

# **Citizenship and Regeneration: Participation or Incorporation?**

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In this chapter, I explore the experiences of local community activists involved in regeneration initiatives in a large seaside town on the south coast of the UK and indicate their complex, fractured and sometimes contradictory nature. Their experiences are also set against changing definitions of community and of citizenship and refracted through government regeneration narratives. Activists' voices frame the concepts of participatory spaces, community representation processes and activists' identity as I explore community participation in regeneration forums.

The research for this chapter grew out of earlier work I had carried out in 2001 into learning and training for Neighbourhood Renewal looking at informal learning in community settings as well as formal training programmes available to voluntary and community organisations. I met and talked to activists and volunteers across a wide range of groups and communities about their organisations and developed a much clearer awareness of the knowledge and energy embedded within them. I returned to a number of people I had met earlier to talk to them specifically about their understanding of active citizenship using semi-structured interviews, recording and transcribing them later. This has allowed a more subjective understanding of citizenship and regeneration, grounded in activists' lived experience, to emerge.

## **Regeneration Initiatives and Social Policy in the UK**

The emphasis in UK central government policy on the regeneration of marginal communities is embedded within the history of social policy developments of the post-war settlement in the UK that emerged after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and the establishment of the Welfare State. Economic growth and greater social equality were considered more likely to be delivered through state intervention than left to develop through the free market. People still held vivid memories from their experiences during the economic decline of the 1930s. The current focus on citizenship and participation as defining motifs of government renewal strategies are a recent twist in the old tale of economic and social regeneration that developed out of this post-war welfare consensus. Citizenship as a concept is the latest manifestation of social policy initiatives in relation to inner city spaces and their residents and has become linked with the idea of community.

The early initiatives in social policy in the 1960s were developed to deal with the perceived teething troubles of rapid post-war economic growth and expanding local government. Social problems were characterised as either the result of individual failure or of community breakdown in response to social change; policy developments focused on rehabilitating 'wayward' citizens and communities within a consensus model of society (Hoggett, 1997).

However, radical elements within the Community Development Projects (CDPs), funded by the Home Office during the 1970s to tackle chronic forms of urban deprivation, provided a critique of this earlier dysfunctional view of community and linked social inequality with forms of social exclusion. Economic decline exacerbated by the 1973 oil crisis demolished the post war consensus and led to local conflicts

over pay and living conditions as working class communities in particular experienced the outcomes of economic restructuring.

The allocation of resources to projects in the Urban and Community Programmes during the 1980s reflected the extension of markets and competition to the public sphere by the Conservative government. This was the beginning of a pattern in which scarce resources became increasingly attached to pre-determined national performance indicators and where local authorities and community groups found funding linked to a narrow range of essentially economic criteria. The idea of 'community governance' also emerged from this period to influence local government strategy in urban areas and could be seen as a logical development of the post-war corporatist consensus with the

development of new forms of local corporatism in which community and voluntary organisations competed to be incorporated into the emerging partnerships between local government and the local private sector. (Hoggett,1997:10)

Marilyn Taylor argues that effecting change in communities in the 60s and 70s involved confrontation with local government as the centralised provider of employment, education and local services, whereas in the 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century local government has found itself increasingly disempowered by shifts in power and decision-making. Thus the invitation to local community and voluntary organisations to take over and become 'key stakeholders' in local service provision must be set against a fundamental shift in the power balance at local level. This shift is also set within a framework of competition for resources, financial constraints and national target-setting. The relationship between communities and agencies of the State are therefore less straightforward and more complex:

Boundaries between public and private are becoming increasingly blurred, and the extent of the central state's sphere of influence is masked by a diversity of players whose accountability is unclear. (Taylor, 1995:104)

### **The Meaning of Citizenship**

The 'shifting significance' of citizenship as a parcel of rights and obligations has become crucially important 'for the well-being of all rather than as something which was primarily a palliative for the poor and dispossessed'. (Hoggett,1997:13)

The collapse of excluded communities during the late 80s and 90s due to economic 'restructuring' led to the realisation that continuing social inequalities could lead to political instability. Hoggett suggests that 'community' is invoked in public policy responses as part of a strategy to incorporate the population as citizens in a 'new participatory democracy'. However, the sense of belonging to a community has become decoupled from geographic place as communities and occupations such as mining have declined, while the resulting 'delocalisation of community' has led to the emergence of 'non-place communities' and identities amongst those able to move within a more fluid global economy. This change is paralleled in marginalized groups becoming locked into 'geographically determined place', trapped in physically isolated public housing estates by the realities of economic and social deprivation.

This should not lead us to simply equate geographically marginal groups with a failure to participate in 'community'. Sharon, a young woman living on a peripheral housing estate, chose to move there because she found living in the centre of town very isolating and quite difficult with young children. She describes her 'geographically determined' community as a place she cares about. While acknowledging she has exchanged social isolation for physical isolation, she states clearly the importance of contributing to her community to her personal fulfilment:

*I've lived in town...and I've always struggled with belonging to things because my family don't live nearby. To keep up a support network of friends [...]is very, very hard when everyone is dotted around the city... so coming to a community area I find it a lot easier to feel that I have a place [...] I like to be given the opportunity to care for people, to care about where I live and that's very important[...] One down part is the physical isolation of the area and everything that comes with that... to be active in the area I live, yes – developing myself and contributing to my community – the 2 come together.*

Yet, the idea that community is something the urban poor and underprivileged need but lack has continued as an underlying assumption within UK public and social policy.

'Active citizenship' as a concept emerged from Conservative government criticisms in the 1980s of what they defined as unrealistic expectations of the welfare state and was used to emphasise individual responsibility for health and social security. However, it was interpreted as an attempt to substitute private individual responsibility for public collective responsibility (Taylor, 1995). Policies of empowerment and participation are largely dependent on the idea of the 'consumer citizen'; the Citizens' charters of the 1980s were essentially consumer charters. This view of 'urban citizenship', and the relationship of the state to the citizen, is based upon a particular definition of citizenship and power, one based on individual property rights. The contractual basis of citizenship underlies the rhetoric of government policy on community involvement, active citizenship and empowerment and has been extended from the private sector to the provision of public services and even voluntary services:

with the reorientation and restructuring of the public sector the citizen is and services are expected to take on the attitude and features of consumerism. Choice among alternatives is seen as the means to individual power. The public as taxpayer and voter is expected to take responsibility for choosing which services they need and for exercising voice to make complaints about services they find unsatisfactory. (Hart, Jones and Bains,1997: 82)

The danger with linking market approaches to individual empowerment is that individuals become customers, economic actors within the market while citizenship is transformed from a collective political activity to the pursuit of individual economic interests (Lister,1998). As public services become privatised public debate about the allocation of resources, the defining of priorities and decision-making processes lose importance –access by citizens to public debate on these issues is restricted and citizenship becomes a relationship within a market for services (Taylor,1995). It is

rendered invisible in public policy development except in relation to marginal groups and communities.

Lister (1998) points to arguments by citizenship theorists for the right to participation in decision-making processes (as indicated by Taylor above) and for the development of a more active form of citizenship than that associated with the post-war welfare state in the UK. 'Participation as a citizenship right' provides possibilities for citizens to be involved in local governance for the 'good of the wider community'. While current Urban Regeneration programmes encourage community members to participate as citizens, with opportunities for community representation on regeneration boards alongside local authorities and businesses, attempts to promote user-involvement and democratic accountability of public services founder on the increasingly economic focus of regeneration programmes with their emphasis on employment and training. This is significant because the way we frame participation and citizenship indicates 'the kind of social and political community we want'. (Mouffe, 1992:225).

### **The Experience of Community Participation**

Community participation is an uneasy shifting process involving ambiguous relationships and motives that reflect inequalities of resources and power, where:

Spaces created by the powerful may be discursively bounded to permit only limited citizen influence, colonising interaction and stifling dissent. (Cornwall, 2002:52)

Cornwall's concept of invited spaces, provided spaces and claimed spaces is helpful in understanding community participation in regeneration forums. In her critique of participation literature she argues that there is a focus on:

*what* mechanisms for public involvement exist and *how* they are supposed to work. Less attention has been paid to [...] participation as situated practices, on how they actually work in practice and on *who* takes part, on what basis, and with what resources, whether in terms of knowledge, material assets or social and political connections. (Cornwall, 2002:51)

We can understand the dynamics of participatory 'spaces' better by examining their origins and understanding that such 'participatory arenas' are never neutral, 'but are shaped by the power relations which both enter and surround them' (Cornwall, 2002). Gaventa suggests additionally that these new spaces carry within them 'tracks and traces' of previous social relationships, resources and knowledge. (Gaventa, 2002)

Government guidance to local strategic partnerships sets the bounded or provided space determining community involvement and indicates the significant role of target setting in delivering the UK Neighbourhood Renewal strategy:

Involvement in the development and delivery of Local Public Service Agreements

3.9 Local PSAs offer local authorities the opportunity to commit themselves to delivering key national and local priorities in return for agreed operational flexibilities and pump-priming grants of up to £1 million each. They will also

receive Performance Reward Grants of 2.5 % of their budget in 2000/01, if they meet their targets. [...]

3.10 The local priorities proposed by councils must be important to, and supported by, local people and partners. and the national targets in the key areas of health, education, crime, employment and social housing will require close working between partners. (Local Strategic Partnerships: Government guidance, DETR; March 2001:32)

The mechanisms for participation can be experienced as an invasion of local space, particularly when activists feel the statutory authorities are, in effect, making use of their efforts in order to meet government guidelines and where targets are imposed rather than negotiated locally. This exposes power imbalances as local community and voluntary groups have their efforts 'colonised' by those they feel have neglected their area in the past:

*The support that would be most helpful is some acknowledgement from the council that they had a serious commitment to working with the infrastructure that already existed in communities [...] not just the ones that met specific deprivation indicators [...] because actually we used to be the one [...] but once you get a bit developed then the council will abandon you for the next area...(Community association member)*

Competition for resources, failure to communicate effectively as well as lack of trust in the participatory 'spaces' for consultation and decision-making can lead to frustration when resources are allocated to specific communities and target groups:

*The council is putting [money] into a relatively small area near us. Had they come to the Project, which already has a fairly good infrastructure, and talked about how [our] youth workers could be of mutual benefit, how [we] could help. No, they defined their neighbourhood [...] and dumped all their money there. (Community association officer.)*

The role of professionals in the delivery of these national targets at local level can be overlooked yet be a key to understanding the mechanisms for local participation. Front-line staff become responsible for the continuous collection and monitoring of statistics and performance indicators. They are required to deliver the service within national and locally determined targets, while at the same time, they are expected to establish structures for the involvement of users. So, although local schemes such as neighbourhood management appear to devolve power downwards, they in fact devolve responsibility for delivering centrally determined targets to the local level without effectively devolving the power and resources to fundamentally change them.

In a critical analysis of development narratives Roe (1991) likens the narrative structure of development policies to that of the folktale, in which a crisis summons forth a hero, who battles against a series of obstacles, emerges triumphant, and everyone lives happily ever. Such 'development narratives' tell scenarios not so much about what should happen as about what will happen if the events or actions are carried out as described, (Roe, 1991:288).

The 'situated practices' of participation and citizenship discussed by Cornwall produce a fractured and contradictory narrative at odds with the re-shaped tales presented in official reports. Rhona, a council tenant in an NDC area, recently became involved in her local community education centre and immediately became entangled in disputes between residents and management over the direction of provision, allocation of resources and decisions about staffing. The realities of reviving a neglected facility and developing community use have resulted in a tangle of misunderstanding. Her comments reflect her own frustration and feelings about the misdirection of her energy into battles over project management rather than on developing the centre as a local resource in ways she feels are appropriate:

*When I read the [NDC] leaflet it was brilliant! It said the NDC would empower local people [...] to be able to run whatever projects have been set up, to give them the experience and the expertise so they can get an education so their lives would be better. So they're saying we residents actually have some power and are to be consulted? No! Because management make the decisions. [...] we haven't got one person working in the Centre who lives locally!*

Rhona's vision of community empowerment has placed her in conflict with the imperative to meet targets and deliver outcomes. As Johnston explores in more detail in chapter 4, issues of social inclusion are often reduced to individual access to education and training opportunities while collective solutions are rarely considered. An older woman new to community activism, she has quickly discovered the necessity of collective and mutual action:

*At the jumble sale today...I was trying to recruit people on to [...] the steering group. if you're not actually enquiring [...] you wont get any information... there are a few of us who are [...] curious about everything and we ask questions and we go through things...*

Her community involvement has been in direct response to invitations to participate in regeneration bodies and her experiences have exposed for her the differences in visions of community participation and of citizenship. While greater participation is encouraged, it is also seen as risky and therefore best done in ways that limit participants' power, resulting in activists like Rhona feeling cheated. Inequalities in status and social class are reproduced 'in the very ways in which people communicate with each other within spaces in which there is notionally free and equal deliberation' (Cornwall 2002:52) Yet, It is also possible to see in Rhona's anger the spark of an instrumental determination to force the boundaries of the Centre's 'invited space' beyond its current limits As she comments later:

*If the government has given me this power I'm going to use it for the community [but] as soon as I discovered it I find it's already been taken away and I'm thinking 'no you can't do that, I wont let these people give it to us, then take it away' and say 'well you can be trained in 5 years time, then you might run us'.*

Thus, whilst a forum may be created with one purpose in mind, it might also be used by those who engage with it for something quite different (Cornwall, 2002).

### **Representation and Identity.**

Marilyn Taylor describes the issue of community representation in regeneration initiatives as a 'vexed question' with agencies frequently complaining about 'the usual suspects' appearing at a number of forums wearing different hats. She argues however, that both the agencies and the representative process itself contribute to this by involving the same visible people, the same 'community stars'. The timescales of consultation that are imposed from above frequently make it impossible to involve anyone except those who are most known or available. (Taylor, 2000). The tendency therefore is for the professionals involved in delivering Neighbourhood Renewal locally to call upon those community activists who are most accessible or willing to be involved in order to fulfil the requirements for local participation set out in central government strategy documents.

Community activist identities themselves may be in a state of flux as they shift within the dynamics of participatory structures and respond to the pressures exerted by their different communities. John Gaventa alludes to this dynamic process when he suggests how a lack of recognition or respect for citizen voices and identities may influence the way people 'perceive themselves as citizens' and

have a significant impact on how they act to claim their citizenship rights in the first place [...] In turn, perceptions and identities themselves are created by and in interaction with dominant structures of power and discourse. (Gaventa, 2002:5).

Douglas is unable to work due to long-term illness, yet his capacity for community activity is phenomenal, being the local tenants' representative for his council estate, amongst other voluntary roles. He considers that being an active citizen is a social responsibility that everyone can and should accept:

*You have to take responsibilities on...you can't live in a society and work as an individual and go off at a tangent or otherwise things will just go awry.*

Douglas also views his voluntary work as a form of advocacy:

*They phone you up and ask you to take it on for them [...] you're acting as an advocate between the people on the estate, the council, social services, the NHS.*

Yet, participation in regeneration initiatives as a community representative and active citizen has become a 'vexed question' for Douglas, and his view of participatory processes is infused with frustration. His activity is grounded in a desire to improve the community infrastructure and see his estate prosper, yet he finds it hard to understand why other people in his community don't become as actively involved as he is despite his ill health. The result of Douglas' commitment has been physical and mental exhaustion, while his attempts to encourage people have led to anger and powerlessness:

*Nobody's willing to take part, but they want people to do it, so its mugs like me who is the tenants' rep who gets all the phone calls [...] I feel that I'm an absolute mug to keep on doing it! [...] I suppose I'm literally burnt out mentally and physically at the moment... and I'm so.. what can I say?... not bitter but... frustrated that.. you've got to get people to come to you as a tenants' rep to find out [...]where the problems are.. then I ask them to contact the council to arrange something to be done or I'll give them a form [...] they can hand in [to] the local rent offices [...] But the problem is they say 'oh we cant do it... we can't park our car down there' so they end up dropping it at my house and I land up having to drop it [off]. The only snag is nobody helps you. You get burnt out [...] You've got to have more people who are willing to help and take some of the strain off.. So, they've got to learn.*

Douglas' identity as a hard-working community champion is recognised by both his community and professionals, yet the tensions and potential contradictions of his position emerge forcibly in his comments. He has perhaps become trapped within certain agency and community expectations of his behaviour and personal responsibility as a 'community star'. Thus, it becomes difficult for him to step back and reflect that his individual activity may sometimes be a substitute for collective community action. In the absence of a clear collective support framework, Douglas tends to become absorbed in his own actions rather than the activity of any of the many groups he belongs to:

*I've got to catch up with all the work after that... and we're setting up new shadow [health] forums that are being laid down by Parliament [...] I'm on the inaugural setting up committee stage [...]with the primary care trust...*

The danger is that he may feel disillusioned by his participation within statutory agencies just as the communities he represents may feel disempowered through the agencies' failure to develop participatory processes and structures. In this scenario, the main discourse between Douglas and his community and with agencies providing services is one of crisis management. In describing his role he states:

*You're acting as an advocate, like a placenta, you're taking everything in and you're shoving it out, you're feeding and taking it away*

Andrea Cornwall talks about how 'a judicious dose of participation' can provide 'moral and political legitimacy' to 'those who use it as a tool' (Cornwall, 2002) Yet when people do become involved as Douglas has, it does not necessarily lead to community voices being heard because representatives may 'lack the confidence to use their power or find themselves as spectators in professional debates and turf wars'. (Taylor, 2000:37) The danger is that activists like Douglas become incorporated within the regeneration framework of representation and can be disempowered and frustrated by their own participation. The impetus in renewal initiatives is on delivering their targets and outcomes, of which participation is just one.

The promotion of 'skills and knowledge' as a key element in the UK government's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's regeneration strategy has resulted in funding for an extensive range of skills training for community activists and voluntary and

community groups. These range from chairing meetings, bookkeeping to managing volunteers. For activists like Douglas who are members of a range of regeneration bodies, the pressure to attend meetings rather than training events results in a failure to develop community organisations' pool of skills and a longer-term, more embedded participation. In Douglas' case, he has not found time to take up important training opportunities that are in the interests of both himself and his community organisation:

*the problem is, being involved with so much I don't have time to go to the training sessions! I mean, I'm supposed to, I'm a community association officer [and tenants' rep.]*

Participatory structures can be constructed too much around individuals rather than collective, social involvement in decision-making. The promotion of 'community stars' as central to the participation framework can easily end up distancing community activists from their communities and substituting their involvement for the community's involvement, thereby weakening the broader social framework for participation. The collective capacity of communities to sustain change can decline if they are neglected by ignoring existing community organisations and can result in the loss of local social capital (Mayo, 2000). As funding becomes increasingly focused on economic outcomes, fewer resources are available for the support and development of social and cultural capital within communities.

Voices like Douglas's can easily be overwhelmed in the 'participatory spaces' between communities and statutory agencies where the voices of the community are heard as complaints about services by service users rather than demands for the accountability of service providers. Douglas is keen to develop an advocacy role but there is conflict between what the participatory spaces allow him to do as an individual and the wider demands to deal with the results of fundamental structural inequalities affecting his community. There is a constant tension and a sense of conflict underpinning all his comments about his voluntary work. Anger and frustration bubble to the surface as Douglas tries to reconcile these contradictory positions.

### **Agency and Participation**

Ruth Lister's work on citizenship as agency offers a key to understanding community activists' narratives, the nature of their community activity and the identities they develop through their participation. She draws upon the idea of human agency through which individuals embark on a process of self-development:

This process takes place in a social context and in developing her self, the individual is also acting upon, and thereby potentially changing the world, a world which at the same time structures the choices available. (Lister, 1998:228)

In Gwen's case, her involvement in the participatory arenas of the New Deal for Communities programme (NDC) has been through existing networks which have taken advantage of the 'provided spaces', incorporating their aims within renewal initiatives where they coincide, adopting new ones where necessary. Gwen interprets them as collective, cooperative spaces. However, her experience, of the problems

inherent in encouraging people new to move into these 'participatory arenas', leads her to suggest something like a mentor or 'community buddy' who could help them navigate through the system:

*... it's really good when your goals are met and you feel you're making progress...but at the same time when people don't know how the systems work, they feel at a bit of a loss.. So, it's really crucial that they have [...] someone who's the link between 'us' and 'them'... the people in the New Deal offices and other higher bureaucracies.*

Her activity was already situated alongside other women, campaigning within a web of inter-linked groups accessing funding opportunities afforded by the regeneration agenda to improve their community and provide activities for their children:

*There are different things going on so something might suit [...] loads of women involved in the youth club on a Friday night [...]. and another night there's an older teenage group and other women do that ... and yet there's others go off to the place-making groups and make the New Deal meetings to do with health and safety ... you just have to have the framework in place, people are interested...and when they see other people going along as well, that encourages them... and there's a certain element of social contact with people and an element of feeling you're making a difference.*

Gwen does not privilege her own contribution but talks about herself in relation to others, valuing whatever others are able to contribute towards their collective effort:

*Well I think that every member of the community can play a role and that they should find a niche where they're interested [...] everyone has something to offer and could pull together to communicate with others and see what could be done to improve the situation [...] not just to leave everything to the one person...you could cultivate something like a team spirit...*

The choices and opportunities open to community activists can be circumscribed by the physical and social conditions in which they live. On many peripheral housing estates in the UK, reported crime can be four times the national average (Taylor, 1998). The fear and anxiety generated by this situation is real and tangible, reflected in the preoccupations of residents and activists locally to find solutions. It is also a dominant element in the national NDC strategy around the UK. In Gwen's account of local participatory events, crime and policing pre-dominate:

*The CCTV cameras which we did last year ...before we did the surveys the tenants' association group tried to get it through but because there was no consultation it just fell on its face. Then when the place-making group which was basically a repetition of the tenants association, sent off to the Home Office all the facts and figures and quotes from people and whatever, it was listened to, so they liked that, we'd done our homework [...] we'd had contact with people in the Home Office. A couple of people in our group went up to London, there was that physical contact and ongoing tracking and the project really developed [...] there were quite a few things the group wanted to do*

*and cctv was just one of them. There were other projects... the subway, nothing come of that, the speed humps, nothings come of that...*

Local residents' anxieties evidently coincide with Home Office policy over the introduction of CCTV systems nationally and neatly 'join up' with NDC resource allocation. It could be argued therefore, that, like Douglas, Gwen and others in her network have been 'incorporated' through a process of selective consultation in order to provide 'moral legitimacy' to government policy on policing and security. However, while their concerns are real, their acceptance of the solution offered is qualified:

*We did a survey and 95% of people wanted CCTV cameras.. not that they liked them but the point is they wanted to reduce crime and vandalism... and for their safety, so now a year later the cameras are going up ...*

Gwen's comments indicate the significance of safety to local residents and their feeling that given an opportunity they would rather do something than nothing. Doing nothing reinforces their sense of marginality and powerlessness. While local activists and residents have exercised agency by responding to the solutions offered, the experience cannot be truly empowering for them while the parameters of the solutions are determined elsewhere. Their agency is threatened by the nature of the consultation process: government agencies retain control and determine the outcomes of the decision-making structures and agenda through selective access to information and resources. (Atkinson and Cope, 1997). It is significant that, while CCTV cameras have been installed, funded through the Home Office, other projects referred to have been less successful. The official narrative outlining Home Office and New Deal policy on safety reinforces resident fears and perceptions about the local impact of crime and undermines the possibility of residents exercising informed citizenship.

### **The Embedded Nature of Citizenship and Learning.**

Whilst resident consultation and citizen involvement is an essential element in regeneration initiatives, it takes place within nationally pre-set policy agendas. Tensions arise when local needs and desires will not and do not fit neatly into the determining policy framework that is driving the regeneration initiative. In many narratives there is a tension between how community activists articulate their relationship within the regeneration story, the reality of their 'situated experiences' within their community and the identities given to them from the outside or from within their own communities.

The narratives in official regeneration publications offer simple answers to these complex issues. There is a need for a simple evocative message that removes all the uncertainties and complexities of real life. The narrative that emerges through activists' accounts is much more fractured and episodic and much more complex and full of the uncertainties and complexities that such a folktale narrative can be used to undermine. Roe suggests that what policy makers need is a 'good story'; the official stories have a strong appeal which make it difficult for criticisms from the ground, from within communities or from professionals critical of development practice, to shatter the narrative that is privileged and validated by official channels.

It would be simplistic to only see activists' participation either as providing moral and political legitimacy to government, or as directly oppositional. People's lived experiences suggest a less straightforward reality in which their relationships change according to the nature of the participatory arenas. While people can be relatively powerless in the wider economic and political sense, they are still capable of acting within their own social context. Lister draws a distinction between being a citizen with the potential to act and being an active citizen: 'those who do not fulfil that potential do not cease to be citizens'. (Lister, 1998:229). In synthesizing the two traditions of citizenship, of rights and of participation, she emphasizes its dynamic and social nature embedded firmly within activity within communities and conceptualises participation as a right, arguing for a more multi-layered citizenship operating on several levels. In that process, people have the potential to develop their own identities as 'actors on their own affairs' that may be different to the identities as passive beneficiaries of outside intervention.

Elsdon's (1995) research into community and voluntary organisations indicates that 'social learning' is the most significant learning outcome from participants' involvement. People move from learning and doing the things they originally joined for into more political and socially aware activities. (See Johnson Ch 4). McGivney (1999) defines informal learning as learning that takes place outside of 'dedicated learning environments' which may not be recognised as learning, but is facilitated in response to expressed needs, while Barton and Hamilton (1998) have looked at sense making through mapping areas of vernacular knowledge in the community and exploring examples of local organisations that people belong to. They found local community involvement was permeated with reading and writing and characterised the 'borderlands' between home and work, school and public life as a permeable zone where literacy practices cross in both directions. They also noted that the distinctions between formal and informal learning, home and work become blurred while learning in the home is rarely separated from use, but integrated into everyday activities.

While community activists clearly do a great deal of learning, it does not necessarily come from the formal training offered through regeneration programmes. As several community activists have indicated, it can be very difficult to find the time to be both active on regeneration bodies and attend training:

*Empowering us is all well and good but I don't have enough time to do any of the training or studying I want and need to do... I've got so many committees I've been asked to join and no time left for my kids or myself.*

A group of residents who attended an Art class in a community education centre went on to organise a summer art scheme for children:

*We learnt a lot from the summer workshops...showed children how to do silk screen painting, batik, glass painting...as well as teaching the children how to do it we learnt a lot ourselves.... We had £3500 to pay for the artists. We worked alongside them learning as we went along... it was hard work [...] but we learnt a lot... and the kids enjoyed themselves.*

They later became active in regeneration initiatives on their estate, a process Susan Hyatt describes as 'accidental activism'. (See Moore, Ch 6). Burns, Hambleton and

Hoggett (1994), in a critique of Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, argue that people can experience different degrees of participation. Rather than a ladder, a climbing frame metaphor seems more appropriate, a more dynamic 3-dimensional model which allows for people's differential movement along, up or sideways as their participation and their understanding changes, with movement over time through life changes.

Frameworks for training for participation are frequently dictated by policies decided outside the participatory arenas by those disconnected from them. 'Situated practices' and experiences need to inform this framework while members of marginal communities targeted through regeneration initiatives need support and facilitation in determining their own learning and their relationship to training frameworks. The experiences of community activists underline the necessity of building the capacity of communities to develop and maintain their own networks and interests, as Gwen articulates:

*Yea.. left to its own devices it kind of decays. It needs someone from outside to come in and give it the 'oomph', or even someone from within the community, but everyone does need someone to bring it all together, to facilitate it, to carry it forward.*

Learning cannot be separated from use. People have their own purposes and intentions, and learning 'cannot be designed. Ultimately it belongs to the realm of experience and practice. It follows the negotiation of meaning: it moves on its own terms. It slips through the cracks; it creates its own cracks.' (Wenger, 1998: 225)

The participatory experiences of activists are multi-layered and the learning embedded within differential life and community contexts. Adult educators need to reflect on the impact of these different contexts, on who determines and influences the learning agendas, and how and where they position themselves within the arenas of citizenship learning.

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