

# Literature Survey

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>Authority, Participation and Democratic Theory</b> .....	7
Authority in Contemporary Theories of Democracy .....	7
Participation in Ancient Democracy .....	8
Participation in Modern Democratic Theory .....	9
Participatory Theory in the Twentieth Century .....	9
Post-Structuralist Democratic Theory .....	11
<b>Theorizing Authority</b> .....	12
Authority, Knowledge and Experience .....	12
Authority Research Network Approaches .....	13
Authority and Participatory Theory .....	16
<b>Participation: History, Typologies and Methods</b> .....	18
A Brief History .....	18
Typologies of Participation .....	20
Participatory Techniques .....	22
Citizens' Juries .....	24
Participatory Budgets .....	26
<b>Barriers to and Problems With Participation</b> .....	28
Practice-Based Reflections .....	28
Citizens' Juries .....	28

An Example of Educational Reform .....	30
Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Action Learning .....	30
Participation's 'Tyranny' in a Global Context .....	32
Re-typologising at a State Level.....	33
Lessons From Feminism.....	34
On Speed .....	35
<b>Participation and Performance.....</b>	<b>36</b>
Participatory Experience.....	36
Emancipating Spectators .....	38
Art and Commitment.....	39
<b>Participation, Objectivity, Materiality .....</b>	<b>40</b>
Plural Objectivities for Plural Publics .....	40
Objectivity and Techniques: An Example from STS .....	42
The Generation of Publics .....	43
STS and the Political .....	45
<b>References.....</b>	<b>47</b>

## Introduction

*'Each person wants to participate and at the same time to be left alone'.<sup>1</sup>*

Participation is a central value in contemporary social, political and cultural arenas. It is a focal point of radical democratic politics and radical aesthetics; but it is also mobilized as a warrant for the withdrawal of the state from provision of essential public services, as well as to justify coercive state agendas of assimilation (for example, through compulsory participation in citizenship lessons and language classes). Broadly construed, 'participation' encompasses diverse practices that aim to engage people more fully in the production of knowledge and in the exercise of power. It is often motivated by a sense of 'democratic deficit' at local, national and global levels: for example, by worry at declining voting rates and membership of political parties; by recognition of the extent to which the global poor are deprived of influence on the ways in which they are governed; and by acknowledgement of a lack of accountability and democratic mandate of international development programmes. New forms of participatory practice have enjoyed demonstrable success in empowering communities, addressing inequalities and social and injustice, and challenging the authority of elite power. Other forms of participation, however, are the material for polarizing, neo-liberal forms of 'government through community' (Rose 2000).

The aim of this survey article is to offer some initial provocations for thinking about the theory and practice of democratic participation. It brings to the forefront three concepts that may seem alien to the practice, politics and theory of participation: *authority*; *performance*; and *objectivity*. We do not aim to offer an exhaustive account of the literature around any of these concepts. Instead, our aim is to offer some potentially fruitful pathways into contemporary theories of participatory practice. In particular, we are interested in tackling some important issues that have been raised in relation to participatory discourse (Hickey & Mohan 2004). Such issues include: its enduring fascination with the 'local' (Mohan and Stokke 2000); its inadequate account of the relations between individuals and organisations in social change

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Bernhard, in Hoffmann 1991:11.

(Cleaver 1999); the tendency to see participation as a technical method of project work (Carmen 1996; Rahman 1995); its valorisation of *presence* (equating participation with ‘giving voice’ to excluded subject positions, and contrasted with the distance and abstraction of representation); and the *scalar hierarchies* that it can presuppose. Questioning the theory and practice of participation in relation to the concepts of authority, performance and objectivity may generate some useful entry-points for reframing such problematic discourses.

As well as the concept of participation, then, which runs throughout this report, three themes of authority, performance and objectivity are central:

- **Authority.** Participatory theory usually (and understandably) has an anti-authoritarian bent. It often focuses on ways of lending direct *power* to marginalized groups. In this sense, it arguably remains in the grip of the Ancient Greek democratic model of offering direct political power to every citizen through the exclusion of the vast majority of the population from citizenship. Of course, this is hardly in the spirit of contemporary participatory democracy. Given that inequalities of power are an unavoidable aspect of social and political life, however, one conclusion that arguably follows from this is that distancing participatory theory from the elitist Greek model of participation requires playing much closer attention to the role of *authority* in participatory practice. Authority is a key element in democratic legitimacy: it is a means by which positions of power are made *accountable* and hence authorized. ‘Authority’ refers, in broad terms, to something like ‘weighty counsel’ or ‘advice that cannot safely be ignored’: that is, to a social relationship where an individual freely chooses to be guided by another by virtue of their specialist knowledge, wisdom or expertise. Authority is not only passed from the powerful to the powerless; it can also be exerted by the powerless upon the powerful. It is through authority that those in power are guided by those whom they govern. Regrettably, however, authority is usually exerted ‘top-down’, via the authorizing power of elite institutions such as NGOs, universities, religious organisations, think tanks, mass media, and so on. This means that a core problem for participatory theory, – as a supplement to the essential question of empowerment – is the question of how participation can enable social and political claims to gain more *authority* to offer ‘advice that cannot safely be ignored’ to the powerful.
- **Performance.** Another legacy of the persisting authority of Ancient thought over democratic theory is the continuing association of participatory democracy and theatrical performance. To participate is to act, and theatre is the cultural form most strongly associated with acting. To associate participatory practice with performance, however, can raise the spectre of ‘inauthentic’ participation – of participants being mere actors in an artificial spectacle. Yet because authority only exists when it is recognized, authority is intrinsically bound up with performance, since inspiring confidence and trust requires that an authority figure demonstrates and makes visible their superior expertise or wisdom. Most major institutions of authority (e.g. religious organisations, parliaments, courts, universities, museums) are connected with elaborate forms of

pageantry and spectacle that aim to demonstrate their claim to 'know better' than others. Similarly, the authority of protest movements has historically been linked to their ability to mobilize large crowds in dramatic displays of dissent. Thinking about participatory democracy in terms of authority, then, requires understanding the performances through which marginalized communities can assert their claim to 'know better' than those who govern them.

- **Objectivity.** Because authority derives from claims to 'know better', it is linked to questions of objectivity. Purely subjective positions cannot be authoritative, because their claim does not reach beyond their own subject position. To become authoritative, claims have to be indexed to a common world. Traditional institutions of authority make authoritative judgments about what is common – e.g. common knowledge, morality, law. Generating authority for lay knowledges, then, requires multiplying the sources of objectivity so that lay knowledges can successfully claim to transcend subjective positions. In addition, paying attention to the role of objectivity in participatory practice leads into a fuller appreciation of the role of *objects* and *technologies* in participatory practices.

In this literature survey we will: highlight themes in political theory relating democracy and participation to authority and performance; introduce key themes and techniques in participatory practice; identify barriers to and critiques of participation; and finally relate participation to the three concepts of authority, performance and objectivity.

## Authority, Participation and Democratic Theory

### *Authority in Contemporary Theories of Democracy*

It is striking that the concept of authority rarely figures in discussions of democracy (exceptions include Christiano 2003; Connolly 1987; Gould 1988; Haugaard 2010; Jones 1993; Warren 1996). This is probably due to the sense that deferring to authority requires a surrender of judgment, whereas democratization involves giving citizens a greater opportunity to exercise their powers of judgment concerning public affairs. Yet there are at least four reasons for understanding the politics of participatory democracy in relation to the concept of authority (Warren 1996):

- In contemporary societies there are limits of time, attention and expertise. People cannot participate in all decisions that are made on their behalf – and utopia is not a nonstop meeting. Societies require a delegation of roles and responsibilities, and authority is the most legitimate form of power for organizing this.
- A large number of important social decisions involve high levels of technical expertise. Of course, many of these (e.g. climate change, the economy, nuclear power, genetically modified crops, HS2 rail) are controversial matters of public concern and need to be opened to more collaborative decision-making processes (see, for example, Callon et al. 2009). Since no-one can master all specialized discourses, however, it will always be necessary to place trust in the technical expertise of authorities.
- Since ‘authorities’ are ‘authorized’ to take decisions or give advice, their terms of authorization can serve as standards of democratic accountability.
- By ignoring the question of authority, radical democrats have allowed the issue of authority to become, in popular political discourse, a concept associated with a conservative nostalgia for traditional, naturally guaranteed order. Yet authority is not the preserve of the powerful: marginalized and minoritarian social and political claims, to be effective, must be authoritative. Those who are excluded from power but wish to make effective claims on the powerful must find ways of making those claims authoritative.

The process of ‘democratizing democracy’ (Callon et al. 2009; Cornwall and Goetz 2005; de Santos 2005), then, cannot be an entirely anti-authoritarian one – which is not to say, of course, that it will not require challenging existing authority relations. Democracy, far from being anti-authoritarian, can be seen as a means of replacing coercive power with authoritative power (Haugaard 2010). Rather than being a means of establishing consensus, it is a way of structuring conflict (Mouffe 2000). It is a way of establishing new foundations for authoritative power in modern, dynamic societies, where authority can no longer be grounded in tradition and permanent foundations. In this sense, authority is a ‘performative’ act – it only exists through its recognition by others (Haugaard, 2010). Democracy, then, can be seen as a means of conferring authority upon the state and its offices (Christiano 2003). Interpreted in this light, new forms of radical democratic practice can be seen not merely to challenge authority, but also to create *new* forms of authority and legitimacy. Understanding authority in relation to participatory practice, however, requires thinking beyond the authority of the state, and focusing on the ways of lending authority to marginalized groups, claims, and discourses who are excluded from meaningful participation in formal political processes.

### *Participation in Ancient Democracy*

In democratic theory, participation (understood as direct rule) is usually opposed to representation (interpreted as delegated rule). However, all democracies combine elements of both (though usually with a much greater emphasis on representation). The relative paucity of experiments with direct democracy means that Ancient Greece remains an important reference point for theorising participatory democracy (Pearce 2010b). The Greeks (arguably) did not have a concept of authority (Agamben 2005; Arendt 1977; Mommsen 1996; Wirszubski 1960). The Athenian experiment with ‘*demokratia*’ (from ‘*demos*’, the people, and ‘*kratos*’, power) aimed to disperse political power directly to the people, away from small elites. Every citizen had the right to address the public in the assembly and to take part in decision making. However, political participation remained reserved for a small elite of male citizens – approximately 10% of the population (Hansen 1991). It presupposed the legitimacy of a fixed, ontological distinction between those fit for *mental* labour and those fit for *manual* labour.

The Roman Republic adopted elements of Greek participatory democracy, but the cost of its widening of the sphere of those counted as citizens was a lesser degree of participation. The Romans introduced a new focus on checking the democratic rule of the assemblies with another body bearing *authority*. As in Athens, popular assemblies of citizens were given legislative power. However, this power was checked by the aristocratic Senate, which was invested with the authority to give weighty advice. Whereas the assemblies possessed power (*potestas* or *imperium*), the Senate had authority (*auctoritas*). In practice, however, the Roman Republic was governed as an oligarchy rather than as a democracy, with a small number of families dominating the Senate, the magistracies and the popular assemblies through extensive patron–client relations (A. Ward 2004).



### *Participation in Modern Democratic Theory*

In modern political theory, Jean-Jacques Rousseau – one of the inspirations for the Jacobin movement during the French Revolution – is recognized as key theorist of participation. ‘Rousseau’s entire political theory hinges on the individual participation of each citizen in political decision making and in his theory participation is very much more than a protective adjunct to a set of institutional arrangements; it also has a psychological effect on the participants, ensuring that there is a continuing interrelationship between the working of institutions and the psychological qualities and attitudes of individuals interacting within them’ (Pateman 1970:22; see Rousseau 2008). For Rousseau, political participation depended on conditions that would ensure citizens could assemble as equal and independent individuals – namely, individuals’ economic equality and economic independence. When an ideal situation for decision making was present, where no organised groups were present but only independent individuals, it would be possible for everyone to recognise the acceptability of a single policy, a single ‘general will’, where benefits and burdens were equally shared. The most important value of participation, however, for Rousseau, was an *educative* one. However, Rousseau, through his insistence on the exclusion of organized groups or parties, paid little attention to the role of authority in the democratic process. His theory of participation rested upon a highly romanticized idealization of a society made up of small, independent peasant proprietors.

Later theorists such as Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill, by contrast, acknowledged the necessity of representative government in large-scale societies. Mill warned of the dangers of centralisation inherent in Rousseau’s notion of a single ‘general will’. Representative government with strong participation at local level, he believed, was a way of avoiding such populist, massifying tendencies. If individuals are to be able to participate effectively in government, it is necessary to nurture these abilities at smaller scales. It is by participating at the local level that the individual ‘learns democracy’. Part of this educative process, however, was learning to recognize the necessity of keeping power in the hands of an educated elite who possessed the appropriate qualities of ‘prudence, temperance, and justice, and generally ... all the virtues which are important in our intercourse with others’ (cited in Robson 1968:210). Mill, that is, effectively based his theory of representative democracy on the unquestioned authority of the educated elite.

### *Participatory Theory in the Twentieth Century*

Twentieth century democratic models have been dominated by the Schumpeterian model of democracy as a ‘marketplace for votes’ for different political parties. However, from the 1970s there was a surge of interest in a new ideal of participatory democracy as ‘the idea of a self-governing community of citizens who are united less by homogeneous interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions rather than their altruism or good nature’ (Barber 1984:117; see Dahl, 1971; Pateman 1970). At the same time, an (arguably) more radical politics of participation was being formulated by Paulo Freire (1971), whose ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ has been seminal for much participatory thought. Freire sees overcoming

oppression to require a mutual process between ‘oppressor’ and ‘oppressed’. Students must become active participants in the learning process. Education is a collaborative process and a social process demanding that educators become aware of the concrete conditions of the learners’ world – the conditions that shape them. For Freire, knowing is a social process which involves the whole self: reason, feelings, emotions, memory, affects. This means that ‘the relationship called “thinking” is not enclosed in a relationship “thinking subject - knowable object” because it extends to other thinking subjects’ (1971:92). The task of radical pedagogy is to counter dehumanization: ‘The ability of humans to plan and shape the world for their future needs is what separates man from animals. The oppressed majority must be taught to imagine a better way so that they can shape their future and thereby become more human’ (1971:94).

These principles remain at the heart of ‘participatory action research’ (e.g. Fals Borda & Rahman 1991; Kapoor and Jordan 2009; Kindon et al. 2007; McIntyre 2008; McTaggart 1997; Rahman 1993; Smith et al. 1997; Whyte 1991). Orlando Fals Borda, for example, describing his experiences of working to understand the historical and social situation of workers, farmers, and Indian peoples in Colombia, criticises the ways in which anthropological research methodologies such as ‘participant observation’ and ‘participant experimentation’ retain the distance between the observed and the observer. Avoiding remaining outside the social process, he argued, requires a researcher’s ‘personal insertion’: a commitment to the organized masses. This enables research that is genuinely empirical ‘in its attempt to adjust analytical tools to the real needs of the masses, and not those of the researcher’ (Fals Borda 1979:37). For example, he cites the example of archival research on a historical episode in which a diocese usurped an Indian reservation. This research ‘provided the formal weapons and ideological and political knowledge necessary to confront the bishop and recover the land by force. This represented a major victory for the Colombian popular classes’ (1979:43).

The Zapatista movement in Mexico has also been an important influence on radical democratic theory. John Holloway (1996, outlines how the Zapatistas have developed and put into practice an innovative conception of power. They refuse to see the state as the site of power. ‘The state divides the public from the private and, in so doing, imposes a division upon us, separates our public, serious side from our private, frivolous, irrelevant side. The state fragments us, alienates us from ourselves’ (Holloway, 1996). Their rejection of the state motivates a form of participatory organisation that insists on the principle of ‘mandar obedeciendo’ (‘lead by obeying’). This is the idea that the leaders of the movement must obey the members, and that all major decisions should be taken through a process of collective decision making. The language used here is interesting – it implies that the aim is not an elimination of all forms of obedience and authority, but a new way of practicing ‘bottom-up’, collaborative authority. At the heart of this is a concept of *truth* as *dignity*: ‘Dignity is to assert one’s humanity in a society which treats us inhumanly. Dignity is to assert our wholeness in a society which fragments us. Dignity is to assert control over one’s life in a society which denies such control. Dignity is to live in the present the Not Yet for which we struggle’ (Holloway, 1996).

### *Post-Structuralist Democratic Theory*

Post-structuralist accounts of democracy have highlighted the problematic aspects of construing democracy as the ‘rule of the majority’ (see Tønder and Thomassen 2005). Politics, they warn, must be about proliferating and empowering *minority* voices rather than adjudicating majority voices. Thus for theorists such as Laclau & Mouffe (1985), Honig (1993), Tully (1999) and Connolly (1995), the essence of democratic politics lies in the constant contestation of the boundaries of ‘the political’. These theorists see contestation to be its lifeblood, in contrast to rationalistic, institutionally-based definitions of democracy, which are not attentive enough to difference and pluralism. In the most well-known formulation of post-structuralist democratic theory, Laclau and Mouffe’s account of ‘radical democracy’ offers a trenchant critique of the concept of representation, based on the assumption that representation fixes fluid identities, and hence attempts to resolve pluralism into a rational procedure of agreement. Basing their account on a fundamental distinction between ‘politics’ (the narrow range of practices of elections, political party activities etc) and the ‘political’ (the making visible of new objects of public contestation), they offer an alternative to ‘representation’ in ‘articulation’, interpreted as a practice that can build political alignments between diverse interests and identities, but only ever according to a contingent set of identifications that remain open to contestation. This theory has been highly influential, but also critiqued from more materialist post-structuralist approaches which criticise radical democratic theory for its ‘evacuation of any *substance* from the social apart from relations of meaning and power’ (Barnett 2004, emphasis added). Assuming that the demonstration that identities are not natural or natural justifies a normative programme that those identities can and should be changed arguably introduces a peculiarly old-fashioned sense of the disembodied, punctual self at the core of anti-essentialist democratic theory.

A similar set of issues run through Jacques Rancière’s (1999) account of politics, which, like radical democracy, is premised upon an ontological distinction between politics and the political (articulated through a distinction between ‘politics’ and ‘police’). Rancière’s thought begins from the standpoint, common to all post-structuralist theory, that any process of *inclusion* is at the same time a form of *exclusion*. Any ideal of a cohesive, stable community is dangerous because it inevitably stabilizes the exclusion of those not. This goes back to the genealogical link between democracy and slavery. For Aristotle, a citizen is one who participates in the fact of governing and being governed. Slaves cannot participate; but this exclusion is not just political but ontological: slaves are deemed incapable of speech, not fully human, and thereby *constitutively* unable to participate. From this, Rancière recuperates a disruptive account of democracy as ‘the power of the people with nothing, the speech of those who should not be speaking, those who were not really speaking beings’. Democracy is the process whereby an excluded identity forces itself into the field of political visibility and audibility. This politics is inherently aesthetic, since it involves a disruption of visibilities. Rancière’s approach here has seemed to some critics to mobilize a problematically anti-authoritarian privileging of disruption, flux and contingency over the power of organized political forms to effect change (e.g. Badiou 2009; Hallward, 2009; though see Millner, 2013).

## Theorizing Authority

### *Authority, Knowledge and Experience*

Authority, as noted earlier, is often characterized as a form of ‘weighty counsel’ – something more than advice, but less than command (Arendt 1977). ‘Traditional’ images of authority relationships include those between parent and child, doctor and patient, teacher and student, and religious leaders and their flocks (Tönnies 2001). When I obey authority, I do so freely. Thus if you *compel* me to do something, you do not exert authority over me. However, by obeying authority, I also recognize the legitimacy of an inequality between myself and the person whom I obey. In this sense, if you use reason to *persuade* me to do something, you are not exerting authority over me, since I am no longer deferring to your judgment, but have come to the same judgment myself. Authority is based on the existence of affective bonds between those who exert authority and those who obey it. It relies upon deeply felt and complex emotional bonds of trust, respect, faith, attraction and/or fear (Sennett 1980). Authority, then, is a fundamentally *ambiguous* form of power: it is a social relationship that is unavoidable, productive, but also dangerous (Connolly 1987). It is for this reason, perhaps, that narratives of a ‘crisis’ of authority have been ubiquitous throughout modern times.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of authority is usually taken to imply that a relationship has been ‘authorized’ and is recognized as legitimate (Weber 1964). However, other theorists have insisted on the existence of illegitimate forms of authority (Adorno 1950; Marcuse 2008; Sennett 1980). Acknowledging the existence of illegitimate authority opens up the possibility of conceptualizing forms of ‘bottom-up’ authority that come from outside the standard legitimizing institutions or traditions of authority. In other words, it enables us to consider the possibilities for creating opportunities ‘to speak with authority *without* being authorized to speak’ (Butler 1997:157; see Lovell 2003).

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<sup>2</sup> The most recent incarnation of this narrative, for example, occurred in the aftermath of the 2011 riots in London and other UK cities, which were blamed by many commentators on a crisis of the authority of teachers, parents, and community leaders. In addition, however, we might observe that the discourse of participation is closely related to critiques of the breakdown of trust in (i.e. the authority of) political leaders and parties.

Much political theory is explicitly or implicitly anti-authoritarian. Anarchist thought, for example, has traditionally opposed all forms of ‘artificial’ authority (though some contemporary anarchists adopt more nuanced positions). Similarly, the thrust of the Habermasian theory of the public sphere, to the extent that it is based on the creation of egalitarian spaces for rational deliberation, and hence excludes the *passions*, is essentially an anti-authoritarian one. Re-introducing passion, emotion and conflict into the theory of democracy, however – as the radical democratic theory of Chantal Mouffe (1992, 2000, 2005), for example, invites us to do – requires seriously engaging with the phenomenon of authority and the affective relationships that it presupposes.

### *Authority Research Network Approaches*

Research on forms of bottom-up authority production emerging from the Authority Research Network places renewed emphasis on authority as a productive, creative social relationship that can enable minoritarian claims to be made with more force. This research develops accounts of authority as a relationship that mobilizes highly complex relationships and relays between subjectivity and objectivity (and, correspondingly, between related terms such as active/passive and participation/representation). Starting from the ‘subjective’ pole of authority, we might think about the ways in which the relationship between authority and subjective experience can be understood through concepts of ‘experiential authority’, the ‘expert by experience’, and the ‘authority of experience’. Dawney (2013), for example, analyses the ways in which authority is conferred upon figures who are recognized to have undergone experiences of particular intensity: for example, experiences of suffering or of proximity to death. The authority that these lived experiences can confer, she argues, derives from the ways in which the bodies of these authority figures – by having touched the limits of subjective experience, and hence come closest to sheer, objective reality – come to materialize specific objectivities around which others can organize their emotional attachments. These bodies become focal points for a circulation of affective experiences of being-in-common. The authority of subjective experience, then, is conferred by the link with a common world beyond individual subjectivities to which it testifies.

Noorani (2013), similarly, shows how self-help groups run by mental health service users can create spaces in which individuals share experiences of distress and acquire new capacities to collectively experiment with and transform those experiences. As these experiments with subjective experiences progress through time, the transformed experiences become more ‘weighty’, more authoritative, and hence more communicable, through performance, as *objective* knowledge. For example, ‘voices simulation’ role-play exercises that mimic the experience of ‘hearing voices’ (or what is known in medicalized discourse as ‘auditory hallucinations’) can demonstrate that the reactions of non-voice-hearers to the role-play are congruous with the reactions of voice-hearers to their voices, and have the effect of performatively challenging fixed partitions between the ‘sane’ and the ‘mentally ill’. Through the development of creative, experimental and dramaturgical techniques for sharing, working upon, and communicating subjective experience, such spaces generate the authority to make more authoritative claims for a rearrangement of roles, categories and hierarchies.

Starting from a perspective tied more closely to the ‘objective’ pole of authority, Blencowe (2013) argues that authority is constituted through the relations it traces with forms of objectivity (understood broadly, in terms of a reality beyond subjective experiences and standpoints). Authority is a means of anchoring experience; it mobilizes ‘ideas of objectivity’ as focus points for experience, enabling us to occupy worlds in common. Authoritative relationships, voices and statements draw upon those ideas of objectivity, playing upon perceived inequalities in our proximity to reality. The authority of figures as diverse as priests, scientists, judges or community groups, then, we can infer, comes from their occupation of a position that is recognized to be in some way closer to reality – and hence stronger, more trustworthy, or more reliable – than others.

Drawing Blencowe’s argument into a different theoretical tradition, we can observe some surprising connections between her approach to authority and the Freudian account of the ‘reality principle’ as an experience of the *positivity* of social identity and reality. This in turn, however, raises a question, common to theorists such as Theodor Adorno (1973), Jacques Lacan (1979), Slavoj Žižek (1989) and Jean-Luc Nancy (1997), about the impossibility of touching upon the ‘real’ through anything other than a traumatic experience of separation and distancing. If reality is only experienced in the moments where one’s separation from it become most intensely felt, then authority becomes indexed, not just to the experience of ‘presence’ created through links to a common reality, but at the same time to the sense of *distance* that is such an experience’s condition of possibility. Such speculations perhaps cohere with the kinds of disruptive authority described by Kirwan (2013) and Millner (2013). In Kirwan’s deconstructive account of the contemporary ‘politics of lost authority’, drawing on the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy, he discusses how contemporary communitarian and neoliberal politics are motivated by a desire for *intimacy*. Intimacy, here, is positioned in relation to two paradigmatic figures: community and locality. In terms of the arguments of Blencowe and Dawney, we might say that the intimacy of community and locality is at root the intimacy of *touch*: that is to say, of an embodied contact with objective reality, with inalienable connections with other people and one’s lived environment.

Kirwan’s theory invites radical political thought to move beyond the common Arendtian narrative of the loss of authority, which links authority to a lost presence or intimacy, to a thinking of authority as present loss. In other words, he construes authority in terms of a disruptive absencing, thereby positioning ‘loss’ and ‘authority’ as terms that are *co-constitutive* rather than mutually exclusive. Authority, in this sense, does not make things present, but creates absences. Authority becomes the paradoxical assertion of an *exterior* intimacy – an embodied encounter with the unknown and unknowable. Authority, as loss, only touches upon reality as the impossibility of authentic contact with reality. In this sense, Kirwan’s narrative seems to be haunted by the unvoiced presence of lost souls such as Baudelaire’s flâneur, Dostoevsky’s idiot, or Wagner’s Flying Dutchman – doomed and opaque aesthetic figures who, hopelessly lost in a labyrinthine and hostile world, acquire a curious authority to speak disruptive truths (see Brigstocke forthcoming).

A similarly complex interplay between presence and absence and subject and object is discernible in Millner's (2013) account of 'experimental' authority and the politics of irregular migration. Like Kirwan, Millner focuses on the authority relations that make possible disruptive political events, which she relates to what Jacques Rancière (2004) calls the 'distribution of the sensible': the economy of visibilities and invisibilities, the delineation between those with a voice in the political arena and who must remain silent. Via an argument that complements Noorani's (2013) focus on the link between authority and experimentation, Millner analyses the productive role of experimentation and creative forms of political organization in the production of authority, and the central role of such authority in the constitution of a disruptive theatre of truth. 'To focus on experimental forms of authority', she writes, 'means noticing where different ways of being ethical are being multiplied, experimentally developed, and brought into polemic disagreement with normative fields of knowledge'. It is through experimental authority, then, that subjective positions touch on, and thereby reconfigure, the parameters of a common world.

Tensions arguably exist between the understandings of the political mobilized in these accounts – whether, for example, it is understood in terms of a moment of polemical interruptions of the order of things, or in terms of the creation of durational, future-oriented planes that build a new future. One theme crossing each of these accounts, however, is an interest in the *aesthetics* of authority – the ways in which authority makes itself seen and felt. Brigstocke (2013), focusing on the increasing authority of the arts since the late eighteenth century, offers an initial framework for moving towards a phenomenology of authority (that is, an account of the conditions of its appearing). The production of modern forms of authority, he argues, can usefully be analysed in terms of interventions across three overlapping axes of experience. The stuttering relay between presence and absence that is constitutive of the experience of authority, he suggests, traverses three distinct fields. First, authority is asserted through the production of experiential *amplitude*. Authority augments experience, but this augmentation can take a number of forms: for example, making experience more extensive (by stretching further into the past, through tradition, or the future, through experimentation); or else by making it more intensive (felt with increased intensity in the present moment). In this sense, authority is associated with a dynamic experience of presence and immanence. Second, authority is experienced in terms its power of *gravity*. Authority is a way of anchoring the world. Traditional authority figures are endowed with 'gravitas' – an ability to bear the weight of the world upon their shoulders. In modernity, however, the experience of authority is the experience of an anchoring *through* flux. This explains the increased authority of the arts since the birth of romanticism in the late eighteenth century, because they take it upon themselves to capture the passing moment in such a way as to retain 'all the suggestions of eternity that it contains' (Baudelaire 1964: 5). Art has the capacity to arrest the world, to lend the most ephemeral and inconsequential moments the gravity of eternity. Third, authority is asserted through the production of *distance*. Authority figures always retain a mystery, a sense that they hold back a source of hidden power. Freud's extraordinary characterization of the authority of the psychoanalyst is exemplary in this respect. 'The doctor', he writes, 'should be opaque to his patients and, like a mirror, should show them nothing but what is shown to him' (Freud 1958).

### *Authority and Participatory Theory*

These theoretical approaches arguably raise some important challenges for thinking about the theory and practice of participation:

- Understanding participation, not solely in terms of empowerment, but also in terms of authorization. Because authority only exists when it is recognized, this arguably requires a relational view that places equal emphasis on ‘bottom’ and ‘top’. In other words, attention should be paid to both: (1) the ways in which marginalized groups *claim* authority; and (2) the ways in which powerful groups *recognize* authority.
- Challenging any privileging of ‘direct’, authentic, unmediated power. All power (except perhaps the most tyrannical) is mediated. The ideal of ‘popular sovereignty’ associated with the Jacobin wing of the French Revolution – the hope for a direct, organic connection between a singular ‘will of the people’ and a singular mechanism of power – is dangerously totalizing (as the aftermath of the revolution exemplified). Power is plural, and there will always be a multiplicity of antagonistic claims and voices. To focus solely on direct empowerment is to risk neglecting the networked relations and mediations between different power- and authority-bearing bodies.
- Moving beyond dichotomies of active/passive. Active participation is not a virtue in itself, and sometimes a *refusal* to participate can be a powerful form of participation.
- Avoiding placing too great an emphasis on subjectivist notions of ‘giving voice’. Authority is not just a matter of recognising subjectivities. It gains its force by connecting those subjectivities to a common world. Conceptualizing participation in terms of authority, then, requires addressing the role of objects and objectivities in democratic forms of participation.
- Challenging the localism inherent in much participatory practice. All communities are created through global relationships (Amin 2004; Massey 1994). An effective politics of participation has to address varied scales of government, from the local to the global.
- Addressing the relationship between participation and critique. Critique is an essential part of democratic politics. Does effective critique require the occupation of positions *outside* power (and hence, outside any narrowly-conceived sphere of political participation)?
- Challenging the assumption that the best way for marginalized groups to make their claims authoritative is to make them knowable. Authority is always to some extent opaque. To assert authority is to assert that one is, in some respects, *unknowable*.
- Likewise, it requires challenging the assumption that *transparency* is inherently democratic (Birchall 2011). As Edgar Allan Poe showed in his famous detective story ‘The Purloined Letter’, making things more open to view can be an effective means of rendering them invisible. There is arguably a dangerously *anti-democratic* element to an unchecked realization of the Enlightenment desire ‘to break up the patches of darkness that blocked the light, eliminate the shadowy areas of society, demolish the unlit chambers where arbitrary political acts, monarchical caprice, religious



superstitions, tyrannical and priestly plots, epidemics and the illusions of ignorance were fomented' (Foucault 1980).

## Participation: History, Typologies and Methods

### *A Brief History*

Useful summaries of the recent history of participation in community and international development are offered by writers such as Brodie et al. (2009), Tandon (2008), and Taylor (1995). In post-war years, emphasis in community and development work was placed on passing down knowledge and expertise. In 1949 President Truman outlined a philosophy of international development based on passing expertise, knowledge and tools from those who had 'arrived' at development to those who aspired to develop. By the 1950s, a model of top-down, expert-led development had been set in motion. Major development programmes, with international expertise and funds, were mounted in newly independent colonies across the world.

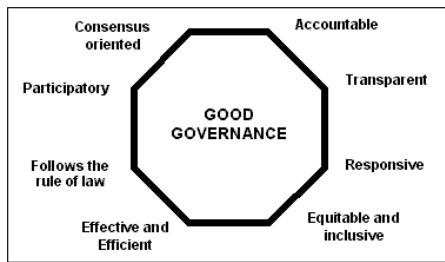
In the late 1960s, as problems of sustainability, local ownership and wastage of resources became apparent, policy makers and international development experts began to take notice of subaltern, micro-experiments in community participation. Domestically, the 1960s saw the UK government introduce numerous programmes to tackle poverty, disadvantage and racial tension, which included an emphasis on public participation. In 1969 the government launched a Community Development Projects programme emphasizing social action as a means of creating more responsive local services and of encouraging self help. However, workers in many of the projects rejected the original analysis and strategies of the project, and re-organized around larger questions of inequality and deindustrialisation rather than more localized concerns around community organization. There was a desire to bring about a much stronger link between the struggles of the workplace and those of the neighbourhood and community, and to develop means of influencing decision-making on a city-wide, regional and national basis. This model was very influential in the 1970s and early 1980s, when community activism was 'strongly influenced by a radical model that saw [it] as an extension of the class struggle' (Gilchrist 2004:15).

Similarly, The 1970s saw a dramatic increase in interest in bottom-up, people-led participatory international development. Two streams of thinking were particularly influential. The first stream had its roots in adult education and community organizing, drawing on Paulo Freire, Myles Horton, Ghandian

philosophy, and Julius Nyerere's political experiments in Tanzania. These movements became the foundation of the participatory research movement in the 1970s. These practices linked inquiry and investigation of social reality with learning and education, on the one hand, and organizing and action, on the other. Its emphasis on popular knowledge and critical reflection as prerequisites for participation was carried forward into many development projects. The second stream extended this approach into structural dimensions of participation, focusing on the design of the administrative system of the governments which intend to deliver participatory development. This stream of work benefited from similar, and parallel, work going on in participatory management in the private sector. By the 1980s, several development programs around the world were experimenting with local structures of 'beneficiary' participation. Representation of hitherto excluded and marginalized groups was promoted on a widespread basis. Thus participation was 'mainstreamed' in large development programs by the late 1980s. By the early 1990s, many international agencies had formally adopted policies and procedures for mainstreaming participation in all the development programs that they supported worldwide. The World Bank formally adopted a Participation Policy in 1994.

By the mid 1990s, three new trends were apparent. First, the results of mainstreaming participation in development started to become available, giving uneven evidence of its success. Second, political events such as the collapse of the Soviet Union, the demise of apartheid in South Africa, and the overthrow of Pinochet's regime in Chile, generated a renewed interest in 'civil society' as an agent of democratic transition from tyrannical regimes. The philosophy of participation began, in many circles, to become subsumed under the phenomenon of civil society. Third, many countries started to decentralize their development projects. Several different forms of local governance institutions emerged, with new local bodies placing local people in positions of public decision making, especially with respect to the implementation (if not the design) of various development programs of national governments. In some countries (e.g. India, the Philippines and Brazil) these local governance institutions had wide-ranging authority in resource mobilization, planning, implementation and monitoring of projects.

In the twenty first century, participation became encompassed within the 'good governance' agenda, associated with the Third Way politics of US President Clinton and UK Prime Minister Blair, which recognized that government is only one of the actors in governance. This led to an emphasis on networks, partnerships, and the fostering of civil society and social capital. It also led to a renewed focus on concepts such as: empowerment (reducing dependence on the state as benefactor); citizenship (aiming for active, informed and organized citizens as participants in the process of acquiring their rights and meeting their obligations); and democracy.



Increased public participation is often viewed as a means of addressing ‘democratic deficit’. Enhancing citizen participation is now an official policy in many countries, in response to concerns that the ongoing decline in participation in formal politics is leading to a crisis of democratic legitimacy. In the UK, for example, a recent White Paper looked at a range of existing and new tools that citizens can use to access and lever power at local and national levels, and the implications of a new ‘duty to promote democracy’ and ‘duty to involve’ people in key decisions (DCLG 2008a). Strategies include: improving access to information available at local level; introducing a new duty to respond to petitions; increasing use of participatory budgeting; and increasing the number of direct elections (for example, for directly elected mayors). ‘Unless we give citizens similar choices in our democratic system to those they have in their everyday lives’, it states, ‘we will see a further erosion of trust and participation in democracy’ (DCLG 2008a:10). The 2011 Localism Act added a number of measures including the right to referendums for large council tax increases and a ‘community right to challenge’ to offer local services.

### *Typologies of Participation*

Many theorists of participatory practice are critical of the shallow degree of participation involved in many practices described as ‘participatory’. Thus Carole Pateman, for example, argues for the need to acknowledge a clear distinction between ‘deliberative’ and ‘participatory’ democratic processes (Pateman 2012). Others mobilize a distinction between participatory ‘democracy’ and participatory ‘governance’ (Pearce 2010a). In order to ground debates around the relative merits or ‘depth’ of different forms of participation, a number of typologies and frameworks for evaluating participatory methods have been proposed (e.g. Arnstein 1969; Fiorino 1990; Pretty 1995; Rowe and Frewer 2000; White 1996; Wilcox 1994; see Cornwall 2008). Since these typologies inevitably involve a normative position (whether implicit or explicit), the different typologies give a feel for the range of ways in which participation is understood and valued.

One highly influential evaluative typology is based on the value of increased *power* and *control* and a distinction between control by *authorities* and control by *citizens*. This is widely drawn upon though also frequently critiqued (e.g. Burns et al. 1994; Sharp and Connelly 2002; Wilcox 1994). By focusing solely on power, there is little room for forms of citizen authority in this framework.

Arnstein's Ladder	
Citizen Control Delegated Power Partnership	<i>Citizen Power</i>
Placation Consultation Informing	<i>Tokenism</i>
Therapy Manipulation	<i>Non-Participation</i>

An alternative ladder proposed by Jules Pretty (1995) is based on a prioritization of active forms of participation over passive forms of participation. The ultimate goal is community 'self-mobilization' – complete independence from external institutions. The normative progression of this ladder is highly problematic. As Andrea Cornwall observes, 'local self-mobilization may be actively promoted by the state and international agencies as part of efficiency goals that are entirely consistent with a neoliberal approach to development' (Cornwall, 2008:271). Moreover, the ideal of pure 'self-mobilization' is arguably a fantasy (albeit perhaps a productive or motivating one). All individuals, communities and organizations are partly constituted through their relations with those external to them.

Pretty's Ladder	
Self-mobilization	<i>People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems</i>
Interactive participation	<i>People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals.</i>
Functional participation	<i>Participation seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals (e.g. reduced costs).</i>
Participation for material incentives	<i>People participate by contributing resources (e.g. labour) in return for material incentives (e.g. food, money).</i>
Participation by consultation	<i>People participate by being asked questions about pre-defined problems</i>
Passive participation	<i>People participate by being told what has been decided</i>
Manipulative participation	<i>Pretence of participation</i>

Wilcox (1994), by contrast, emphasizes a model which emphasizes collaboration and partnership working. This leaves more space for developing an account of the role of authority in the creation and negotiation of collaborations. It acknowledges that state organizations and NOGs can still have a productive role to the play in the participatory practices.

<b>Wilcox's Ladder</b>	
Supporting independent community interests	<i>Local groups are offered funds, advice, and support to develop their own agendas within specific guidelines</i>
Acting together	<i>Different interest groups decide together on what is best and for a partnership to carry it out</i>
Deciding together	<i>Encourages additional options and ideas and provides opportunities for joint decision making</i>
Consultation	<i>Offers some options and listens to feedback</i>
Information	<i>Tells people what is planned</i>

### *Participatory Techniques*

Much work has gone into the creation of a somewhat technocratic body of knowledge concerning models and techniques for participatory practice. This generally focuses on 'deliberative' and 'top-down' models of participatory practice. For a flavour of the range of techniques used, see the table below (which draws on Elliott et al. 2005; Involve 2005; Rietbergen-McCracken & Narayan 1998) can be seen in the following table:

<b>Some Participation Techniques</b>	
<b><i>Appreciative Inquiry</i></b>	An approach for creating a vision and planning to achieve it. Appreciative Inquiry builds a vision for the future using questions to focus people's attention on success. Questions revolve around what people enjoy about an area, their aspirations for the future, and their feelings about their communities. They encourage people to tell stories from their own experience of what works, in order to imagine and construct further success.
<b><i>Beneficiary Assessment</i></b>	A consultative method of information-gathering which assesses the value of an activity as it is perceived by its principal users. The overall objective of a BA is to make the voices of beneficiaries and other local-level stakeholders heard by those managing the project or formulating policy. The focus is on obtaining qualitative information, including subjective opinions, to complement more easily accessible quantitative data on a development activity.
<b><i>Citizens' Juries</i></b>	A small panel of non-specialists, modelled to resemble a criminal jury, who carefully examine an issue of public significance and deliver a 'verdict'. They are independent forums for members of the public to examine and discuss an important issue of public policy. Juries receive information about the issues in question. This information includes a full range of opinions on what should be done about the issue. Much of this information is presented through witness presentations followed by question and answer sessions.

<p><b><i>Citizens' Panels</i></b></p> <p>Citizens' Panels derive from opinion polls and market research, and are large, demographically representative groups of citizens used to assess public preferences and opinions. Panel members participate in surveys at intervals over the course of their membership, and sometimes in further research such as focus groups.</p>
<p><b><i>Consensus Building/Dialogue</i></b></p> <p>An approach to conflict resolution that is designed to help participants identify common ground and mutually beneficial solutions to a problem. The process involves stakeholders in defining the problem, devising the methods and creating the solutions. Dialogue is mainly conducted through workshops and similar meetings.</p>
<p><b><i>Consensus Conference</i></b></p> <p>A panel of citizens explores a topic by questioning expert witnesses. The citizens decide the key aspects of the debate, including the choice of questions and selection of the witnesses, and formulate their own conclusions. The panel produces a report outlining conclusions and recommendations that are then circulated to key decision-makers and the media. The process is usually run by an organisation with no stake in the outcome, in order to limit accusations of bias.</p>
<p><b><i>Deliberative Mapping</i></b></p> <p>Deliberative Mapping involves both specialists and members of the public. It combines varied approaches to assess how participants rate different policy options against a set of defined criteria. The emphasis is not on integrating expert and public voices, but understanding the different perspectives each offer to a policy process. The groups themselves determine which criteria they will use to score the options against, thereby limiting any structural bias, and arrive at a ranking of them.</p>
<p><b><i>Deliberative Polling</i></b></p> <p>A deliberative poll measures what the public would think about an issue if they had an adequate chance to reflect on the questions at hand by observing the evolution of a test group of citizens' views, as they learn more about a topic. They aim to be more statistically representative than many other approaches due to their large scale. Deliberative Polling creates dramatic, statistically significant changes in views, although some of these changes are reversed over time. Deliberative polls are often broadcast on TV.</p>
<p><b><i>Democs (Deliberative Meeting of Citizens)</i></b></p> <p>A conversation game enabling small groups to discuss public policy issues. Information on the topic is provided on playing cards which are dealt out in two rounds. Each time, people reflect on their cards and choose one or two that they feel are most important. They take turns to read them out, explaining why they chose them, and then place them on the table. They then cluster the cards, with each cluster representing a key issue relating to the topic. Once they've voted on a range of responses or policy positions they try to create a response that everyone in the group can agree to.</p>
<p><b><i>Future Search Conference</i></b></p> <p>A way of creating a shared vision for the future. It enrolls a large group of stakeholders who take part in a highly structured process, where a group of 64 people forms eight tables of eight stakeholder groups.</p>
<p><b><i>Open Space Technology</i></b></p> <p>A meeting framework that allows unlimited numbers of participants to form their own discussions around a central theme. Participants are invited to identify issues for which they are willing to take responsibility for running a session. These topics are distributed among available rooms and timeslots. If participants find that they are not learning or contributing they go to another session or take a break. Written reports, complete with action points, are collected from each discussion at the end of each day.</p>
<p><b><i>Participatory Appraisal (PA; PLA; PRA)</i></b></p> <p>PA emerged from international development projects in Africa and Asia. It is a broad empowerment approach striving to build community knowledge and encouraging grassroots action. It uses a lot of visually based methods, making it especially useful for participants who find other methods of participation intimidating or complicated. At the start it usually focuses on mapping. As the process develops participants start finding common ground and eventually this can lead to new plans being developed and implemented. Outsiders – technical advisors or decision-makers who have information key to action planning – can be brought in to discuss and negotiate issues.</p>
<p><b><i>Participatory Strategic Planning</i></b></p> <p>A consensus building approach aiming to enable a community or work group to articulate together how they would like their community or organisation to develop over the next few years. It is a four-stage process: (1) The group determines their vision for the future of the organisation or community; (2) Then they articulate the</p>

contradictions or obstacles that are preventing them reaching their vision; (3) They move on to agree strategic directions that will help them get past the blocks and reach the vision; (4) Implementation planning: what shall we do in the first year, and finally, what shall we do in detail in the first 3 months.
<b><i>Planning for Real</i></b> Participants make a 3D model of their local area and use their knowledge of living in the area to make suggestions by placing cards directly on the model. There are both ready-made cards with common suggestions (around 300) and blank cards for participants to fill in themselves. These suggestions are then prioritised in small groups on a scale of Now, Soon, or Later. These resulting priority lists form the basis for an Action Plan that decision-makers are charged with taking away, considering and implementing.
<b><i>SARAR</i></b> A participatory methodology that has been applied extensively by UN agencies. It considers five principles to be essential for participation to be a dynamic and self-sustaining process: Self-esteem; Associative strength; Resourcefulness; Action planning; Responsibility. Five types of technique (Creative; Investigative; Analytic; Planning; Informative) are applied progressively. At the outset, participants are involved in using their creativity to look at situations in new ways and to build their capacity for self-expression. Then they gain tools for investigating and analyzing reality in more detail. Finally, they develop skills in gathering information, making decisions, and planning initiatives.
<b><i>User Panels</i></b> Regular meetings of service users about the quality of a service, or other related topics. They help to identify the concerns and priorities of service users and can lead to the early identification of problems or ideas for improvements. They usually take the form of a workshop. Clear lines of feedback are created between the panel members and the decision-makers.

In order to give a more detailed feel for different models of participatory practice, we will dwell here on two practices considered by many to have been particularly successful methods for participatory democratic engagement. Both also raise interesting questions in relation to authority and performance: citizens' juries and participatory budgeting. These exemplify aspects of 'deliberative' and 'participatory' models, respectively.

### *Citizens' Juries*

Citizens' juries draw upon the symbolism of the English tradition of trial by jury. What is particularly attractive about trial by jury in this context is that it places power directly into the hands of lay citizens: 'No other institution of government rivals the jury in placing power so directly in the hands of citizens, or wagers more on the truth of democracy's core claim that the people make their own best governors' (Wakeford 2002:1-2). Trial by jury emerged in English common law as an alternative to 'trial by ordeal' in the twelfth century, and is now used in several other countries, including the USA, Canada, Australia and France (DiPerna 1984).<sup>3</sup> It is seen as a key check on the judiciary. The jury system is premised on a right to trial by an *independent* and *impartial* court. Running alongside this is a principle of *fairness*: that justice should not only be done, but must also be seen to be done. Ensuring the principles of independence, impartiality and fairness is a separation between matters of *law* and matters of *fact*. The judge is an essential counterpart to the jury, because the separation of powers between judge and jury enables matters

<sup>3</sup> Many democratic countries, including Germany, India, and Japan, do not use trial by jury, but incorporate other forms of lay participation. The USA, where the Sixth and Seventh Amendments guarantee the right to trial by jury in all criminal cases and civil suits, is the location of 80% of the world's jury trials.



of legal process to be separated from the facts to be decided upon. The authority of the jury derives from the limits imposed upon it: the jury cannot decide upon the law itself.

Underlying the principles of fairness is the right to be tried by a ‘jury of one’s peers’. However, the definition of ‘one’s peers’ is extremely controversial. It is usually characterized in terms of the jury’s *representativeness*. But the UK and USA, for example, have very different models for achieving representativeness. Both are based on the random selection of 12 jurors, who are (at least in principle) legally obliged to participate.<sup>4</sup> However, whereas in the UK there is very limited right for defendants or prosecutors to challenge (i.e. de-select) jurors, in the USA the jury selection process is a vital and often lengthy part of the proceedings, sometimes supported by very extensive research into the likelihood of various demographic profiles swaying towards certain beliefs or attitudes.<sup>5</sup> Jurors are interviewed to reveal potential prejudice. Although discriminatory de-selection (e.g. by grounds of race) is illegal, statistics demonstrate that it is routinely practiced: ‘Today in America, there is perhaps no arena of public life or governmental administration where racial discrimination is more widespread, apparent, and seemingly tolerated than in the selection of juries’ (Equal Justice Initiative 2010:4). Advocates of the US system, however, criticize the British system for its potential to allow homogeneous juries that do not represent a diversity of beliefs and perspectives.

The authority of criminal jury trials, then, is tied to the challenge of demonstrating their impartiality, independence and fairness, through representative jury selection and via a separation of powers between matters of fact and matters of law. Citizens’ juries arguably face similar challenges.

Citizens’ juries are an influential example of ‘deliberative’ models of democratic participation (see, for example, Brown 2006; Coote & Lenaghan 1997; Crosby et al. 1986; Crosby 1995; Huitema et al. 2007; LGMB 1997; McIver 1998; Pimbert & Wakeford 2003; Smith and Wales 2000; Stewart et al. 1994; Wakeford 2002; Wakeford et al. 2008; Ward et al. 2003). Citizens’ juries have been held on very diverse topics, including: policing and drug use (Wakeford et al. 2004); nanotechnologies (Singh 2008); health (Einsiedel 2002; Elwood & Longley 2010; Entwistle et al. 2008; Haigh & Scott-Samuel 2008; Kashefi & Mort 2004); the environment (French & Laver 2009; Kenyon & Nevin 2001; O’Connor 2000; Robinson et al. 2008; Toni & von Braun 2001; Ward et al. 2003); and food and farming (Pimbert & Wakeford 2003).

In a typical citizens’ jury, jurors are composed of 10–20 people and (unlike legal juries) are selected randomly as a quota sample so as to be statistically representative of different strata of society. (In cases where they are instead selected as a sample of a particular interest group, they involve a very different form of legitimation, since they forego the criterion of impartiality.) Members are asked to take an independent, impartial, informed view of an issue. They answer a ‘charge’ posed by the organisers, who typically consult the sponsors of the jury when framing it. Jurors are paid to participate for several days,

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<sup>4</sup> The number 12 derives from Biblical tradition rather than any statistical or numerical principle of representativeness.

<sup>5</sup> However, UK juries’ claims to representativeness are often argued to be undermined by the rights to be excused from jury service, which lead to the middle classes being significantly under-represented in UK juries.

during which they receive evidence from a range of sources. They have the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses and to request more information. Trained facilitators help jurors through the process and a moderator acts as chair. Juries are normally expected to achieve consensus, although they can resort to majority voting and voice minority viewpoints.

### *Participatory Budgets*

Participatory budgeting (PB) is widely considered to be amongst the most successful instruments of participatory democracy (see, for example, Cabannes 2004; Centner 2012; Coulon 2001; Hernandez-Medina 2010; Marquetti et al. 2012; Novy and Leubolt 2005; Nylén 2002; Rodgers 2010; B. D. Santos 1998; Souza 2001; Zhang and Liao 2011). Unlike deliberative models such as citizens' juries, 'all citizens have the opportunity and the right to participate each year in a major part of city government. PB is not a specially commissioned event for which a few citizens are chosen, but a regular part of a vital area of municipal government. Nor is it a supplement to existing democratic institutions. PB changes and democratizes the structure of one part of those institutions' (Pateman 2012:11)

Participatory budgeting was first developed in the late 1980s in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and quickly spread around Latin America. In 2006, more than 1000 of the 16,000 municipalities of Latin America had adopted a form of participatory budgeting (Cabannes 2006). It has more recently spread to Europe, and in 2008 more than 100 European cities had some form of participatory budget (Sintomer et al. 2008).

Porto Alegre provides the 'foundational' model for participatory budgeting. Its principles are: direct, voluntary and universal participation; self-regulation; discussion of the budget in its entirety; and social control over the execution of the investment plan (Genro and de Souza 1997).<sup>6</sup> Baierle (2010) offers a useful summary of the process. The participatory budget method that was developed in Porto Alegre in the late 1980s involved a series of meetings (preparatory, decision making and monitoring) which took place at different levels and in a fixed annual cycle. Regional and thematic assemblies established priorities, elected councillors to a Participatory Budgeting Council, chose the number of delegates for the prioritisation meetings and reviewed the budget of the preceding year. Participation was universal at these decision-making meetings. Subsequent meetings of regional and thematic delegates determined concrete investment proposals within prioritised areas. The final result formed the Investment Plan of the Council, which was arrived at through weighting priorities, technical criteria (feasibility) and social justice criteria. Members of the Participatory Budgeting Council could have their mandate revoked by the regional or thematic assemblies at any time. Rules were decided by participants themselves through a process in which the government participated but did not vote.

The Porto Alegre experiment was based on principles of: grassroots democracy (carried into effect by citizens' assemblies); social justice (realized by an allocation formula for deciding the funds available to each area based on number of citizens, quality of existing infrastructure, and the local list of priorities);

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<sup>6</sup> This emphasis on social justice and on direct citizen participation of the poor contrasts with the emphasis placed by the World Bank on participatory budgeting as a tool for good governance, 'a tool for educating, engaging and empowering citizens and strengthening demand for good governance' (Shah, 2007).

and citizen control (realized by elected boards, such as the Council of the Participatory Budget, which ensure that the priorities of the districts are taken up in the budget to the greatest extent possible). Its success resulted from a combination of very strong political will on the part of local government, on the one hand, and bottom-up mobilization, on the other. Top-down participatory budgeting processes in Brazil are argued to have been less successful (Avritzer 2006).

Much interest has been taken in participatory budgets in Europe as well as Latin America. However, their power is generally considerably attenuated compared to the Porto Alegre model. Certainly participatory budgeting in the UK is far removed from the political radicalism of the Porto Alegre model. Enthusiastically endorsed by the New Labour government (DCLG 2008b), it usually follows a 'community grants' model, where small grants are allocated to be allocated by citizens through participatory means. Calls for just 1% of municipal budgets to be allocated to participatory budgets (compared to 100% in Porto Alegre) are currently considered by politicians to be excessive. However, the programme director of the government-funded Participatory Budgeting Unit has commented that 'Everything around localism and big society – and the whole government agenda – is entirely consistent with PB principles' (Pati 2011).

## Barriers to and Problems With Participation

### *Practice-Based Reflections*

Barriers to participation in more formal, top-down participatory practices include institutional barriers, a lack of resources, practical deterrents, psychological barriers and discrimination and prejudice (Brodie *et al.* 2009). Institutional barriers include bureaucracy, unnecessary complexity and excessive formality. Local community leaders can also hinder effective participation. Lack of resources (e.g. lack of education, the consequent dearth of social networks, and lack of financial resources) also create barriers to participation. Practical elements include lack of time, knowledge, childcare, and access to transport. Psychological barriers include a lack of confidence, insecurities concerning knowledge of the ‘system’ and suspicion and lack of trust as barriers to engagement in formal politics. Forms of stigma and cultural dominance can also hinder participation in national and local political and formal volunteering roles.

Let us turn to consider some of the ‘techniques of participation’ that we have introduced above, to give a little detail on obstacles faced.

### *Citizens’ Juries*

French & Laver (2009) and Wakeford (2002) discuss problems with citizens’ juries. Random sampling is essential, yet this can be frustrated by invitees declining to participate, while others agree to participate but simply don’t turn up. Interactions between these variables include young people (under 24) being under-represented because they were more likely to agree to take part but then not turn up, and people with college or university education being over-represented because they were both more likely to agree to participate and more likely to show up having agreed to participate. Indeed, Fishkin & Luskin (2005) claim that the participants of citizens’ juries are generally a little older, better educated, and more interested in, and knowledgeable about, the topic than nonparticipants. Practical problems with the non-participation of invitees are compounded by the fact that juries address issues concerning social inequalities in participation (French & Laver, 2009: 424-425). Self-selection and attrition of jurors have

also been investigated and found to be significant issues (French & Laver, 2009; see also Hansen & Andersen, 2004; Luskin *et al.*, 2002; Merkle, 1996).

Issues with the make-up of juries also raise questions around whether experts-by-experience should be included, and/or whether the spectrum of perspectives on the central issues should be represented amongst jurors, witnesses or both (Glasner, 2001). This can also lead to an over-emphasis on 'rational deliberation' that excludes other voices. Premium is placed on expert testimony, leading to a restriction on acceptable forms of argumentation and appropriate forms of language. Ward *et al.* (2003) suggest that part of the appeal of this is that 'it excludes arguments founded on tradition/authority and other extra-rational grounds'. However, it neglects inequalities in 'epistemological authority': that is, in 'the capacity to evoke acknowledgement of one's arguments' (Sanders 1997:348-49).

In addition, there are potential problems in the precise questions put to jurors, in terms of the framing of what is 'fact' and what is up for debate, what the options available and the broader remits are (Mirenowicz, 2001). French and Laver (2009) document a lack of information provided in citizens' jury processes on the witnesses called upon by the jurors, and a dearth of research on the balance of witness presentations and the effects of their different abilities in performing a certain 'role' or expertise. Arguably, sponsors and jury organisers have too much power to set the agenda and deliberative processes. Although juries can sometimes modify the charge being discussed, they rarely criticise structures, institutions, and resource-inequalities framing the issues (LGMB, 1997; McIver, 1998).

Two additional criticisms of citizens' juries should be stated. One is that the use of consensus decision rules may result in the suppression of dissenting views, and some jurors have reported reservations about their ability to express dissenting opinions (French and Laver, 2009:440; Hall and Stewart, 1996). Wakeford (2002) describes how dissenting opinions can and should be accommodated. However, others describe how a focus is put on finding an 'objectively best' solution rather than illuminating conflicts between the values at stake (LGMB 1997; Coote & Lenaghan 1997). Thus citizens' juries risk acting counter to a conception of democratic forums as spaces that allow the expression of serious antagonisms (Connolly 1995; Mouffe 2000). Secondly, jurors can get locked into a deferential frame, listening passively rather than actively engaging and questioning witnesses.

For French & Laver (2009), a central obstacle rests with key stakeholders being able to leave the process at any time and thereby invalidate the findings, because this then gives them an effective veto over the methodology. When these stakeholders are public officials (who perhaps do not like the proposals being tabled), this means that deliberation is governed by official 'gatekeepers', contrary to its very purpose.

French & Laver reflect on the difficulties with experimentation: "There are...so many degrees of freedom in designing a deliberative 'experiment' that it is difficult to identify, much less control, salient features of experimental design. This greatly impedes the systematic accumulation of knowledge on the process as a

whole. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that each jury experiment is expensive, time consuming and, at least in this case, exasperating to organise' (French & Laver, 2009: 442). We might dwell on this observation as illustrating the barriers to seriously engaging with participatory techniques as forms of 'experimentation', and indeed whether such an analytical term is useful in this context.

### *An Example of Educational Reform*

Reflecting on the discourses of participatory reforms in the US education system, Anderson (1998) documents how, on the one hand, participation has become a form of public relations to help secure a sense of legitimacy for current educational practices, while on the other, mechanisms for participation have become sophisticated technologies of control by instilling self-regulation through particular sets of values, rather than facilitating the 'empowerment' of more (and marginalised) voices. Anderson argues that structures of participation end up being so many more sites for collusion between powerful actors. Perhaps one can accept Anderson's claim that the multitude of new spaces for participation tend towards the collusion of those with more voice, while maintaining that the existence of more spaces means the potential for more contestation over the meaning and practices of participation.

Anderson cites Warren's (1996) diagnosis of *arenas of social groundlessness*, where the relatively clear set of rules, norms and identities regulate social interactions are discarded without a plan for the collaborative reconstruction of a new social ground (Anderson, 1998: 592, see also Freeman, 1970). 'These problems', he writes, 'suggest that the role of conflict in participatory approaches to institutional change may be under-theorized' (Warren 1996:592-593, see also Knight-Abowitz, 1997).

### *Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Action Learning*

Richards (1995) offers four criticisms of the pervasive adoption of PRAs (see 'Some Techniques of Participation' table, above). Firstly, he suggests that the use of PRAs has undermined the support of research bureaucrats for long-term social research in rural development. Secondly, social scientists are forced, through the bureaucratisation of PRA, into working 'like economists and accountants' – to short-term deadlines, providing a label and a foil for agendas determined by the 'really important data' provided by the economists. Thirdly, there is little reflection of the particular epistemological assumptions made by those who frame what 'participation' actually means, crucially including the entrenched assumption of privileging 'structure' over 'action' when analysing practices. Here he offers the example of Bourdieu (1977) demonstrating that the Berber farm calendar emerges from farming practices and decision-making, rather than preceding and structuring those practices. Fourthly, Richards highlights how the methods of PRA and RRA intersect with local politics, and those local politics must be taken into account if PRA and RRA methods are to succeed in empowering or emancipating the rural poor. He concludes that PRA/RRA must 'wean itself from a desire to document – to "know things" in ways capable of sustaining discussion, or filling boxes in consultants' reports – and move towards interventions in which attention

focuses on action as a key component in the establishment of an emancipatory learning environment' (Richards 1995:16).

Parpart (2000) notes several obstacles to effective PRA processes. First, the focus on the local ignores the impact of national (non-participatory government structures, patriarchal laws, etc), global (most notably trade-based and structural adjustment programmes) and what we might call transversal power structures. Second, techniques of PRA alone are not sufficient for realising the aims of empowerment, but also require sensitive and nuanced facilitators. Third, the non-directive and informal nature of techniques can alienate those who are used to more formal forms of participation. Fourth, PRA assumes that inclusiveness and voice are good for enhancing the participation and empowerment of the disempowered, but this ignores local hierarchies of control over knowledge, where aspects of 'voice' (e.g. does the voice in question speak on behalf of individual or collective concerns?) and 'inclusiveness' (e.g. how is the public that is created through PRA techniques biased towards certain actors and not others?) are constantly being negotiated. For instance, prioritising voice ignores how silence can be powerful, and Parpart illustrates from an example how: 'The power associated with gossip and information, the ability to decide when, where and with whom it will be shared reminds us that giving voice to women (or men) especially in public arenas is not always empowering' (Parpart, 2000: 10).

This raises the question of whether and how participation practices whose objective is empowerment should be attempting to empower minority groups within the population, and minorities within *those* groups and so on. If the spaces created for participation are always already full of relations of power and knowledge, does the constituency who the intervention is aimed at determine the techniques of participation, sometimes (and ironically) at the cost of the empowerment of larger or smaller-scaled minorities? Perhaps the intractability of this problem with participation supports the idea of orientating interventions not around power inequalities so much as particular problems. But then who defines the problems?

One alternative way of thinking, according to Parpart, is to critically engage with the notions of 'power' and 'subject' implicit in PRA and other participatory approaches. More specifically, firstly moving away from a *power over* model, better understanding *power within*, *power with* and *power to* models 'requires a realistic assessment of material, institutional and cultural impediments to challenges to the status quo and strategic plans for overcoming these barriers' (2000:15). Secondly, recognising the complexity of shifting and multiple identities negotiated through at once demands PRA techniques that use complex analyses, which in turn suggests a greater focus on theories that problematize or deconstruct the idea of the unitary, self-same bounded subject. Given PRA's insistence on involving its subjects in its analyses, this suggests a greater engagement with theory for all involved (2000:15-16).

### *Participation's 'Tyranny' in a Global Context*

Moving away from literature that critically assesses specific techniques, let us consider a broader assessment of the field of participation. Cooke and Kothari (2001) argue that the techniques and rhetoric of participation mask the way that participatory projects largely maintain existing power relationships. Their well-known collected edition identifies three types of tyranny:

- The continuing dominance of multinational agencies and funders under the discourse of participation;
- Ways in which practices of participation can maintain local power differentials, and even allow powerful local actors to use those very practices of participation to further own influences;
- Ways in which the dominance of the language of participation crowds out alternatives, such as the strengths of expertise or leadership models, and entrenches a notion of empowerment that is both depoliticised and individualised.

One theme that emerges from their elaboration of these critiques is how local knowledges is not a fixed commodity to be extracted from local sources, but products of the social relationships in which they are embedded.

Hickey and Mohan (2006) offer a series of responses to Cooke and Kothari (2001), claiming that new experiments in participation suggest that it can be transformative, so long as the approach taken is political and not technocratic, where development ought to be understood as a process of social change and contesting substantive citizenship rights. This also requires limiting the overly-ambitious claims to empowerment of much of the participation literatures. However, this does not address the deeper motivations behind the unfolding of the 'participatory turn'. For instance, Leal (2007) develops these issues, arguing that the participation has emerged as a 'counter-ideology' to the dominant ideology of neo-liberal market-based reform. Leal argues that the IMF, World Bank, and governments and NGOs have co-opted the discourses of participation as a way of stirring popular opposition to state governments in the global South, but focused on techniques and processes of participation rather than asking what it actually *means*. This allows the development sector to steer clear of questions of social justice and social confrontation in a "technification of social and political problems" (2007: 76).

This tension between, on the one hand, the normative claim that the 'approach should be political, not technocratic', and on the other, analyses which suggest that the unfolding of participatory practices has been an exercise in the technification of the political, indicates a need to dig a little deeper. For instance, what is the relationship between participation, materiality and authority? Newman and Beardon (2011) gesture in this direction by stating that 'voice' will not result from participatory techniques in development without a degree of openness on behalf of institutions. For example, in a lot of situations where Northern 'head offices' require reporting from the Southern 'field offices', the outputs are limited



in scope and do not allow for a lot of the learning to be transmitted. Technical managerial work rather than social justice work dominates concerns at a head office level. The problem of underspending illustrates a clash of understandings of participation, wherein project managers need to spend the budget allocated or else may be judged by funders as less-than-capable of planning, even if (the contingency of) participatory methods reveal ways of spending less money than planned to reach the same or indeed a larger and wider population. This links to the professionalisation of participatory practices in development over the past 40 years. Such a critique is illustrated by Coelho, Kamath and Vijaybaskar (2011), who describe prominent public-private partnerships in urban development in India that co-exist with depoliticising forms of governance and market-oriented reforms. They describe a shift away from public consultations with a 'populist' orientation that sought to reach a large and wide-ranging of lay-people, to consultations in smaller rooms with sophisticated technology, ready for a technologically-literate stakeholder representatives.

### *Re-typologising at a State Level*

Gaventa (2006) addresses the idea of a 'democratic deficit', and offers obstacles and barriers to four different participatory approaches. The first approach is to build a vibrant civil society to reinforce the democratic institutions. This broad set of initiatives has been critiqued on several fronts. It promotes a very specific notion of democracy, heavily influenced by a Tocquevillian vision, disregarding local contexts and the particularity of democratic impulses. It also frequently treats the symptoms rather than the causes of democratic deficits (Carothers, 1999: 101). Lastly, it holds questionable assumptions about whether civil society can be understood as autonomous from the state (in relation to Sao Paulo, see Houtzeger *et al.*, 2003). In relation to this, Wainwright (2004) suggests that the issue is not the strength of civil society but the conditions under which it exercises its potential for political power in support of political equality and increased popular control.

The second approach to deepening democracy described by Gaventa is of 'participatory governance'. This is about 'co-governance' and he associates it with the work of Ackerman (2004) and Manor (2004). Ackerman (2004) suggests participation can be understood as a smokescreen for offloading government costs and responsibilities through market based 'exit' strategies, or consultative 'voice'-strategies, whereas 'real' participation requires bringing social actors into the core activities of the state.<sup>7</sup> However, influential opposition to this approach suggests that participation can be easily co-opted by elites and become in itself a 'new tyranny' (Cooke and Kothari, 2001), as discussed above.

Gaventa's third approach focuses on the nature and quality of deliberation that does occur when citizens do come together for debates and discussions in the public sphere. He suggests that this school of

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<sup>7</sup> Ackerman makes the additional interesting point that there are relatively few examples of *successful* participatory government, while many examples of *failures* in participatory government, and that maybe we should be focusing more on the former (2004: 448).

thought comes under criticism on four counts: favouring consensus over difference and conflict, being based on narrow understandings of what constitutes reason and how to incorporate pluralism, underestimating the value of advocacy and countervailing power, and making assumptions about the nature of public space which may not exist in many societies (Gaventa, 2004: 18).

Finally, Gaventa considers 'empowered participatory governance' (Fung & Wright, 2004), which attempted to draw the previous three approaches together. The key addition that this approach contributes is to distinguish deep and thin versions of democracy. Nevertheless, Fung & Wright describe potential difficulties as being the risk of elite domination; external limitations on the scope of decision-making; that empowered institutions will fall prey to 'rent-seeking' behaviours; that devolution may 'balkanize the polity'; that participation may demand unrealistic levels of popular commitment and that these experiments in participation may be difficult to sustain over the long term (Fung and Wright, 2003).

Gaventa (2004) himself highlights three challenges that need to be addressed if the deepening democracy debate is to usefully engage problems of democratic deficit. These are the need to pluralise the debates; to develop and systematise understandings of the entry points for democracy work in different settings, and to link the civil and the political spheres. He adds a warning about treating 'participation' as a panacea without taking due notice of the potential for unaccountability that it can smuggle in: '...participation *also* includes processes of representation, through which some speak for others as intermediaries in policy or governance processes, often through claims to legitimacy other than elections – such as experience, common identity, traditional authority, or proximity. Yet, unlike elections, as corrupt or unrepresentative as they may be in some circumstances, other forms of legitimacy often lack clear rules or norms by which they can be judged and held accountable' (2004: 25).

### *Lessons From Feminism*

Hilary Wainwright (2012) links creative forms of participatory democracy today with the radical movements of the 1960s/70s, and in particular the feminist movement. Her analysis suggests that the issues around power and 'reappropriation by elites' may also be understood in the broader terms of capitalism's capacity, 'as it searche[s] for ways out of stagnation and crisis, to feed opportunistically on the chaotic creativity and restless experimental culture of [resistance] movements'. Difficulties with authentic participation then lie with the tendencies to individualise and privatise different kinds of knowledges usually associated with the individual, such as 'experiential', 'practical', 'tacit' and 'implicit' knowledges. Instead of accepting that these knowledges can only be distributed through free market mechanisms, effective participation must develop new ways of sharing and networking them, as Wainwright argues the radical movements of the 1960s and 70s did.

Wainwright suggests that Freeman's (1970) classic pamphlet, 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', is an excellent resource that we might do well to read again today. Freeman's key term of *structurelessness* refers

to the absence of formal structures in groups. A central problem she identifies in (formally) unstructured groups is the emergence of *informal* elites – sub-groups of people who share similar values, ideas and political orientations, whose power is unchecked precisely because it is informal. She describes the resultant decision making as that of a sorority, where people listen to each other because they like them, not because what they say is significant. Moreover, the informal structures have no obligation to be responsible to the group at large. Freeman also describes the ‘Star’ system, wherein the public is conditioned to look for spokespersons, and so will choose members of groups as ‘representatives’, whether they like it or not. Over time, these people can be purged as ‘stars’ by the movement itself, which then loses any control it may have had over the person, which encourages the individual non-responsibility that the movement stands against and condemns (see above, Wainwright, 2012). Finally, Freeman describes the political impotence of unstructured groups. Ripe for elitist take-over, groups aren’t able to get anything done without it happening through informal elites, and often groups’ time is taken up with infighting between different elites – including ‘old’ and ‘new’ ones.

Freeman offers ways of thinking about participation that pre-date and respond to the social psychological interest in group formation and ways of keeping participatory projects open and fresh. For her the solution lies in democratic forms of structuring, and she lists seven principles that guide an experimental approach to developing those forms: delegation of tasks; responsibility of delegates to the group; distribution of authority to as many people as possible; rotation of tasks among individuals; allocation of tasks along rational criteria; diffusion of information to everyone as quickly as possible, and equal access to the resources needed by the group. Her analysis raises the issue of accountability, whose lines supposedly run clearly in traditional representative models of governance and democracy, but become less clear-cut when using participatory methods.

### *On Speed*

The issue of going ‘too fast’ appears to be an important obstacle to effective practices of participation. Some authors emphasise the need for slow, deliberative approaches that allow an understanding of the complexity of the dynamics (Chambers, 2004; Pettit & Musyoki, 2004; Stengers, 2010). Others suggest participatory practices are a balance between improving and delaying a decision, such as, on the one hand, when lengthy legal disputes are avoided through constructive/timely dialogue, and on the other, dialogue goes on too long/is an unnecessary imperative (Mulgan et al. 2005:22). Moreover, it is often a principle of participation that participants should be involved from the very earliest stages of the process. The politics of speed is complex, however, feeding into neo-liberal, democratic deficit and social activist/empowerment agendas.

## Participation and Performance

Authority has a close relationship with performance, aesthetics, and art. This is not only because ‘cultural capital’ is an important source of social authority (Bourdieu 1984). Nor is it solely due to the Ancient Greek linkages between democracy and theatre. It is also because *creativity* and *experimentation* are key anchors for contemporary forms of authority. Since the Romantic era, because they are perceived to embody qualities of experiential intensity, authentic creativity, embodied forms of knowing, and capacity to disrupt established structures of experience, the arts – or at least the *idea* of art – have enjoyed a surprising degree of authority (see Nicholson 2005:109-29; Rancière 2002). This authority, however, in its complicity with neoliberal cultural economy agendas, is far from unproblematic (Osborne 2003; Peck 2005; Thrift 2005).<sup>8</sup>

At least three distinct approaches towards the role of participation in aesthetic experience can be identified. The first emphasizes the active role of the viewer or spectator in the production of the artwork, and the dissolution of subject/object divisions in aesthetic experience. A second is indebted to the Platonic critique of theatre, as well as a certain interpretation of Marxist critiques of mass culture (e.g. Debord 1983; Lefebvre 1991). This approach emphasizes the ways in which participatory forms of art can make active agents out of passive audiences. A third, dialectical approach, draws attention to the active work of critique, and the tensions between subject and object, activity and passivity, individual and society, which art explores and makes visible.

### *Participatory Experience*

In the canon of aesthetic theory associated with Kant’s (2000) *Critique of Judgment*, art appreciation is related to distant, disinterested contemplation. Engaging with the art work, that is, demands non-participation in the practical world. The judgment of taste, for example, must be disengaged from the experience of hunger. Another more speculative tradition of aesthetic theory, however, with its roots in

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<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in the 1930s a critic such as Walter Benjamin could go as far as to argue that ‘outmoded’ concepts such as creativity were dangerously complicit with Fascist politics (Benjamin 2002).

the 'total theatre' tradition passing through figures such as Richard Wagner, Antonin Artaud and Peter Brook, rejects this model of art reception as contemplation, and explores the ways in which the viewer or spectator actively participates in the art object or performance. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this work, for our purposes in this review, is the extent to which it mirrors the epistemological framework for participatory research developed by John Heron (1996) in his seminal *Co-Operative Inquiry: Research into the Human Condition*.

Arnold Berleant's theory of 'participatory aesthetics' characterizes aesthetic participation in terms of a blurring of subject and object, a loss of sense of self on the part of the appreciator, and a merging of identity with the art object (Berleant 1991; see Thomas et al. 2011). Aesthetic engagement involves an active joining of 'perceiver and object into a perceptual unity' (Berleant 1991:46). In the participatory model of experience, person and place and subject and object fully merge and become indistinguishable: this experience 'transcends all division ... No longer a spectator, no longer even an agent, we join in the movement of things' (1991:89-90). Most important here is the contribution required of the creators and appreciators of art – 'the contribution that we ourselves make, a contribution that is active and constitutive' (1991:4). The viewer at the same time completely *submits* to the artwork and *contributes* to it. Berleant identifies film as a particularly powerful medium for participatory experience. The viewer is passive and silent, yet is fully absorbed and bodily engaged; she loses her self and becomes part of the story.

There is a strong mystical feel to such arguments, and these are brought out more fully by David Martin (see Thomas et al. 2011). Participatory experience, he argues, is characterized by a loss of self-consciousness: 'the participative aesthetic experience ... is transobjective, personal, dramatic, full of feeling and wonder deepening into gratitude ... [It is a] totally integrated experience' (Martin 1972:26-27). In aesthetic experience, the viewer loses any sense of subject-object duality. 'In the participative experience consciousness is released to a thing in such a way that "the thing thinks in me"' (1972:70).

For John Dewey, finally, 'participation' is characterized as an action aimed at understanding the connection between oneself and one's environment (Dewey 1916). 'Experience' is the result of interaction between an organism and its environment: 'experience is heightened vitality ... it signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events' (Dewey 1934:19). Dewey stresses the continuity between aesthetic experience and everyday experience. For example, germs of the aesthetic are found in biology: the process whereby an organism becomes alienated from its environment and then, through 'participation' in that environment, integrates and re-adapts to it, results in a restoration of union, stability and equilibrium that reflects the 'germs of a consummation akin to the aesthetic' (1934:11). Art contributes to a consciousness of the rhythm of the tensions between humans and their environment, as well as the resolution of those tensions. It brings to consciousness 'an experience that is unified and total' (1934:14).

### *Emancipating Spectators*

A highly influential tradition relating participation to art is the body of thought that problematizes the *passivity* of conventional spectatorship or appreciation. Baz Kershaw describes how in the late 1960s, ‘audience and community participation became central to alternative theatre aesthetics, and it was encouraged in a wide variety of ways ... All these approaches to participation were ultimately designed to enhance the status of the spectator, to place her in a more ideologically efficacious position *vis-à-vis* the show, project and company – in short, to empower her’ (Kershaw 1992:103-04). The role of radical aesthetics, from this point of view, is to rouse passive spectators into participating actors. This is motivated by a narrative of an ongoing pacification of consumers (through the ‘narcotic’ of phantasmagoria or spectacle) and the decline, since the nineteenth century, of a public sphere of vibrant democratic debate (Habermas 1989; Sennett 1977). This tradition runs via figures as diverse as Friedrich Nietzsche, Berthold Brecht, Guy Debord, Paulo Freire, Herbert Blau and Augusto Boal. Once again, it draws on the authority of the Ancients: in a manner reminiscent of Nietzsche’s account of the Dionysian elements of Greek musical drama (Nietzsche 1993), for example, Augusto Boal outlines his own foundational myth of Greek drama: ‘In the beginning the theatre was the dithyrambic song: free people singing in the open air. The carnival. The feast. Later, the ruling classes took possession of the theatre and built their dividing walls. First they divided the people, separating actors from spectators; people who act and people who watch – the party is over! Secondly, among the actors, they separated the protagonists from the mass. The coercive indoctrination began!’ (Boal 2000).

According to Boal, ‘In order to understand the *poetics of the oppressed* one must keep in mind its main objective: to change the people – “spectators”, passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action’ (Boal 2000:122). Traditional theatre, he argues, renders infinite the distance between the audience and the actor. The spectator is transformed into mere object. The role of a ‘theatre of the oppressed’, then, is to train its audience in ‘protagonistic’ (i.e. active, agential) language. Attempting to integrate theatre with political citizenship, and drawing on Paulo Freire’s (1971) ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’, Boal aimed to encourage increased participation in legislative processes through use of a range of drama strategies designed to stimulate debate and to find practical solutions to everyday problems (Auslander 1997; Nicholson 2005:24-27).

Jacques Rancière (2009), however, has offered a powerful critique of both the ‘participatory experience’ and the ‘emancipating spectators’ models. Underlying both models, he suggests, is a strange suspicion of the *distance* between actor and audience. Yet the continual attempt to overcome the distance between actor and audience always ends up re-inscribing it. In this respect, the move towards participatory theatre is part of the *same* logic as the traditional pedagogic relation that sees the role of the teacher to be to overcome the distance between his knowledge and the student’s ignorance. Yet in order to reduce this gap, he must reinstate it ceaselessly. For Rancière, this relationship is part of a specific ‘partition of the sensible’ that supports oppositions such as looking/knowing, looking/acting, appearance/reality, and activity/passivity. It is ‘a distribution of places and of the capacities or incapacities attached to those

places'. It is an allegory of inequality. Rancière insists, by contrast, that 'distance is not an evil that should be abolished. It is the normal condition of communication. It is not a gap that calls for an expert in the art of suppressing it'. Genuine emancipation starts by recognizing that looking is always an action, and that interpreting the world is already a means of transforming it. It also must start by recognizing that the relation between actor and audience is not one of cause and effect. The spectator learns things from a performance that the performers themselves do not. Spectatorship is itself a creative form of participation: the attempt to eliminate it is itself a form of domination. Theorists of participation, then, must be careful not to assume that 'active' participation is intrinsically more worthwhile than 'passive' participation.

### *Art and Commitment*

Similarly, Theodor Adorno offers a powerful critique of the ideals of political participation in art. He criticises forms of 'pseudo-activity' characterized as attempts 'to rescue enclaves of immediacy in the midst of a thoroughly mediated and rigidified society' (2005:291). For Adorno, the emphasis on participation and commitment in Brecht or Sartre places far too much value on subjective commitment, and fails to pay due attention to the modern objectification of the subject. Participatory practice, for Adorno, must go via the object rather than the subject. Thus the highest ideal of participation is not subjective participation, but an immanent critique of the art *object* that lays bare the antagonisms of the society in which it was produced. Thus participation, for Adorno, requires *withdrawal* – a refusal to participate in pseudo-participation (Adorno, 2002). Thus for Adorno, truly effective participation involves 'a ruthless critique of everything that exists, which produces a perpetually shifting viewpoint on the subject's function as object in society' (Daddario 2011: 124).

## Participation, Objectivity, Materiality

The history and development of participatory approaches have put standard hierarchies of knowledge into question. Sometimes expert knowledge is inverted (as with the techniques of PRA and PAL) and at other times it is rejected, for example as having a ‘technical-managerialist’ role in contrast with the political aims of ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ participation.

A different approach is to pluralise the notion of expertise, but this brings with it some tricky issues. How do multiple expertises sit alongside one another? What happens when expertises offer mutually incompatible solutions? Is the form, or manifestation, of each expertise the same? These questions and issues can be addressed through the lens of *objectivity*. In what follows, we will consider how the concept of objectivity has been mobilized in relation to participatory practices, in particular through Science and Technology Studies (STS). Objectivity pulls away from perspectival understandings of participation, as requiring willpower or a change of perspective alone, and considers the material bases of possibilities for new connections across different practices, processes and people. These connections form the basis of objective knowledges that can be formed. This approach suggests then that we need not so much to invert, reject or cast out existing expertises, but to focus on participatory practices as producing new forms of objective knowledge.

### *Plural Objectivities for Plural Publics*

One clear way in which connections can be created is in relation to an issue or set of problems shared by all parties. This means that publics gathered around a particular issues may be able to develop a body of knowledge in relation to it. These knowledges need not be incompatible but they often are, contesting and provoking one another. Such plural knowledges do not fly in the face of realism in social scientific thinking. For example, Haraway (1991) combines a commitment to being able to faithfully account for the ‘real world’ with an account of the historical contingency of knowledge claims and a critical approach to recognizing our own ‘semiotic technologies’ for making meanings.

Standpoint epistemology provides a way of analyzing these knowledges without resorting to a relativism that refrains from judging between them. Harding (1993) suggests that we understand all knowledge as



socially situated, and that knowledge that begins from the (materially objective) position of the most disadvantaged will ask the most pertinent critical questions, and therefore give us the ‘most objective’ forms of knowledge. The grounds of knowledge here are not the universal grounds of knowledge in some conventional philosophical sense, but the material grounds, sites and activities from which the most critical scientific questions arise. Standpoint epistemologies proffer two principles of inquiry – ‘start thought from marginalized lives’, and ‘take everyday life as problematic’.

For Harding, the idea of universal objective knowledge is not simply erroneous but dangerous. This is because from the perspective of standpoint epistemology, practices of experimentation and knowledge-formation within a community are only able to reflexively engage with the differences *between members of that community*. Thus a community of researchers that do not account for their community-situatedness, as value-avoidant empiricists might, produce knowledge that retains the assumptions shared by members of that community. In looking for criteria for the most objective knowledge possible, Harding (1993) contrasts the weak objectivity of empiricism and other universalist knowledge practices with standpoint epistemology’s ‘strong objectivity’, a primary aspect of which is ‘strong reflexivity’. This means critically engaging with the problems that are addressed and the concepts used to address them, not simply the processes of verification that emerge once problems and concepts are agreed upon. Heterogeneous communities are able to produce more objective knowledge, and the quest for strong objectivity becomes tied to the idea(l)s of participatory democracy. Nevertheless, even the most objective knowledge will necessarily be contested over time: “Standpoint approaches want to eliminate dominant group interests and values from the results of research as well as the interests and values of *successfully colonized* minorities – loyalty to femininity as well as to masculinity is to be eliminated through feminist research. But that does not make the results of such research value-neutral. It will still be the thought of this era, making various distinctive assumptions that later generations and others today will point out to us” (Harding, 1993: 74)

Irigaray (2004) offers a version of ‘difference feminism’ which extends these issues of collective meaning-making through objectivity. This argument echoes with Simmel’s approach to objectivity. Simmel transformed Kant’s question, ‘how is experience possible?’, into the interrogation of the possibility of *shared* experience and association; he asked ‘how is *society* possible?’ (Blencowe, 2013, Lash, 2005). Like Foucault, Simmel claimed that there is not one, fixed, form of *a priori* shaping the consciousness of all humanity for all time, but that rather the *a priori* is itself historical and diverse. There are different grounds of common meaningful experience, grounds that are constructed within history, which are nonetheless *real objective grounds* beyond and before particular consciousness, interests or interpretations, delineating what we can experience to be real and indisputable. specific commonalities, solidarities, of experience. Here, objectivity corresponds to forms that are produced through practices of culture but that stand outside of subjectivity; culture consists of a movement, or flux, back and forth between subjectivity and objectivity (Simmel, 1997). We produce objective forms as a means to communicate and collaborate and to create things bigger than ourselves or our own capacities – objective culture is the condition for

working on things collaboratively and for their perfection across time. Objectivity is the form of living together, of shared culture, it enables us to work together (Blencowe, 2013).

Questions of power are never far away. Laclau & Mouffe (1985) describe all forms of social objectivity as constituted through acts of power. Indeed, for them, this convergence of objectivity and power is the very meaning of the term, 'hegemony', and points to certain necessary exclusions. That is, any form of objectivity demands certain things be left out. As previously noted, there is arguably a lack of attention to the substance of objectivity in Laclau & Mouffe's heavily discursive rendering of objectivity.

This notion of evolving yet plural objective knowledges can be understood through the myriad of contemporary references to experts-by-experience, such as in the UK disability movement. These experts share common problems and develop bodies of knowledge in relation to their problems through peer-to-peer settings. Suggesting that what they believe is 'just their perspective' does not do justice to the processes of testing, sharing, provocation and coherence-making that occurs within these communities. These processes are materially embedded, in the bodily apparatuses and social relations that provide crucibles of experimentation for the development of peer expertise.

### *Objectivity and Techniques: An Example from STS*

STS scholars such as Karen Barad (2007) explore in greater depth what is meant by material apparatuses, and their relation to the production of objective knowledge. She does this by focusing on the moment of measurement, as a determining of material (or ontic) configurations and possibilities for meaning-making at the same time. That is, what 'matters' in both senses of the term is determined at once, again and again, according to the wider set-up of the measuring apparatus. Measurement always entails a modification to collective sense-making, and Barad claims that this is made by determining the necessary exclusivities in the production of particular phenomena (at the cost of others). She argues that, far from being pre-given, the dualisms of object-subject, knower-known, nature-culture and word-world are constantly remade, through ongoing processes of materialization: "...apparatuses *are* discursive practices, where the latter are understood as specific material reconfigurings through which "objects" and "subjects" are produced." (2007:148).

Where does objectivity lie in this rendering of the social? For Barad, as for Bohr, objectivity demands both reproducibility and communicability to a community of verifiers (2007:143; see also Stengers, 2008). As Barad states, 'In Bohr's account, objectivity is a matter of the unambiguous communication of the results of reproducible experiments' (2007: 174). Barad's version of objectivity refuses the representationalist supposition that knowers, language and the world are separate, a supposition which allows for a distance between them, which in turn is crucial for the distanced observer of 'objective' knowledge. Objectivity is not secured by epistemic or spatial separability, not only because ostensibly separate systems are actually parts of one distributed phenomenon, but also because we have no right to discuss any conception of 'distance' outside of well-defined conceptual apparatuses. It is not necessary for

objectivity that the experimenter be removed from the experiment. This then brings Barad to a notion of objectivity that comes close to that of the standpoint epistemologists, while emphasizing the experimental conditions required for the production of objective knowledges. Moreover, she introduces a new way of thinking about the plurality of knowledges and expertises, whereby different knowledges are both necessary and mutually exclusive, a seeming contradiction that gestures to the distinctiveness of a realism drawn from quantum mechanics. The difference between object and subject, while not obliterated, is apparatus(/material-discursively)-dependent, and emerges through a range of non-Cartesian boundaries.

### *The Generation of Publics*

Much of the STS literature guides us towards the making of objective knowledge and objects of knowledge through technical means. Objective knowledge must exist in and for particular publics. However, the processes of producing publics cannot be ignored by assuming that publics already exist and can be called upon. To put it rather crudely, just because there is expertise in the form of objective knowledge does not mean that it is *listened to*. In various ways publics are brought into being, and co-constituted through the production of particular objects and of objective knowledge. A recent special issue on public participation in *Economy and Society* (edited by Marres & Lezaun, 2011) explores these questions by exploring the political capacities of various objects, devices, settings and materials, and how these emerge out of the processes of organization of the material world. Marres and Lezaun distinguish the approach of the special issue from two others:

- Identifying the immateriality of ‘voice’ that is the basis of the political. This broadly Habermasian-Arendtian position focuses on the deliberative potential at the heart of politics, which should be stripped of material constraints. In support of this distinction between the political and the material, Pocock (1998[1992]) warns that if citizenship is considered materially, it risks erasing the distinction between the sphere of politics and the material reproduction of everyday life.
- Considering ‘material’ as a “sub-political” platform from which the political subject can speak. Under this broadly post-Foucauldian approach, once material possibilities and constraints are taken into account, theory can offer us little about the moment that the ‘political subject’ engages in ‘political acts’. Materiality is certainly regarded as a constituting force in the organisation of collective and individual political *subjects*, but analysis stops at the point at which choices are made by those subjects, leaving us no better off as to understanding how participatory practices actually unfold.

Marres and Lezaun question the sufficiency of these two approaches to understanding the intersection of materiality and politics. In contrast, Marres and Lezaun claim to offer an approach that “considers material engagement as a distinct mode of performing the public” (2011: 489). If there is no special point of ‘choice’ or ‘will’ at which materiality takes a back seat and ‘real’ participation *qua* ‘voice’ is activated (as

a serious materialism would have it), theory needs to be able to engage with the materiality of participation throughout the entirety of the processes. Moreover, the political questions need to be answered empirically, and their approach is “premised on the fact that the socio-material composition of political collectives is inevitably caught up in the dynamics of technological change” (*ibid.*: 499). Marres and Lezaun ask how material settings, devices and objects of participation themselves create ways of articulating and evaluating participatory practices in material terms. In summarizing the cases studies of their special issue, Marres & Lezaun offer three trajectories of normative valuation of material publics:

- Material entanglement (the connectedness of materiality) and procedural disentanglement (the ways that procedures produce distance within participatory practices);
- Effort and comfort/effortlessness (the idea of effortless participation as central to effective citizenship on the one hand, against the value of self-mastery, work on the self, and physical strain in pursuit of deserved goals), and
- Experimentation and diffusion (how experimental and how replicable is a given form of participation: “the question is whether and how that effect can acquire normative force beyond the confines of the original trial” (*ibid.*: 502)).

In one such case study, Whatmore & Landström (2011) describe the experimental participatory forum that emerged in the English village town of Pickering to deal with periodic local flooding. They suggest that particular artefacts developed, objects and objective knowledge structures that were efficacious as publicity devices through which the participatory forum gained political force. Whatmore & Landström employ Stengers’ (2010) experimental ethos, which consists of two aspects:

- Reflexive acknowledgement of the need to invent research apparatuses that allow those about whom scientific experts speak to themselves be present and participate in the invention, whose form and results cannot be known in advance, and
- Empowering not ‘local people’, as much of the participation literature suggests (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hayden, 2007), but the ‘situation’, which Mol (1999) characterises as an ontological logic. The task is to ‘force thought’ in those affected by it, and ‘slow down’ reasoning, to “work with various materials and artefacts that served to mediate or objectify the knowledge claims and practices of different members of the group and those informing local flood management – from photos and video footage to computer models and policy documents brought and/or produced by group members” (Whatmore and Landström, 2011: 586).

The recruitment of participatory forum members for tackling the issue of flooding rejected a random sampling rationale, which suggests it possible to replace one member of the group with any other citizen, in favour of a sampling based on ‘their particular experiences of flooding and willingness to engage in the group in a personal capacity’ (Whatmore & Landström, 2011: 607, fn,11). Theirs was an approach to creating a public that drew together those with experience of a particular issue, and led to the production of objects of knowledge that forced discarded possibilities back onto the political agenda.

In another example from the special issue, Hawkins (2011) explores how plastic water bottles as objects participate on the one hand in the materialization of markets for their consumption, and on the other in the engagement of publics that are concerned about the bottles as a problem. Furthermore he asks how these two processes, of the production of markets and of publics, are interconnected. Hawkins criticizes the explanatory frameworks of capitalist accumulation and ethical consumption as being “blind to the materiality of markets and publics and the role of technical devices in their formation” (2011: 538). In analysing publicity for a water filter company that uses an image of a woman drinking oil to advertise the negative impact of buying plastic water bottles, she emphasises the affective power of images such as these in bringing markets and publics into being. Hawkins draws upon the affective and material power of the recycling logo on plastic water bottles to bring different publics into being and into contestation, and in this way describes the logo as a kind of participatory forum where demands for greater effort in recycling are made. Meanwhile the image of the woman drinking oil creates new connections between oil-as-matter and the responding body.

### *STS and the Political*

Others seek a more grounded normative agenda than that provided by Marres and others in the previous section. For instance, Moore (2010) takes issue with the simplistic conclusion that participatory practices are necessarily good. He suggests that there is no reason to connect the political demand for greater inclusion and participation to the epistemological critiques of expert claims to know, and a valorization of alternative ways of knowing. Collins and Evans (2007) offer a critique that some people do indeed know better than others, suggesting that a need to know who is an expert and who is a non-expert does not necessarily mean adopting participatory approaches.

Brown (2009) engages with the political implications of multiple, competing expertises and the valorisation of the lay-expert. He searches for alternatives to simply affirming the need for more participation, by extending the democratic theory of representation beyond its mere conflation with (or reduction to) correspondence theories that suggest political representations should “correspond to the pre-existing reality of either popular will (delegate model) or the objective public interest (trustee model)” (Brown, 2009: 6). Rather than claiming that science requires more participatory practices, Brown suggests that it is when science becomes political that democratic political interventions are needed. Furthermore, when they are called for, Brown’s solution lies less in increasing participation and more in developing a diversity of elements of political representation. Through historical investigation, he identifies five such elements of representation: participation; deliberation; accountability; authority; resemblance. While he criticizes ‘epistemic power’ for privileging ‘elite reason’ and insulating it from democratic challenge, he does not return to participation as the solution – rather, suggesting that the different elements of representation have distinct parts to play in encounters between science and politics. If we need to pluralise the political ideals we employ when engaging at the interface of science and politics, we must begin by recognizing that representative democracy has always included more relations between citizen

and representative than the delegate and trustee models allow for. The normative task, for Brown, of this toolkit of elements of representation, is to facilitate *contestation* by *equalizing power*.

Moore (2010) suggests that while Brown offers a roadmap for thinking about the relationship between epistemic power produced through science and the potential political responses, he does not offer much in the way of explanation for how, when and according to what criteria to intervene at the front end of technical development, where there is a danger that “unjust power relations” could become “embedded within an expert consensus” (Brown, 2009: 90, cited in Moore, 2010: 797). Moore identifies this the continuation of a normative weakness that plagues STS (see also Winner, 1993).

Latour (2007) responds to this same crisis of needing to engage describes five different understandings of the political, described at various stages in the trajectories of issues, claiming alongside Marres (2007) that politics revolves around issues. He offers the following table of different meanings of the ‘political’ through which an issue might pass:

<i>Meanings of ‘political’</i>	<i>What is at stake in each meaning?</i>	<i>Examples of movements</i>
<b>Political 1</b>	New associations & cosmograms	STS
<b>Political 2</b>	Public and its problems	Dewey, pragmatism
<b>Political 3</b>	Sovereignty	Schmidt
<b>Political 4</b>	Deliberative assemblies	Habermas
<b>Political 5</b>	Governmentality	Foucault, feminism

Table: summary of some of the successive meanings of political through which a given issue might pass (taken from Latour, 2007: 7).

When do we know that a particular issue requires engagement through participatory means? It may be that particular participatory methods are most suitable at particular periods in the life of each issue, and the publics that this draws into being. Moreover, as we saw above, an analysis of the material aspects of an issue may highlight particular agencies at play, that should be recognized as intrinsic to that issue. Latour explains that each assemblage deserves its [own] assembly (2007: 8), as every issue must be tackled not through established political (of any of the five meanings offered) means but through a fresh engagement appropriate to its new and unattended entanglement. Perhaps this lesson is more generally applicable to the range of methods and analyses of participatory forms: that effective participation requires a sensitivity to the ways in which the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of participatory interventions are intimately and dynamically intertwined.

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