with one another

8.10.2 the extent to which participants (and participants and sponsors) are mutually respectful to another

8.10.3 the extent to which everyone has a full chance speak and be heard and no points of view are excluded

8.10.4 the extent to which participants (and participants and sponsors) are open and honest with each other

8.10.5 the extent to which all options are interrogated and participants do not satisfice

8.10.6 the objectivity, completeness and accessibility of any information provided to inform the dialogue

**8.11 Dissemination****8.12 Early Involvement****8.13 Fairness**

8.13.1 who participates

8.13.2 the agenda-setting

8.13.3 information provided

8.13.4 the ways that participants interact

8.13.5 the decision-making procedure

**8.14 Honesty about impact****8.15 Impact (on outcomes)**

**8.16 Improved citizens**

8.16.1 increased skills for democratic participation

8.16.2 Greater trust in the political system and public organisations and decision-makers

8.16.3 Greater trust in other citizens, closer bonds with other citizens and the ability to recognise the perspectives of others

**8.17 Inclusive****8.18 Increased understanding**

8.18.1 Of participants

8.18.2 Of the general public

8.18.3 Of sponsors

**8.14 Independence/Autonomy****8.15 Influence on policy decisions****8.16 Institutional coordination****8.17 Mutual understanding****8.18 Negotiated by participants****8.19 Open to all****8.20 Other-oriented****8.21 Output quality****8.22 Output use****8.23 Participant control****8.24 Participant satisfaction****8.25 Sponsor satisfaction****8.26 Participant-oriented****8.27 Participation rate****8.28 Policy quality****8.29 Process legitimacy**

8.29.1 Fairness

8.29.2 Appropriateness

**8.30 Representativeness**

8.31 Of participants

8.32 Of dialogue/arguments

**8.31 Subjective empowerment**

**8.32 Sufficient resources**

**8.33 System legitimacy**

## 9. EVALUATION DEBATES

**9.1 Outcome vs process**

**9.2 Trade-offs**

**9.3 Universal or specific**



### Appendix 3: Questionnaire

I would like to collect some information about you and your involvement in participation initiatives to assist with comparisons with other participants in this research project. Please answer the following questions/statements.

#### I am usually involved in public participation initiatives as:

- I have not participated in any way
- A member of the public
- A user of public services
- An academic
- A civil servant
- A politician
- An employee of a public service organisation
- An employee of a third sector organisation
- A member of an interest group (e.g. patient group)
- A participant in a social movement
- Other (*please state*):

#### My role in participation initiatives is:

- Voluntary
- Professional
- Not applicable

#### My role in participation initiatives is primarily as:

- A participant
- An expert
- An organiser/facilitator/manager
- A commissioner
- A user of the outputs
- Other (*please state*):
- Not applicable

#### In what policy sector have you been involved in participatory policy-making?

- Health
- Housing
- Local government
- Social security
- Social exclusion
- Other (*please state*):
- Not applicable

#### Please mark on the line how often you are involved in participation initiatives:



*Never involved*

*Continuously involved*

**Sex:** Male  
Female

**Age:**

**What is your ethnic group?**

**What is your highest level of educational qualification?**

No qualifications  
Secondary education (e.g. GCSEs/O-levels)  
Further education (e.g. A-levels/vocational equivalent)  
Higher education (e.g. Degree or higher)

**Please indicate your approximate pre-tax, personal income over the previous year:**

less than £14,999  
£15,000 - £24,999  
£25,000 - £34,999  
£35,000 - £49,999  
More than £50,000  
Don't know  
Don't want to answer

**If there was a general election tomorrow who would you vote for?**

Conservatives  
Green Party  
Labour  
Liberal Democrats  
Plaid Cymru  
Scottish National Party  
UKIP  
Other (*please state*):  
I would not vote  
I don't want to answer

## **Appendix 4: Consent Form**

Before you agree to participate in this research it is important that you understand what your participation will involve. If you have any questions about the research, or if anything is unclear, please do not hesitate to ask.

### **What do I have to do to take part?**

This project attempts to better understand people's opinions about public participation in policy-making. If you choose to participate, it will involve two things. First, you will be asked to sort some cards that contain common statements about public participation in the policy process based on whether you agree or disagree with them, and the final order you choose will be recorded. You will then be interviewed about your thoughts on public participation and the sorting process you have just completed. If you agree, the process will be audio recorded in order to increase the accuracy of analysis. The duration of your involvement depends on how much time you wish to spend sorting the statements.

### **What happens to the information I provide?**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the research study. Information that could be used to identify you will be removed from the data. The results of this research will be written-up as a Ph.D. thesis and as academic papers, however; you will not be identified in these publications and your anonymity will be protected.

### **Another person/organisation recommended I participate in this research. How will my participation affect my relationship with that person/organisation?**

If you have been put in contact with the researcher by another person/organisation, your participation will not affect your relationship with this person/organisation. It will not be held against you if you choose not to participate. Any data you provide will not be discussed with this person/organisation.

### **Can I withdraw from the research?**

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. If you have any reservations or questions you would like to discuss with the researcher, you can use the following contact details: [r.j.dean@lse.ac.uk](mailto:r.j.dean@lse.ac.uk) or +44 (0)7947 835 604.

Please sign below to confirm that you agree to participate.

Signature:

Print name:

Date:

