

Rethinking Young People's Participation: Two Reflexive Case Studies

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Abstract

This research aims to establish a new way of understanding the 'problem' of children and young people's participation. The problem is that the reality of participation has not lived up to its theoretical promise of enabling children and young people to meaningfully shape their environment on their own terms. With a reflexive approach, the research reformulates the relationship between the theory and reality of children and young people's participation through investigating two case studies of participation projects in museums and galleries in the UK. In the literature review the problem of participation is situated within the policy, organisational and personal contexts; at each level of context, it is argued that there are fundamental, intractable reasons why the promise of participation cannot be realised in practice. In the case studies participation in practice is investigated in an in-depth way from a range of perspectives, focusing on the framing, practice and experience of the projects through discourse analysis of project documentation, observation of the projects in practice, and interviews with the participants. In the case studies the theoretical contradictions of participation emerge in practice; while the organisations attempt to enable the participants to engage with the project on their own terms, the top-down organisation of the project mean that controls over the participants are unintentionally created. The participants engaged with and experienced the projects in different ways and types of participants were identified in terms of how the projects were navigated. It was found that all participants were able to draw a positive experience from the projects even though there were problematic aspects. In response to the intractable problems of participation, in conclusion it is suggested that 'spaciousness' may be

a more useful concept, focusing on enabling young people to make sense of their ambivalent experience in organisations in their own way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis aims to establish a new way of understanding the ‘problem’ of children and young people’s participation. As an idea, participation is concerned with transforming the position of children and young people in society, through enabling them to shape their environment for themselves, according to their own priorities and perspectives (Percy-Smith, 2006). It is based on the principle that children and young people should be regarded as subjects, whose perspective is as legitimate as that of adults. From this ethical perspective, the purpose of participation is to enable children and young people to exercise their political right to share in decision-making within environments in which they exist on equal terms to the adults that run them (Hart, 1997; Mayall, 2000; Sinclair, 2004; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). However, the problem of participation is that although children and young people’s participation has been widely put into practice, the reality has not matched up to this ambitious aim of equalising power relations and transforming the position of children and young people in public service organisations. Instead, participation processes have been widely criticised for operating on the terms of adults and organisations, failing to give children and young people a voice on what matters to them and being as likely to reaffirm existing intergenerational inequalities as transform them (Percy-Smith, 2006, 2010; Tisdall et al., 2008; Malone & Hartung, 2010).

The problem of participation then consists of a stand-off between two conflicting areas of consensus: it is agreed that children and young people should participate and that the current ‘mechanisms’ for participation, in particular within the UK, are inadequate means of achieving this (Hill et al., 2004). There is no consensus as to

how this stand-off between the promise and the reality of participation is to be investigated and resolved. Two ways of approaching the problem are important to mention. First, from a gradualist perspective, the mere existence of mechanisms that enable children and young people to put forward their views and share in decision-making is regarded as an important step forward in transforming the position of children and young people in society (Sinclair, 2004; Fleming, 2013). Whether or not the system of participation is perfect, it is viewed as 'a positive social trend' that should be built on and ameliorated (Hallet & Prout, 2003, p.2). Although critique is important, it should be focused on deciding what specific improvements need to be made. From this perspective, the distance between the promise of participation and its realisation in reality is a question of taking a series of 'steps':

While much has been achieved there are many areas where change still needs to be pursued. The first important step was to win the case for children's participation and to see more and more young people being given the opportunity to influence decisions. The second was to make that involvement more meaningful for children. The next steps are to ensure that participation is more effective in the impact it has on decisions and on decision-making processes and ultimately on participation structures and cultures. (Sinclair, 2004, p.114)

Although it has obvious advantages, the optimism of this narrative of steady improvement has been dented by the ongoing limitations identified in participation in practice over the decade since it was put forward. Consequently, there have been calls for a more radical approach to be found (Percy-Smith, 2006, 2010; Tisdall, 2008; Malone & Hartung, 2010). In this context, Tisdall (2008) has pointed out that, when the problem is understood simply as a stand-off between the necessity for participation and the recognition that participation in practice is often

flawed, it can be seen as an exhausted one. According to this argument, there is little mileage to be had in attempting to bridge the gap between the promise of participation and reality.

Another way of viewing the problem posed by this gap between participation in theory and in practice is to see it as a 'breakdown', that can 'create spaces where imagination can be put to work' (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007 p.1266). There is an optimism and energy associated with this description, which in a sense challenges researchers in the field to use the space created by the current impasse imaginatively, with a view to reinvigorating the current understanding of participation.

In this thesis, it is intended to take up this challenge and re-frame the problem of participation in two ways. First, the disparity between the promise and reality of participation will be presented as posing primarily a *theoretical* problem, rather than a practical one (Tisdall, 2008; Malone & Hartung, 2010). From this perspective, participation can be more productively understood in ways *other than* as a gap that needs to be bridged between promise and reality. Secondly, a reflexive, case-study approach will be used to create new empirical material, which will be evaluated with the aid of new concepts, taken from outside the field (*ibid.*). The case studies will be discussed below. Briefly they consisted of participation projects for children and young people in museums and galleries outside London and Edinburgh, funded by Artists Rooms (hereinafter referred to as 'AR'). AR is a collection of modern art acquired in 2009 by Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS). By way of introduction, I will first define children and young people's participation and the context in which it has been put into practice in the UK. I will then set out

my approach, which is based on a reflexive approach to re-articulating the problem of participation and exploring two case studies of participation projects in depth. Finally, after introducing the case studies and discussing their relevant features, I will outline the structure of the thesis chapter-by-chapter.

1.1 Children and Young People's Participation in the UK

From a theoretical perspective that emphasises the ethical promise of participation, participation can be defined as:

A process in which children and youth engage with other people around issues that concern their individual and collective life conditions. Participants interact in ways that respect each other's dignity, with the intention of achieving a shared goal. In the process, the child experiences itself as playing a useful role in the community. Formal processes of participation deliberately create structures for children's engagement in constructing meaning and sharing decision making. (Chawla, 2001, p.9)

Participation is defined here in 'warmly persuasive' terms (Nelson & Wright, 1995, quoted in Skelton, 2007, p.169), as a productive, caring and meaningful process in which goals are 'shared', and the child is a fully recognised member of the community. Although it is clearly an ideal type, it was an image of children and young people's participation that had a significant influence on the model of participation that became 'widely accepted, supported by statute and enhanced by specific practice guidance' in the UK in the late twentieth century (Gunn, 2008, quoted in Fleming, 2013, p.484). Following the UK's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 (UNCRC), the apparently radical idea that children should actively shape their own environments within organisations that affected their lives quickly became mainstream, with the result that government-funded organisations were required to take the perspective of

children into account (Sinclair, 2004; Fleming, 2013). Participation was promoted by the New Labour government as part of its 'active citizenship' agenda aimed at empowering adults and children to re-shape the public services according to their own needs (Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006). In addition to introducing legislation to ensure that children and young people's participation was valued within public service organisations, the government worked with and funded a group of organisations that promoted the participation agenda, such as the Children and Young People's Unit within the Department for Education and Skills (Cockburn, 2005).

At this stage, a number of normative frameworks were developed, with a view to enabling organisations to improve their participative work with children and young people over time (Shier, 2001). They include the government-supported National Youth Agency's (NYA) Hear By Right Framework (Badham & Wade, 2010), which will be explored in the next chapter. An influential early model was Hart's (1997) ladder of participation, adapted by Shier and by the NYA. It ranked participation by degrees, according to the level of involvement of children, from non-participation such as tokenism to the top level where children 'share power and responsibility for decision-making' (Shier, 2001, p.111). There was initially a 'honeymoon phase', in which it was expected that, over time, organisations would become increasingly participative, and children and young people would be on an equal footing with adults (Percy-Smith, 2006).

This honeymoon stage was interrupted by a reality that was perceived by many as disappointing (ibid.; Tisdall et al., 2008), because participation that was being put into practice was as follows:

Participatory mechanisms have been a fast-growing area of practice... Some consist of one-off events, some involve time-limited networks or groups, while others entail ongoing structures. Among those with a more continuous existence are a variety of what might be termed 'adult-orientated' projects, which provide opportunities for children and young people to adopt processes modelled upon adult political models. Youth Councils, Assemblies and Parliaments, School Councils, etc fall into this broad category. Typically, the young people involved will have been through a process in which they have been 'nominated' or 'elected', and an expectation is created that they are able to act as the representatives of other young people. This model is relatively cheap and easy to set up, it is often reassuringly familiar to the adult agencies interested in consultation, and it provides experience and learning opportunities for the young people involved. (Hill et al., 2004, p.85)

The participation described here, though not wholly negative, is clearly very different from the definition set out above, based on an ideal typology. It can be regarded as more realistic, taking into account the compromises that have been made. In particular, it recognises that participation is limited by time, the controlling influence of adults, and by economy. It is therefore a practice that may have the *potential* to be transformative but which is also created within and reflective of disappointing *reality*. In this thesis, particular importance is attached to the idea that it is important to be specific in understanding what participation means in practice in particular projects at particular moments. 'Participation' is a useful phrase for covering an area of related activities, but it is not so useful for understanding specific practices (Lansdown, 2010). Following Fielding (2006), I am interested in different 'modes' of participation. What Fielding terms 'person-centred', and I will term 'meaningful', can be understood exactly as in Chawla's definition above, while what Fielding terms 'high-performance' and I will term 'controlling' (based on the discussion in Chapter 2) refers to participation where children and young people are involved in the process, but the process itself is

organised in accordance with adult priorities (as set out by Hill et al., 2004), and further, has the purpose of shaping the participants, so that they come to think of themselves in more adult-approved ways.

1.2 Reflexive Approach to the Problem of Participation

A reflexive approach to theory and research emphasises the importance of a willingness to reconsider how we think about the promise of participation, the reality, and the gap between the two (Tisdall, 2008; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Although a reflexive position is theoretically-minded, it also requires focusing closely on the context of participation in practice. The reason for this is that the social world is complex and beyond our capacity to understand as armchair theorists (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Participation in practice is connected to a complex interplay of policy, organisational structures and processes, and individual people who have their own relationship to the world. While it is impossible to acquire a complete and perfect understanding, the accounts of participation in practice on which theorising is based need to be as rich and interesting as possible (ibid.). Otherwise, there is a danger that the problem will be conceptualised as an unbridgeable gap between the promise and reality of participation, with a black box in the middle containing a list of factors that must be addressed.

In order to obtain the fullest possible understanding, this research will focus on the policy, organisational and personal contexts of participation. It will be argued that the issue of the gap between the promise and reality of participation can be understood on each level of context; each level of context contains its own inherently problematic aspect for participation. Rather than as a series of 'barriers' that can be overcome through concerted effort and commitment to the principles of

participation, I will argue that the position of children and young people's participation within society is contradictory and confused: at each level of context the system of participation is set-up both towards and against providing meaningful involvement for children and young people.

At a policy level, there are contradictory rationales for children and young people's participation. From an ethical perspective, the purpose of participation is to *liberate* the child and young person from the constraints of society (Mayall, 2000), while from the perspective of New Labour's 'active citizenship' agenda, the purpose can be viewed as *shaping* participants to be more aligned with government-approved values of self-reliance and commitment to public service organisations (Clarke, 2005). There is an issue here between the purpose of participation as liberation and as control that cannot be resolved.

At an organisational level, the problematic aspects of children and young people's participation reflecting the perspectives and interests of the organisation rather than the participants are by now well-known (Hill et al., 2004; Percy-Smith, 2006; Fleming, 2013). In the UK though, participation is largely organised in a top-down way, in which government sets out 'principles' that public service organisations must demonstrate that they are putting into practice (cf. Badham & Wade, 2010). While this 'ensures' participation, it also means that children and young people are subjected to the various irrationalities of organisational life, under the current managerial system of 'New Public Management' (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Tisdall et al., 2008).

At a personal level, participation can be seen as constructing a particular model of how a person is and how they experience the world. Within museums and galleries

(where the case studies are located), there is an emphasis on the importance of people being free to make meaning on their own terms and in dialogue, rather than having meaning imposed on them by the institution (Hein, 1995; Pringle, 2006). In response to this, I will outline an alternative construction of the person based on the concept of 'identity' that emphasises how people do not often in practice 'make meaning' for themselves on their own terms in this way, as people are viewed as also being self-conscious social objects whose mastery over the world is limited (Craib, 1994; Archer, 2003). In this view, support for participation leads to a partial and incomplete version of what a person is.

In all these contexts, it will be argued, the problem of participation is intractable and cannot be resolved through Sinclair's steps (Sinclair, 2004). Policy, organisations and people combine to make the promise of participation unrealisable on the immediate or even long term in the world as it is. The aim of this research is therefore to reconstruct the understanding of the participation and *experiences* of participation, on the basis that participation is a fundamentally problematic undertaking (Craib, 1994; 1998). Here, the concept of 'identity' will be used; identity can be viewed as 'the conception of the self reflexively and discursively understood' (Kuhn, quoted in Alvesson, 2010, p.193). Its usefulness in understanding participation and children and young people's experience of it is that it sees the person as an individual but places them firmly within the social context (Alvesson et al., 2008a). Using identity to Focus in a deeper way on people's experience of participation than many existing critical studies which tend to focus more on the flawed *processes* of participation (cf. Percy-Smith, 2006; Wyness, 2006), will contribute significantly to our understanding of the effects of

participation projects on young people's experience and will provide a different lens to understanding the shortcomings of participation in practice (Alvesson et al., 2008a).

The second requirement of a reflexive approach is that while it is necessary to hold to theoretical ideas about the promise and reality of participation in order to understand the problems and tensions, our ideas about the world are always flawed, and as such should be provisional rather than set in stone (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). From this perspective, existing ideas about the promise of participation and why it has not been realised are useful for understanding the problem but may hold us back from achieving a more insightful understanding. It is therefore necessary to hold clear theoretical positions on participation but to hold them lightly. From a reflexive standpoint on understanding the problem of participation, the purpose of research is to refine ideas about participation and its limitations, by investigating participation in practice closely and in context (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009).

A reflexive approach therefore means adopting a case study approach that enables in-depth exploration of what actually happens, while acknowledging that its findings are not uncontaminated data that allow a perfect vision of 'what really happens'. Instead, the case studies are regarded as constructing a representation shaped by the theories of the researcher, the particularities of the case, and the imperfections inherent in any method of understanding the social world and people's experience of it. Case studies are employed as a way of reformulating how participation in practice is theorised, in order to provide insight in to the

problem. This reconstruction is connected to existing theory as well as the findings from the case studies (ibid.).

1.3 Case Studies

In this section, I will describe the case studies and outline how they were used to answer the research aim. Before I sketch out the case studies, it is important to note that the case studies and this PhD are connected through AR. I have carried out the research as an ESRC Case Award Student, based at the University of Exeter and also as a Tate Research Student. The PhD funding was attached to studying the experience of young people in AR projects. I have been completely independent in terms of how I approached this area, and it was based on the reading that I carried out in my first year that I decided to take a critical approach to understanding the participation projects. My supervisors included Chris Ganley, the AR Learning Co-ordinator at AR, who helped me gain access to the research sites (as detailed in Chapter 5), and first Lucy Askew, and then Amy Dickson, the AR curator, who helped with advising how AR works and what its purpose is. Finally, I was also supervised by Emily Pringle, who is the Head of Learning Practice and Research at Tate and is partly connected to AR through her role but is also an established researcher in the field and served as an academic supervisor. As part of the Studentship, I have had access to the Tate intranet, including AR documentation. As part of the supervision of the PhD, there would be four meetings a year where I report on the research and the project is managed. While I have remained an independent student, I am also to some extent an AR 'insider' and this is part of the way that I am positioned in regard to the case studies. This positioning was important to be conscious of over the course of the research; it is

not something that I regard as a bias or as something that can be negated but something to be aware of and reflect on (Alvesson et al., 2009).

The two case studies will explore participation projects in museums and galleries. As my focus in the research is on the problematic aspects of children and young people's participation, I am interested in the case studies as examples of 'typical' participation projects. However, there is clearly no such thing as a typical project, and the case studies have various features that make them distinct from other projects. In this section, I first explore some of the features of the projects that make them distinct and then set out why I have chosen them as representative of participation projects.

First of all, they took place in museums and galleries. In museums and galleries, and in AR, there is a particular focus on participation in which children and young people collaborate with artist-educators and make decisions through creating events and resources for other young people (Rosso, 2010). This can be regarded as a more creative and direct approach than forms of participation in non-creative environments, in which the participants are merely consulted and decisions are made by the adults (Batsleer, 2011). It must be recognised, however, that museums and galleries exist alongside other public services in the same top-down system, in which adults organise the participation projects and are accountable for them within the same top-down system (Gray, 2011). This means that, although participation in the arts context can be considered as being more engaging than other forms of participation, it is likely to retain many of the issues that arise in participation in other contexts (Batsleer, 2011).

Secondly, one case study was set in England, the other in Scotland. The policy underpinning children's participation in England and Scotland can be viewed as having a shared basis in the UNCRC, ratified in the UK in 1991 and in Scotland in 1998 (Tisdall, 2013). While there are differences in terms of the details of the statutory underpinning, these do not necessarily affect participation projects in practice (Tisdall & Hill, 2011; Tisdall, 2013). Common to England and Scotland is a wide variety of practices covered by the umbrella of participation, and similar criticisms are levelled at the limitations of participation in practice in both countries (Cockburn, 2010; McGinley & Grieve, 2010; Tisdall, 2010). It has been suggested that the commonalities in participation policy and outcomes within England and Scotland are more important than the differences (Tisdall & Hill, 2011).

Thirdly, the projects were for 'young people' and most of the participants were aged 16-17, with some older and no one older than 23. The issue of the terminology around children and young people with regards to participation is not straightforward. It would be simple were it possible to use the term child up to age 16, for example, and then adult from 16 onwards. However, in practice a person can be understood as a child or a young person depending on the context (Skelton, 2007). Within academia, the new sociology of childhood has argued that what a 'child' and what a 'young person' is are social constructs and that each term carries with it a possible set of meanings; the term 'child' has become associated, at least within sociology, with notions of a 'becoming' rather than a 'being' in their own right (Moran-Ellis, 2010). In relation to participation, the phrase 'children and young people' is commonly used (cf. UN, 1989), with a 'Handbook of 'Children and Young People's Participation having been produced in 2010 (Percy-Smith &

Thomas). In AR, the targeted age group for participation projects is between 13 and 25 (AR, 2010). In the case studies, the participants, mostly aged 16-17, will be referred to as 'young people'; in considering the wider field in the literature review, I will use the term 'children and young people'.

Thirdly, as has already been stated, the case study projects were funded through AR. AR is a collection of modern art acquired in 2009 by Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS). It is a growing collection, consisting chiefly of fifty 'rooms' exhibiting twenty-five artists, all of whom worked in the second half of the twentieth century in North America or Europe (Tate, n.d.). It was originally owned by Anthony d'Offay, an art collector and gallery owner, who donated the collection to NGS and Tate and agreed with them the guiding principles of AR. The central principle was that the collection was to be broken down into separate 'rooms' containing the work of one artist, and that these 'rooms' were to go on tour in 'associate' museums and galleries (hereinafter referred to as 'associates') around the country. Entry to the rooms was to be free, and they were to engage young people around the country, who would not commonly have the chance to see such art (d'Offay, 2014).

AR funds projects that engage children and young people with the exhibition. Although it is not a necessity, associates are encouraged by AR to innovate through working participatively (AR, 2010). Associates who apply for funding for a project with young people must outline how the project 'go beyond usual offers' and meet AR aims, which were established by Tate and NGS to reflect sector norms (AR, 2009). Participation projects are an established means of working in an innovative way with young people in museums and galleries, and it is common for

associates to use the AR funding to run participation projects with young people. In the year in which this research was conducted, eleven of the twelve AR projects were participation projects.

Both associates decided to experiment with new ways of working and ran pilot projects with young people of a kind that they had not attempted before. The fact that these were pilot projects that were intended for the organisations to learn from is important to bear in mind. The projects do not claim to have realised in practice the promise of participation and, particularly since a set of criticisms of participation projects are readily available (Percy-Smith, 2006, 2010) it is important not to simply spot flaws in the projects for its own sake. Rather, the purpose of examining the projects as cases of participation within the various constraints of contexts listed above.

A further important influence of AR is that the projects are established by adults according to organisational aims. While AR projects aim to engage young people, it should be noted that the impetus for creating the projects came from an adult perspective on the capacity of art to engage young people, and the projects took place in adult-run organisations. While top-down participation projects are common within the UK (Tisdall et al., 2008), AR forms a particular way of organising the projects. The process of establishing a participation project through AR, explored in detail in Chapter 6, requires staff at the associate proposing the project to set out what is to happen in it and what the relevant outcomes are to be for the organisation and for the young people before funding is agreed by AR. So, while AR is typical in creating top-down managed participation projects, the particular form of management between itself and associates is unique.

In each case study, a 'theory' of the project was set out in the application forms and then put into practice by the professionals and participants involved in the project. The plan for each project was as follows:

Riverton: Young people from a range of backgrounds and ages (although in practice mostly 16-17 from arts college) would be recruited to collaborate with an artist-educator in the period leading up to the AR exhibition in creating a range of resources and events that would engage other young people to the exhibition. The young people would have a choice over the resources and events they created, and how they created them, while being guided in this by the organisation. In addition to the artist-educator, the participants would work with the organisation's learning, exhibitions and marketing teams. The outcomes for the participants would include a meaningful experience, gaining work experience, and developing their skills and confidence in the arts. Outcomes for the organisation would include re-shaping the service they could provide for young people, through engaging them with more relevant resources and events.

Bolworth: Young people from the local art colleges, aged 16-17, would be recruited to collaborate with an artist-educator in the period leading up to and including the AR exhibition in creating workshops that engage their peer-group with the exhibition and artwork in response to the AR exhibition to be displayed in the educational space alongside the exhibition. The outcomes for the participants would also be in gaining work experience and meaningful engagement with art.

The case studies can be considered *sui generis*, shaped by a particular project plan, and the context, which includes AR, the field of museums and galleries and

the particular age-group. For the purposes of this research, I will treat the case study projects as conforming to the definitions of participation proposed by Chawla (2001, p.9) and Hill et al. (2004, p.85).

The case studies conform to Chawla's (2001) definition of participation in the following way:

- The projects are intended to be meaningful for the young people
- Decision-making is shared between young people and adults
- Young people are able to reflect on their perspectives within the projects

The case studies comply with the definition proposed by Hill et al. (2004) in the following way:

- The projects are a time-limited mechanism within adult organisations
- Young people must adapt to established ways of working within the organisation
- There is an expectation that the participants are representative of young people more broadly
- There are outcomes for the young people as well as the organisation

In summary, the case studies will serve as a way of exploring participation projects with children and young people in the UK with particular reference to the policy, organisational, and personal context. The aim is to offer a reformulated account of understanding the problem of participation in practice that draws on existent theory and two case studies in museums and galleries. For this purpose, the objective throughout the thesis is to pay close attention to the context of participation while considering, and reconsidering, existent theory in relation to understanding participation in practice. Each chapter, both in the literature review and in the results chapters, will be based on this aim and these objectives. With the aim of

gaining sufficient understanding of the context of participation to develop theory, three research questions will be asked:

1. *How were the participation projects framed by the relevant organisations?*
2. *How were the participation projects put into practice by the project co-ordinator?*
3. *How did the young people experience the participation projects?*

Methodologically, the approach will be to understand the case studies from a range of different angles, in order to understand the projects and participants' experience of them in relation to the various levels of context. This will include using discourse analysis to study the documentation of the project, particularly focusing on how the aims of the projects are established and agreed upon through the project management process of the applications. Then participant-observation will be used to study closely what happens in the project, in particular focusing on how the professionals put the projects into practice that is in accordance with their own values but at the same time within the constraints of the projects. Finally, I conduct in-depth interviews with the young people to gain an understanding of the project from their perspective.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The literature review will consist of three chapters, each outlining a different area of the context of participation with regard to different theoretical perspectives (as set out above). In each chapter, I set out an intractable problem around the possibility of the promise of participation being realised in practice. These problems can be summarised as follows: policy that draws on a rationale of liberation and control; meaningful participation, which is ensured through controlling management

processes; the limited conceptualisation of human nature in the field of participation in museums and galleries, which results in the opportunities offered to participants being emphasised and disregards the difficulties that participation may cause them. Having set out these problems, I will discuss the possible implications of these for understanding participation in practice.

In Chapter 5, having justified my research questions, I will outline a methodological approach based on a reflexive stance. I outline the research design chosen: a qualitative case study approach, using multiple methods suited to understanding the complexities of participation in context. I will also set out the procedures that I followed in the research, relevant ethical issues, and address why a reader should have trust in the research.

The results will be set out in five chapters, exploring the case studies from different angles. Chapter 6 looks at how the projects are constructed in the AR planning process. The focus will be on how the management process both ensures participation and also makes it potentially problematic through incorporating the participants within management processes. Thus means that, in practice, two potential modes of participation arise out of the planning process: a meaningful mode and a parallel, emergent controlling mode.

Chapter 7 will consider how the professional (known as a 'co-ordinator' in the projects) put the problematic project into practice. It will set out how the co-ordinator attempts to put *meaningful* projects into practice, how a *controlling* mode emerges despite these efforts, and how the co-ordinator then 'negotiates' the gap between the meaningful and controlling mode, to ensure that the participants have a positive experience.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 examine the experience of the participants in detail, through organising them into different 'types'. These types represent the different ways in which participants experienced and navigated the projects; they depended on participants' orientation to the world (identity) as well as the realities of the project in practice, with their own possibilities and constraints for each participant. A separate chapter is devoted to each of the three types. Chapter 8 considers participants who handled the disappointments of the project through maintaining a 'cynical distance', going through the motions of the project without fully engaging. Chapter 9 looks at participants who found the participative process difficult, equating it with being 'put on the spot', and handled this through adopting a compliant attitude and engaging with the project selectively. Chapter 10 looks at the committed participants who engaged with the projects and lived *through* some of the contradictions of the project rather than side-stepping them. No particular way of being in the project is considered preferable: the different types are conceptualised simply as ways in which participants found a way through the real-life projects. The implications of the different styles of navigating the project are discussed in each case.

In the concluding chapter, I will achieve three things. First, I will provide a summary of the research. Secondly, I will set out a reconstructed perspective on the problem of participation, based on existing theories and the findings from the case studies. Finally, from a reflexive perspective, I will acknowledge the limitations of the research and the importance of the position adopted by the researcher in relation to the research findings.

Chapter 2: The Policy Context

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

There is broadly a consensus that despite government support and numerous projects and initiatives, the participation of children and young people in practice has not lived up to its promise (Hill et al., 2004; Tisdall, 2008; Tisdall et al., 2008; Percy-Smith, 2010; Fleming, 2013). As discussed in the introduction, participation will be treated as emerging from the fallible, flawed political, organisational and intellectual context of the adult world. This literature review will build on critique of participation that calls into question the entire current system of children and young people's participation rather than building on critiques of aspects of participation in practice. As such, it will be grounded in 'a wider questioning of discourses of participation', as opposed to a focus on 'the impact and effectiveness of participation activities' (Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006, p.2). This broad approach can be justified in several ways. In part, it is in response to the calls for a rethink around the whole system of participation, on the basis that the problematic aspects of participation can be viewed as being fundamental and widespread (Hill et al., 2004; Tisdall, 2008; Tisdall et al., 2008). A further justification, explored in this chapter, is that participation is connected to a particular way of governing, and so the question of participation is necessarily broad and contested, rather than simply about technical improvement.

The literature review contains three chapters, each focusing on a particular context: policy, organisational and personal. The purpose of reviewing the context of participation is to provide a sufficient basis from which to understand the participation projects researched in this thesis and the experience of the

participants. This requires not only setting out existing perspectives and research on understanding participation in practice but also, where necessary, moving beyond them (Tisdall, 2008). While there have been calls for understanding the participation of children and young people in context, and several relevant empirical studies, there has not yet been a review of the various relevant contexts of participation together.

In this first chapter, I will explore the *policy context*, covering the conflicting reasons that are behind participation. Are the policies that support participation based on the ethical principle that children and young people are part of society rather than marginalised? Or are they fundamentally instrumental, based on the aim of shaping more efficient public services and more 'responsible' young people (Whitty & Wisby, 2007)? The existing reviews (Cockburn, 2005; Whitty & Wisby, 2007) do focus on some of the limitations and problematic aspects of the relevant policy but do not sufficiently take into account the extensive critiques of the active citizenship agenda, to which the participation of children and young people is closely connected (Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006).

. In the second chapter, I will look at the *organisational context*. Government-supported participation takes place within public service organisations, and there are processes within the organisations that ensure the existence of participation (cf. Badham & Wade, 2010). However, the organisations operate within hierarchical and tightly-constrained structures, with limiting consequences on the possibility of meaningful participation (Freeman et al., 2003; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Several studies have noted the importance of how, in various ways, organisations can limit the possibility of participation (Freeman et al., 2003;

Eliasoph, 2009; Pinkney, 2011). However, this has generally been done in a piecemeal way, and the various limiting factors that the organisational context has on participation has not been set out as a whole. Rather than looking first at participation and then seeing how it could fit into organisations, I will explore the weak position of public service organisations and professionals, particularly museums and galleries, and then look at how difficult it would be to put meaningful participation into practice. In this way, I will look at the organisational context of participation in a more complete way than currently exists.

The identity perspective in Chapter 4 will be used as a way of understanding participation from a new angle (Alvesson et al., 2008a). While this chapter builds on the critical examination of the context of participation through exploring the personal context, it differs from the other chapters in that Chapters 2 and 3 set out problematic aspects of the context in the real world. The focus in Chapter 4 is more exclusively on the *theory* behind the participative subject. In theorising participation a particular model of the individual has been constructed – a ‘participative subject’ (Smith, 2011). The construct of the participative subject is of a person who finds meaning in being active in the world. This construct can be critiqued, as an oversimplified view of human agency on the ground that, in practice, participation is always likely to lead to ambivalent experiences (Craib, 1994, 1998). Together, the literature review will provide a basis for examining the projects, and participants’ experience of them, and reconstructing the ‘problem’ of participation in the conclusion.

2.2 Participation at a Policy Level

Participation is a flexible and contested term (Lansdown, 2010; Fleming, 2013). It can refer to different practices, from consultation to co-production to shared decision-making (Sinclair, 2004), and in various different contexts (Thomas, 2007). At the same time, reviews of policy around children and young people's participation have noted that the purposes attached to participation are varied and conflicting (Cockburn, 2005; Thomas, 2007; Whitty and Wisby, 2007). This facilitates a contradiction, which has at its heart the fact that participation can have both an *ethical* purpose, of enabling children and young people to exert appropriate influence over their environment and an *instrumental* purpose, as a means of control, shaping young people to conform to what society requires of them (Fielding, 2004). In the relevant government papers, both these uses of participation are present, side-by-side (Whitty & Wisby, 2007). Perhaps because the relevant government policy was adopted around a decade ago, this contradiction in how participation is used in practice is rarely mentioned. However, since participation is mostly a government-supported entity in the UK (Sinclair, 2004; Tisdall et al., 2008), the specific purposes of any participation that the government is supporting should be regarded as important. While it is true that practitioners and organisations have some flexibility in putting a policy into practice (Braun et al., 2011), I will suggest in the next chapter that the managerial nature of public service organisations means that this flexibility is limited.

In order to develop a meaningful understanding of children and young people's participation, it is important to understand the intellectual currents in addition to government policy that are behind it. In this chapter, I will suggest that the

instrumental purpose of participation-as-control has formed part of a coherent government approach of 'active citizenship', to improve how society and organisations function (Clarke, 2005; Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006). Participation-as-control can thus be seen as having a place within the ongoing functionalist concerns of contemporary government (Biesta, 2009). Whilst an ethical perspective of participation-as-liberation is advanced by academics and does find a place within the policy documents, it is a radical argument that does not sit comfortably with more conservative government policies (Cockburn, 2005; Moran-Ellis, 2010). This means that there is a potential disparity between the 'legitimacy' of participation resting on arguments about instrumental improvements to how organisations function (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, p.111) and a focus on the ethical promise of participation. The purpose of this chapter will be to argue that, from a progressive and ethical perspective, the nature of government support for participation is somewhat problematic, and may therefore lead to problematic forms of participation.

In this chapter I focus in particular on the policy of New Labour in the UK, which could be criticised for being out of date. This can be defended since the participation of children and young people can be viewed as a distinctively New Labour initiative (1997-2010 in England; 1999-2007 in Scotland), tied to its particular concerns around 'active citizenship' (Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006; Whitty & Wisby, 2007). Much of the policy around participation was developed and enacted under New Labour (Lister, 2004; Cockburn, 2005; Whitty & Wisby, 2007), and it can be viewed as a legacy of New Labour. The relationship between the emphasis on participation under New Labour and the current UK Coalition government is

complex. There has been continuity, at least on the rhetorical level, of the importance of active citizenship through the notion of the 'Big Society' and initiatives such as the 'National Citizen Service' to encourage voluntary activities (Birdwell et al, 2013). Coalition education policy can be seen as a continuation of New Labour policies, albeit with a change in emphasis (Avis, 2011). With regards to children, the focus has shifted from away from the emphasis that New Labour placed, at least rhetorically, on the child as an independent entity (Lister, 2008) to one that places the child within the context of the family (Daguerre & Etherington, 2014). In Scotland, the current Scottish National Party government has retained a commitment to respecting the child as a current, as well as future citizen, in its framing of policy towards children (Tisdall, 2013).

In this chapter, I first set out the two different arguments for the purpose of participation ('ethical' and 'instrumental'), including the intellectual and political currents and agendas that are behind each purpose. In the discussion, I explore the significance of the conflicting nature of the arguments.

2.2.1 The Theory of the Promise of Participation

In this section I outline the *promise* of participation and explore why there has been hope that the promise of participation would be realised in the UK in practice. Intellectually, the radical basis for participation draws on social constructionism, which emphasises that the way the child and the organisation are viewed is constructed within society, rather than relating to their essential properties (Skelton, 2007, p.168-9). The work of the 'new sociology of childhood' explored how, traditionally, children have been seen as 'becomings', as adults-in-training, rather than as beings-in-themselves; children are judged against the ideal of

adulthood, and found to be incomplete (Moran-Ellis, 2010). From this traditional perspective, children can be understood in a more or less benign way, as being 'innocents' who are more pure than adults or alternatively as 'menaces' (James et al., 1998). What appear to be objective ways of understanding children, such as are offered by developmental psychology, are considered to be an essentially adult-orientated form of understanding within the new sociology of childhood, which is concerned with differentiating the socially competent adult from the child who is only in the process of becoming competent. It claims that the traditional way of thinking 'justifies the supremacy of adulthood and further ensures that childhood must, of necessity, be viewed as an inadequate precursor to the real state of human being, namely being "grown up"' (ibid, p. 18).

So, while social constructionism emerged as a way of seeing the world that disrupted received ways of thinking, it was also interested in effecting change in the world for children and young people. The following description of social constructionism captures its possibility of radical social change:

I will take constructionism to represent a range of dialogues centered on the social genesis of what we take to be knowledge, reason, and virtue on the one side, and the enormous range of social practices born and/or sustained by these discourses on the other. In its critical moment, social constructionism is a means of bracketing or suspending any pronouncement of the real, the reasonable, or the right. In its generative moment, constructionism offers an orientation toward creating new futures, an impetus to societal transformation. (Gergen, 2000, p.131).

In drawing on the radical potential of social constructionism, the new sociology of childhood has not just been an intellectual exercise but has led to searching questions about society, where children's agency is routinely controlled and denied in a variety of contexts (James, 2007), and an orientation towards granting children

greater participation rights (Mayall, 2000; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). As the new sociology of childhood emphasises how the child is seen as not yet a full member of society, it argues that the child is in fact strongly active within society:

Children are active in the construction of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes. (Prout & James, 1990, p.8).

The notion of children as being systematically marginalised from society leads to the support amongst academics to provide children and young people with the means to actively shape the institutions within which they exist: 'for if we understand children not just as individuals but as members of a social group then we are forced to reflect on that group's rights to participate in constructing the social order, social policies and practices' (Mayall, 2000, p. 256). From a social constructionist perspective, the importance of participation is as an ethical-political (Taylor & Robinson, 2009) process which takes place within society and institutions but at the same time 'suspends' how society and the institution functions, so that momentarily power relations are equalised and the child and young person have an opportunity to shape their own social environment for themselves. While the term 'empowerment' may no longer be in fashion, the notion of participation as enabling children and young people to exercise power on their own terms is accurate in terms of the promise of participation. Participation from a social constructionist perspective is viewed as something that must operate from the perspective of the child/young person: participation 'must start from children and young people themselves, on their own terms, within their own realities and in pursuit of their own visions, dreams, hopes and concerns.' (UNICEF, quoted in

Skelton, 2007, p.174). Participation is then the means through which children and young people can shape the world according to their own perspective (Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006). As a normative position that draws on social constructionism, the promise of participation is based on the idea that the way that children and young people are perceived and treated in society and organisations is not necessarily 'natural' or necessary but a particular way of doing things that can be radically changed (Mayall, 2000). Whereas modern life is generally dominated by imposing ways of organising and being that are geared towards increasing technical efficiency, participation offers a different way of being, a beacon of democracy within tyrannically hierarchical organisations (Fielding, 2007), where children and young people are 'categorised, compared to and judged against one another' (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006, p. 223-224). In this light, participation is 'a kind of romantic quest for the authentic life world, as a space that is critically, historically, eked out between the drive towards techno-bureaucratic improvements' (Moran & Murphy, 2012, p.180). The importance of participation, in this view, is that while it is itself a reality within society, it also serves to overturn society's worst aspects, in terms of the domination of children and young people, in favour of transforming society and organisations within which children and young people exist, such as schools, along more democratic lines.

As a basis for improving children's status as active agents within society, the new sociology of childhood supported children's 'right' to participate in society (Mayall, 2000). In 1989, in response in part to pressure from Western-based children's groups (Skelton, 2007), the right to participate, to complement children's right to

'protection' and 'provision', was included in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. (UN, 1989, Article 12[1]).

While the rights of the child are seen as a valuable means of holding government to account in order to ensure that participation is put into practice, the fact that it stops short of requiring children to be included within shared decision making is a significant limitation (Lansdown, 2010). Also, the idea of rights for children as described in the UNCRC can be criticised for being western-centric, using western concepts of rights and participation to solve a western problem of children being marginalised from society (Mayall, 2000). Despite these critiques, from the perspective of new sociology of childhood studies, children's participation rights have been broadly welcomed as being a 'positive social trend' (Hallet & Prout, 2003, p.2). The UNCRC can be viewed as transforming the status of children in similar terms to the social constructionist ideas:

Until 1989, the concept of children's rights had most often been framed in terms of beliefs about their nature and needs, and the responsibilities of adults to provide the best possible care and education, and protection from harm. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child redefined the status of children and young people by also acknowledging their civil and political rights. (Woodhead, 2010, p.xx)

After the UNCRC was enshrined in UK law in 1991, children's participation in the UK became a dominant aspect of government policy on children and young people (Shier, 2001). Under New Labour, there were a number of government papers that

ensured that children and young people would be able to participate within services that affected them, although they can be seen as problematic in their emphasis on instrumentality (Lister, 2008), a point that I discuss later in this chapter.

Since participation has sometimes been a vague concept, there have been a number of different formats that it has taken (Lansdown, 2010). From a progressive perspective, participation is meaningful when it 'confronts the power issues' (Fielding & Rudduck, 2002), which means that it should aim authentically to represent the perspectives of children on matters that are important to them, rather than focus on outcomes on an organisational level, such as a more efficient service (Cockburn, 2005; Percy-Smith, 2006). While there have been attempts on a theoretical level to demarcate child-led or transformative participation from forms that are less meaningful, such as 'consultative' (Lansdown, 2010), 'nominal' (Cockburn, 2005) or 'tokenistic' (Hart, 1997) forms, it is much harder to ensure that participation is always meaningful in practice (Lansdown, 2010). The mandate from the UNCRC (Lansdown, 2010) and from the government (Cockburn, 2005) is significant in terms of ensuring participation, but it does not extend to ensuring meaningful participation. Consequently, great leaps forward have been made but a complete victory has not been won (Tisdall, 2008; Woodhead, 2010).

The normative participative models were undoubtedly idealistic, aiming to 'push the boundaries' of participation in practice (Head, 2011, p.542; Tisdall, 2008), but they were also supported by government legislation and so can be viewed at least as a plausible attempt to ensure that meaningful transformative participation was put into practice. The promise of participation came first from the theory of children and

young people's marginalised position in society, which could be transformed through creating participation processes through which children and young people could have a 'generative' rather than passive position in society. It would appear then that participation, in theory and in practice, was well-placed to transform the position of children and young people in society. Although the limited and partial way in which the promise of participation has been realised will be critiqued in this chapter and throughout the rest of the literature review, participation could reasonably be viewed as having possessed a substantive promise on a theoretical level. The radical aspect of participation makes it surprising that it received such extensive government support and in the next section, I will suggest that the situation was perhaps indeed too good to be true, and in fact the government support for participation rested to a significant degree on a more controlling agenda.

2.2.2 Participation as Control

Up to this point, the argument for participation has been made from the ethical perspective of liberating the individual from the strictures of society. Participation serves the role of enabling individuals to take greater ownership of their experience and of the settings in which they exist. However, participation is a contested and flexible term (Lansdown, 2010). While there is an intellectual current behind participation that emphasises rights and takes an ethical stance on the position of the child and the society, there are alternative perspectives on the purpose of participation (Whitty & Wisby, 2007). In this section, I will outline a perspective that argues that the purpose of participation in the eyes of government is instrumental rather than ethical. I will set out a rationale for participation that is enacted with the

purpose of ensuring that the individual is the 'appropriate' kind of person, more committed to the aims of the public service (Bragg, 2007a). A further purpose is to treat citizens as consumers, and to improve public services through enabling consumers to shape the service for themselves (Hartley, 2008). I set out the theory behind this perspective of participation and then outline how this rationale was the dominant one for New Labour.

2.2.2.1 New Labour and Control through Participation

Participation as a form of control in advanced liberal democracies is based on a particular way of controlling the individual through 'community' favoured by New Labour (Rose, 2000). New Labour social policy was geared towards 'a social order in which people behave differently rather than one in which resources are distributed differently' (Deacon, 1998, p. 306). This was based around the 'active citizen':

Active citizenship is evocative of notions of community, citizenship and empowerment and speaks to the presumed intrinsic benefits of public engagement in decision-making: the idea is that the process of participation is, and should be valued as, a good in and of itself. Yet, active citizenship consists of more than simply increasing the level of public participation for its own sake it demands participation with a purpose. That purpose is to engage people in making their communities better places for themselves and for those around them. (Stoker, 2004, p. 2).

Like the related concept of 'social inclusion', active citizenship is a flexible phrase that can be used to convey various political ideas – from the goal of defending 'the collective fabric of public life against encroachment by the market' towards an emphasis on people's responsibilities over their rights (Marinetto, 2003, p.107). It is argued that the purpose of the active citizenship agenda was not to empower citizens to ask difficult questions about society and where necessary disrupt the

process of government (Davies, 2012). Rather, it was to ensure that everyone would play their role in the required way. As the UK Home Secretary David Blunkett stated, the government 'can show leadership in developing a wider and deeper democratic engagement with citizens so that they are more able and inclined to take responsibility for shaping the well-being of their communities' (Home Office, 2003, quoted in Davies, 2012, p.11). Thus, being active involves the conflation of 'freedom and democracy with responsibility' (Davies, 2012, p.11). The individual and society are seen as being totally aligned, so where the individual is active, it is assumed that this is in a manner that would be approved of by government.

One way to understand the 'responsibilising' purpose of the active citizenship agenda is through understanding the thinking of Amitai Etzioni, an organisation-turned-social theorist, particularly influential over New Labour (Prideaux, 2005), who was interested in the relationship between control and agency. He was a functionalist, concerned with how a business organisation can best control people, given that control is necessary but can result in alienation if applied tyrannically (Etzioni, 1964). He later transferred his ideas to studying how societies can work most efficiently through citizens or 'societal members' being 'active' (Etzioni, 1967). Etzioni imagines a society in the same way as a managerialist perspective imagines an organisation, in which everyone is working towards the same goals and the more 'active' people are, the better the organisation/society functions (Etzioni, 1993). His functionalist influence on the 'active citizenship' agenda (Etzioni, 2010) is discernible within the framework of New Labour's policy of changing society through improving the citizen-members, rather than in a structural

way (Levitas, 2005).

Levitas (ibid.) distinguishes between redistributive and cultural discourses of social exclusion. The redistributionist model of social exclusion links exclusion to poverty and argues for the necessity of alleviating poverty in order to alleviate social exclusion. In this discourse, social exclusion is built into the structure of capitalist society, and combating social exclusion is the proper work of a fair society. The cultural model adopts a picture where there is society, which is more-or-less not to be faulted, and there are people who are outside of this society. As with the redistributionist model, being outside of society is linked to poverty. However, society is linked primarily to economic opportunity rather than inevitable inequality, and poverty is thought to lead to cultures of dependency, with the result that the socially excluded no longer make the correct moral choices and take part of society in the way that will lead them to make the most of the opportunities within it. In the cultural model of social exclusion, there is a specious equation of society with that which is good. Social exclusion, from this perspective, becomes the fault of those who are excluded. It becomes a question of people not sharing the 'good' values of the included. This model of social exclusion is based on 'an overly homogenous and consensual image of society – a rosy view possible because the implicit model is one in which inequality and poverty are pathological and residual, rather than endemic' (ibid., p.6). For participation, the relevant element is that participation shapes people towards sharing the good values of society and feeling responsible for their own outcomes (Clarke, 2005).

The influence of the cultural model of inclusion of improving individuals within the active citizenship agenda can be discerned in the limited and managed

participation of citizens within the public services (Clarke, 2005; Brannan et al., 2006; Newman & Clarke, 2009). Crucially, the increase in the participation of citizens has not brought with it actual redistribution of power from the centre (Marinetto, 2003). The participation of the public in public organisations such as healthcare facilities has been characterised by the public organisation strongly controlling the process and limiting the extent to which the public are able to meaningfully contribute (Martin, 2008; Newman & Clarke, 2009). Rather than empowering the public, participation seems to be as much for the purpose of improving them as societal 'members':

Active citizens were a means of reducing cost and activity pressures on the National Health Service – becoming 'expert patients', taking on managing their own lifestyles and well-being, and requiring less direct attention from hospitals and general practitioners. Active citizens 'volunteer' and create mutual self-help as the basis for community activation and regeneration. They embrace the spirit of Do-It-Yourself, from staying active in old age to dealing with the annual tax returns for the Inland Revenue. (Clarke, 2005,p.448).

The active citizen as described here appears to be very similar to Etzioni's idea of the active society, where people are fully engaged in participating in society in order to make it better, within an environment in which there is consensus about what it means to make society better. The active citizen contributes to society much as an employee contributes to the organisation. The active citizen is productive and 'competent' rather than subversive, participating in society is a moral obligation rather than an opportunity. The citizen is active not in order to argue about what the ends of society should be, but in order to contribute, in part through self-improvement, towards the goals of society that have been imposed from above.

Arnott (2008) suggests that the participation of children and young people can and should be understood within this wider context of how government understands and regulates the participation of citizens within society in general. In particular, the participation of children and young people can be positioned as part of the active citizenship agenda (Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006). The progressive agenda, in favour of children and young people having an influence over the organisations that affect them, does not have 'deep roots' within UK policy concerning children (Lister, 2004, p.173). In practice, a far more entrenched purpose has been to see children as an investment for the future in terms of how they can be productive: 'it is the future *worker*-citizen more than *democratic*-citizen who is the prime asset of the social-investment state' (ibid., p.171, emphasis original).

So, from a government perspective the dominant purpose of citizens being active is that they become more responsible, and the focus on responsabilisation of society is focused on children as much as it is on adults (Lister, 2008). It would therefore follow that, at government level, the legitimacy of participation came from the instrumental benefits it would bring, rather than from idealistic reasons of the rights of the child. A review of government policies relevant to children's participation indicates that while progressive aspects of participation, such as respecting the UNCRC, are touched on, participation is commonly linked to the instrumental 'benefits' it brings to the organisation and to the level of responsibility of the individual (Whitty & Wisby, 2007). When it was active, the Children and Young People's Unit produced 'Learning to Listen', setting out the 'core principles' of children and young people's participation (CYPUP, 2001). This document was based on the functionalist principle that 'involving children and young people in the

planning, delivery and evaluation of government services brings benefits' (CYPU, 2001, p.6) that were directed in part towards more responsible children. One of these benefits was social inclusion:

Promoting citizenship and social inclusion. Promoting early engagement in public and community life is crucial to sustaining and building a healthy society...listening to young people is a powerful means of persuading disadvantaged young people that they count and can contribute. (ibid., emphasis original).

Here, the figure of 'disadvantaged' young persons is characterised by their attitude to society and the extent to which they can 'contribute'. The imagined problem of disadvantaged young persons is understood as a 'cultural' one, of having a particular attitude in which they do not feel they can contribute, and participation is imagined as having the capacity to change attitudes (Levitas, 2005). The document continues to focus on the attitudinal benefits connected to participation, such as suggesting that 'good participation opportunities produce more confident and resilient young people' (CYPU, 2001, p.6). In recent Department for Education guidance on participation through 'pupil voice', the following benefits were set out in terms of improved attitudes:

It encourages pupils to become active participants in a democratic society - by holding youth parliaments and school councils which develop skills such as co-operation and communication and encourage them to take responsibility.

It contributes to achievement and attainment - young people involved in participative work benefit in a range of different ways. Increased confidence, self-respect, competence and an improved sense of responsibility have all been reported by young people who contribute in school. Schools also report increased motivation and engagement with learning. (DFE, 2014, p.2)

So, the focus here is on the participant as 'becomings', with participation leading to responsabilising developmental benefits. It is diametrically opposed to the progressive purpose of participation, which is for children and young people to be treated as 'beings' rather than 'becomings'. Through participation, the child is seen as becoming a far more productive societal 'members', but there is no mention in the document about the potential of participation to transform the school according to the perspectives of children. It appears that the focus of participation is primarily in improving the pupil. This link at a policy level between participation and the responsabilising benefits that it brings to children and young people would suggest that it is unwise to consider participation as 'a positive social trend', even one that 'could benefit from critical analysis' (Hallet & Prout, 2003, p.2). From a responsabilisation perspective, the focus on the active agency of young people is not as a route to social transformation but as a way of shaping young people so that they adopt a more responsible attitude (Smith, 2011).

2.2.2.2 Participation as Personalisation

The participation of citizens, including children and young people, can also be seen as a means of the citizen-as-consumer being able to improve the public services (Whitty & Wisby, 2007). If responsabilisation is the intended instrumental effect of participation on children and young people, then personalisation is the intended instrumental effect of making the public services more efficient. Since around 2004, personalisation has been accepted by all political parties and for all public services, although with some variation in emphasis (Needham, 2011). It has been a term 'that helped to summarise all that was perceived to be wrong with existing public services and all that could be done to improve them' (Needham, 2011, p.4), and as

such has been at the heart of reforms in education, health and social care (Cutler et al., 2007). The purpose of participation from the perspective of personalisation is to improve the public services through 'responding' to children and young people as consumers, as set out in the 'Learning to Listen' guidance:

Participation leads to better services. It is accepted that the effectiveness of services depends on listening and responding to customers. Giving children and young people an active say in how policies and services are developed, provided, evaluated and improved should ensure that policies and services more genuinely meet their needs. (CYPUP, 2001, p.6)

The rationale of the personalisation of public services through participation was adapted from marketing theory (Hartley, 2008), whereby the value of a transaction between a business and a customer is not provided by the product or by the staff who provide the product to the customer. Rather, value is 'co-created' and 'co-produced' in the interactions between the business and the consumer. In order to be successful, the business must provide not just a standardised product, but an experience that is personally meaningful to the customer (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000). The Demos think tank, and in particular the work of Charles Leadbetter, was influential on New Labour, and he set out the purpose of 'personalisation through participation':

By putting users at the heart of services, enabling them to become participants in the design and delivery, services will be more effective by mobilising millions of people as co-producers of the public goods they value (Leadbetter, 2004, p. 19).

When applied to a public service such as education:

Personalised learning starts from the premise that learners should be actively, continually engaged in setting their own targets, devising their own learning plans and goals, choosing from among a range of different ways to learn (Leadbetter, 2004, p. 71).

The centre of the public services, then, becomes not the provider of the public service but the user (the pupil or the 'learner'). Personalised learning means that the teacher is to provide a 'bespoke' service; as in marketing theory, the pupil is imagined to have wants and needs that the teacher identifies and responds to (cf. Leadbetter, 2006, pp.102-114).

Personalisation as a term can be placed within the broader creation of the citizen-consumer. It does this by stressing the benefits of choice, with more choice being equated with a more responsive service (Clarke & Newman, 2007). Because it is linked to raising standards in public services, there is a certain inconsistency: the users (the pupils) have no say over the nature of the standards that they are required to attain. Consequently, personalisation should be understood as strictly limited and within confines set out by government rather than the users themselves (Cutler et al., 2007).

Although personalisation shares the emphasis on placing the child or young person at the centre of the public service, there are two ways in which the aims of participation-as-personalisation are distinct from an ethical purpose of countering the marginalisation of children and young people in society. The first way is that personalisation can be viewed as working in conjunction with responsabilisation (Ferguson, 2007), since in both cases participants are expected to want what is deemed appropriate for them:

Users who are more involved in shaping the service they receive should be expected to become more active and responsible in helping to deliver the service: involved patients are more likely to attend clinics, students to do homework. Personalisation should create more involved, responsible users. (Leadbetter, 2004, 59).

So, personalisation is not just about making the service more responsive to the needs and wants of individuals; it is also concerned with ensuring that individuals come to identify more with the service. Although personalisation may lead to changes in the service, the ultimate target of personalisation appears to be the user, who is expected to adapt to the service.

The second way in which participation-as-personalisation differs from an ethical purpose is that personalisation offers choice to the individual, but a choice that is limited by what it is that the public service can offer to the individual (Ferguson, 2007). However, from the perspective of the 'lifeworld' of the individual, there is no reason to think that the choices about the service that personalisation will offer will be meaningful to them (Percy-Smith, 2006). The separation between a progressive form of participation that shapes the organisation around the agency of the child and a personalising form of participation, where the child helps tailor the service around their needs, can be articulated through the concept of 'misrecognition', which occurs when the organisation imagines the child or young person to be a particular way according to their own value systems, rather than as the child or young person actually is (Fisher, 2011).

2.3 Discussion

In this chapter I have suggested that participation is an ambiguous term that is capable of supporting contradictory arguments and that within the UK it has been understood as serving two different purposes. As a rough heuristic, for academics it constitutes a means of combating the marginalisation of children, whereas for politicians its legitimacy is derived from an agenda that aims at citizens, including children and young people being more productive societal members and at

improving the efficiency of public services. It is important to emphasise that the instrumental argument for participation carries far more weight, in political circles, connected as it is to New Labour's whole social policy approach of 'active citizenship'. Although this view is rarely expressed, it is possible that the academic social constructionist arguments in favour of children and young people's participation had little influence on the policy of participation, and that the progressive aspect of participation can be seen as a distraction from what is largely a policy of control. In the discussion I want to consider what the possible implications of this are for understanding participation in practice.

On this issue, there are two possible positions to adopt. The first is that children and young people's participation is largely a pragmatic issue: what is important is that there is a 'broad advocacy' for children and young people's participation in public institutions (cf. Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, pp.100-125). From this perspective, there remains ground for optimism that participation can be put into practice in a meaningful way: despite the essential motivation for the policy being control, children and young people's participation nevertheless has the support of government and there is space within organisations to put it into practice in a meaningful way. This argument has been made for welcoming the participation of pupils despite misgivings about the rationale of the policy, by placing emphasis on the possibilities of professionals adopting it in a progressive way:

We remain convinced that, potentially, pupil voice opens up some progressive possibilities, not only in terms of children's rights and active citizenship but also in relation to moves towards collaborative or democratic professionalism. If this is to happen, teachers themselves need to take the initiative and play their part in helping pupil voice to develop in the context of collaborative rather than managerialist cultures. (Whitty and Wisby, 2007, p.317)

This passage emphasises the potential contribution of the professionals responsible for putting the policy into practice: they can do this in a way that is meaningful for them (Braun et al., 2011). Consequently, from this perspective any policy on participation potentially opens up a space for meaningful participation: policy does not determine practice. In the next chapter, I will look at the space for making participation meaningful in the public services.

This brings me to the second way of viewing the mismatch between participation as control and as empowering. Here, the emphasis is on improving participation (Tisdall et al., 2008) so that it will more closely resemble the progressive ideal and reflect the lifeworld of children and young people (Percy-Smith, 2006, 2010). Since participation in the public services is to a significant extent government-supported, it is reasonable that calls to improve participation should target not only organisations and individuals but also underlying policy. It is common for progressive improvements to participation to be directed towards organisations, through creating models of participation (cf. Shier, 2001; Badham & Wade, 2010), and towards suggested improvements to how staff work (cf. Fleming, 2013). An example of what is required of staff in this system to make participation work is as follows:

Adults need to check their own motivations and assess their readiness to work in partnership with children. They need to work on whether they accept the validity of young people's agenda and whether the processes they adopt are more effective and respectful to children. (Cockburn, 2005, p. 115)

While such suggestions are true as far as they go, if left unqualified they may presuppose that there is a mandate for a progressive form of participation, in which

organisations and professionals are expected to deliver 'a reflexive learning mechanism' or to 'accept the validity of young people's agenda'. Yet the policy field around participation explored in this chapter would suggest that organisations and professionals are expected to become more efficient and improve children and young people through participation, and that participation should be about the organisation shaping the children and young people's agenda as much as being open to it.

For over a decade, there have been calls to improve participation through how it is put into practice (cf. Sinclair, 2004, Fleming, 2013). In the case of government-funded participation, such improvements depend on forms of ethical participation being put into practice, despite the underlying policy being largely instrumentalist. Against this idea, participation may be conceptualized as having different 'modes', and policy that rests on discourses of responsabilisation and personalisation legitimates a corresponding mode of participation, rather than participation itself. With reference to participation in schools in particular, different possible modes are clearly articulated here:

Student voice operating within the 'high performance' mode is largely an instrumental undertaking orientated towards increased measurable organisational performance. In its most extreme form it is about the use of student voice for particular kinds of adult purposes. It is often technologically and emotionally sophisticated, seemingly interested in young peoples' points of view and attentive to suggestions that may enhance the school's effectiveness and reputation. It is, however, ultimately totalitarian and often dissembling in its dispositions and its operation: student voice only has significance and is only legitimate insofar as it enhances organisational ends. (Fielding, 2006, p.308).

As has been argued in this chapter, there is another purpose that could be added to this description: that of shaping the child or young person to be more productive

societal members. These purposes may not be consistent with ethical purpose espoused by the social constructionist approach:

In contrast to high performance approaches, student voice operating in 'person-centred' mode is explicitly and engagingly mutual in its orientation towards widely conceived educational ends that will often include measurable results, but are not constituted or constrained by them. It is about students and teachers working and learning together in partnership, rather than one party using the other for often covert ends. Its processes and procedures are emergent, rather than fixed, and shaped by the dialogic values that underpin its aspirations and dispositions. (ibid.)

This idea of different modes of participation raises the possibility that a 'high-performance', 'responsibilising' or 'instrumental' form of participation was legitimated through policy, while a 'person-centred' mode was not. In this research, it will be important to pay attention to the mode of participation that is constructed by the implementing organisations. If it is possible to identify an instrumental mode of participation, then the appropriate interpretation of the limitations of the project may be to link them to the instrumental political ideas behind participation. It will need to be acknowledged that there is not necessarily a government agenda behind promise participation, and museums and galleries are not supported to make participation meaningful. The political constraints under which the museums and galleries operate must be recognised, and this implies that the reasons why any particular mode is put into practice must be assessed in terms of the political agendas to which the museums and galleries are answerable.

Having in this chapter discussed the political barriers to meaningful participation, in the next chapter, I will consider the organisational constraints. The important issue raised in this chapter is that organisations are responding in part to control-based

agendas on participation, and this affects the degree of freedom that organisations and individuals have in putting participation into practice in meaningful rather than control-based modes.

Chapter 3: The Organisational Context

3.1 Participation within Managerialism

Having explored the policy context of children and young people's participation in the previous chapter, in this chapter I will respond to the call to pay greater attention to the organisational context (Percy-Smith, 2006; Mannion, 2007; Tisdall, 2008). Since participation is such a widely-encompassing term, covering a range of activities across various different contexts (Thomas, 2007), it would not be possible to set out all the contexts in which children and young people could be said to participate. While acknowledging the many areas in which children could be said to participate in life, from online (Bennett, 2007), to playing (Bae, 2009), to being with their families (Mayall, 1994), in this chapter I will focus on participation within organisations that are in the main adult-run but which attempt to involve children and young people through specific projects and initiatives (Thomas, 2007). The reason for focusing on this particular form of organisation is that it is the dominant form of participation in the UK, where participation is generally top-down and government-funded, with specific projects set up by organisations in order to enable young people to have a say in making decisions that are relevant to them (Matthews, 2001; Tisdall et al., 2008).

The organisational context of participation in the UK can be examined from different perspectives, including viewing participation projects as 'intergenerational' projects organised by adults for children and young people (Thomas, 2007). However active children and young people are within a project, this is likely to be the result of adults shaping the space for them (Mannion, 2007). An intergenerational perspective looks at whether or not adults were willing or able to

meaningfully involve children, or whether they wanted to maintain their own status by not doing so (Hill et al., 2004; Cockburn, 2005; McIntyre et al., 2005).

Without discounting this intergenerational perspective, it can be argued that there are more fundamental factors that may limit meaningful participation in organisations: in particular, the *managerial regime* within which public service organisations are organised (Clarke & Newman, 1997), and by extension, how children and young people's participation is organised within public service organisations (Tisdall et al., 2008; Pinkney, 2011).

In this chapter, I will adopt the position that an appreciation of New Public Management (NPM) reforms is centrally important to understanding contemporary public service organisations in the UK (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004; Pollitt, 2007). NPM is a 'loose term' commonly applied to a broad agenda in public service reform over the last thirty years (Simonet, 2013, p.5). Most broadly, it is an agenda for running public institutions using principles derived from private institutions (Drechsler, 2005). It emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, as a response to the perceived failure of the state effectively and economically to deliver public services and at a time when private companies were thought to be shifting away from bureaucratic forms of organisation to a position where there was more 'freedom to manage' (Larsen, quoted in Hood, 1991, p.8). Politically, in the UK, both Labour and Conservative governments have made NPM a key part of their political projects, which promote reform of the public services based on NPM principles of greater accountability and efficiency (Rhodes, 2000).

In practice, participation as a top-down operation in the UK public services entails the government requiring organisations to demonstrate that they are practicing

participation with children and young people. In this chapter, I will focus on how the system of managing participation in these ways within the public services within the UK potentially affects participation projects with children and young people. Within the managerial state (Clarke & Newman, 2007), I will investigate the possibility that attempting to ensure outcomes through NPM leads to both intended and unintended consequences (Hood & Peters, 2004), and examine whether this is true for participation. Tisdall (2008) calls for new concepts to understand participation and children and young people's experience of it. In this chapter I will investigate the unintended consequences of the particular form organisation of participation within the UK through the lens of 'organisational stupidity', taken from the field of critical management studies:

Functional stupidity is organisationally-supported lack of reflexivity, substantive reasoning, and justification. It entails a refusal to use intellectual resources outside a narrow and 'safe' terrain. It can provide a sense of certainty that allows organisations to function smoothly. This can save the organisation and its members from the frictions provoked by doubt and reflection. (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012, p.1196)

In this chapter I will look at the ways in which participation is ensured through management processes (cf. Badham & Wade, 2010, p.8) that provides 'certainty' but does not enable the organisations to work with the necessary reflexiveness to make participation meaningful in practice (Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006).

While there is a current system for participation in place with regard to children and young people's participation in the public services, there is a question as to whether it is worth improving and building on or whether an entirely new system is required (Freeman et al., 2003). The optimistic argument is that the 'hard elements'

of participation are in place, in that participation is ensured through processes in the organisation (Fleming, 2013, p.491). Consequently, were participation not to be meaningful, it is the fault of the 'soft' human element – the 'shared values, staff, skills and style of leadership' (ibid., p.491). The more pessimistic view is that the way in which public service organisations are required to work means that even the most progressive organisations cannot make participation work meaningfully (Freeman et al., 2003). From this perspective, the hard elements are regarded as part of the problem, in that bureaucratic processes constrain the extent to which meaningful, rather than tokenistic or partial, participation is possible (Wyness, 2006). According to this view, the whole framework of participation should be reviewed (Freeman et al., 2003; Tisdall et al., 2008; Percy-Smith, 2010).

In the chapter I set out four inter-related areas of tension, inherent in attempting to put meaningful participation into practice through NPM. In the first section, I will look at management frameworks such as the National Youth Agency's Hear By Right framework and the prevalent practice of 'project management' through which organisations are able to ensure that they put participation into practice meaningfully. In the second section, I will look at the pressure on museums and galleries in particular to provide evidence of their social role, through producing 'outcomes' and other evidence for external auditing measures. In the third section, I will look at a recent Arts Council initiative, 'Quality Principles', which evaluates the professional against principles that ensure meaningful participation. Fourthly, I will look at the hierarchical nature of organisations and how within any participation project participants can be conscious of their particular subordinate position within

the organisation. Each section will outline the tension between management and meaningful participation.

Having set out the management processes around participation and their potentially contradictory effects, I will discuss the question of the managerial organisational context for the study of participation projects. The contribution of this chapter will be to complement previous discussions of the organisational context on participation, by paying particular attention to the managerial context of participation, which has been identified as significant (Freeman et al., 2003; Wyness, 2006; Pinkney, 2011), but has not yet received an overview of the type provided here. Since the case study projects operate within museums and galleries, I will pay particular attention to their political position. However, since all public services have been subject to the same kind of managerial reforms, the discussion of museums and galleries will also have a more general relevance to all public service organisations.

3.2 Management Frameworks and Participation

While NPM is no longer as influential within government as it was in the 1990s, the reforms that have been carried out mean that it is now an important way of understanding government (Pollitt, 2007). It is argued that the managerial processes of NPM have come to be accepted as being inherently progressive and the best way to achieve goals (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004, p.201). One of the tenets of the 'managerial state' is that the purposes of the state such as welfare, education, or the participation of children and young people can be achieved best through management processes (Clarke & Newman, 1997). As Goldspink (2007) states: 'Where improved performance is sought it is pursued through the

manipulation of formal mechanisms such as rules, procedures, structures, rewards or changed evaluation' (p.24). Since the UNCRC was ratified, the government has supported children and young people's participation (Sinclair, 2004) in the main through managerial processes:

As New Labour has moved forward its policy agenda through standards and targets, advocates of children and young people's participation have sought to insinuate such participation into these mechanisms: to set up kite marks for children and young people's participation, to set out standards that organisations can judge themselves against, to create performance indicators within publicly funded programmes that require children and young people's participation. (Tisdall et al., 2008, p.50)

In the UK, then, participation with children and young people is funded as a government priority in accordance with the agendas set out in the previous chapter. In practice, this has meant that the government sets out principles of participation that it considers important, and then establishes systems for continuously monitoring and measuring relevant outcomes (Tisdall et al., 2008). The expectation is that institutionalised management processes 'secure the sustained and effective participation of children and young people' (Badham & Wade, 2010, p.8). The government set out 'core principles' of participation, in the guidance document 'Learning to Listen', which public service organisations were required to put into practice. The principles focused on organisational processes:

A visible commitment is made to involving children and young people, underpinned by appropriate resources to build a capacity to implement policies of participation.

Children and young people's involvement is valued.

Children and young people have equal opportunity to get involved.

Policies and standards for the participation of children and young people are provided, evaluated and continuously improved. (DFE, 2001, p.10-11)

It should be noted that, within NPM, the government should 'steer not row', which means that government is 'more concerned with strategy and less with carrying-out' (Pollitt, 2002, p.276). Here, government's approach to putting participation into practice is that public service organisations, increasingly detached from government (Christensen & Laegreid, 2006), should involve children in their own way. As with the participation clause in the UNCRC, it is significant that the minimal term 'involvement' is used, rather than anything that commits to shared decision making (Lansdown, 2010). So, in terms of the actual participation of children, the burden on organisations here is relatively light: they simply have to put it into practice in some way (Cockburn, 2005). Under NPM, there is faith in public service managers, rather than central government, to put the government's strategy into place successfully (Hood, 1991). In this system the principles of participation would be aimed at managers, who are viewed as able to make participation work in the organisation and have considerable freedom to put participation into practice as they think best. So, in this way, organisations are required to have a policy around participation, but are far more free in terms of defining exactly what participation means in practice.

The Government-funded National Youth Agency's 'Hear By Right' Framework then set out in more detail how participation could be incorporated into how organisations work (Badham & Wade, 2010). This framework is the specific means through which organisations can put each of the four principles of participation into practice, and in it the certainties inherent in NPM are apparent:

Using the Hear by Right standards framework secures the sustained and effective participation of children and young people. The standards enable its continual improvement in an organisation. They

can be applied to all services that directly or indirectly affect children and young people. (ibid, 2010, p.8)

Here, the participation of children and young people is something that can be 'secured' through a managerial framework in which the organisation monitors itself through a model of standards and indicators that can be overseen through management processes. Each of the four 'shared values' (which are identical to the 'core principles' from the 'Learning to Listen' document, set out above) are connected to a set of 'emerging level indicators' which can be monitored (ibid. p.10). In this way, management-led processes seem to 'ensure integrity and robustness' in participation. through setting out 'quality management systems' (ibid. p.9). Frameworks such as Hear By Right provide an unambiguous statement of a formal commitment to children and young people's participation, supported by quality assurance processes and monitoring measures through which it appears that meaningful participation is within the grasp of organisations, as long as they follow the requisite processes.

In this framework, management processes are presented as being a 'neutral' means (Clarke & Newman, 1997) to achieve 'sustained and effective participation' (Badham & Wade, 2010, p.8). Children and young people's participation is viewed as being ensured through putting into practice various management processes such as 'budgeting and financial systems are in place for supporting the active involvement of children and young people' (ibid., p. 14). Furthermore, children and young people's participation itself is viewed as taking part in the management processes, as is shown by the following statements:

Children and young people contribute to developing and reviewing the strategic plan for active involvement, agreeing objectives, boundaries and benefits. (ibid., p.12)

Children and young people and partners are involved in reviewing and updating relevant policies and systems. (ibid., p.14)

It is therefore clear that the 'meaningful participation' (ibid., p.8) of children is seen as indivisible from the management processes of the organisation. According to Percy-Smith's honeymoon/post honeymoon perspective of participation in institutions (Percy-Smith, 2006; Tisdall, 2008), it is possible to differentiate an optimistic (or intended) from a pessimistic (or unintended) perspective of public service organisations' capability of enacting meaningful participation through frameworks in this way. The optimistic perspective would be that organisations can work meaningfully with children and young people through establishing and putting into practice a participation policy (Shier, 2001). Once a participation policy has been established, then an organisation can continuously improve through monitoring itself against a framework which serves 'to support organisations in ensuring that young people take part in the decision-making processes, and their voice is heard and acted upon' (Fleming 2013, p.491). So, from the optimistic perspective, meaningful participation occurs when an organisation chooses to apply itself to creating it, using the clear unambiguous plans and strategies of the framework.

There is, however, a more pessimistic perspective, that a clash of values occurs when children and young people's participation happens through management processes. Rather than a neutral way of making decisions, incorporating children and young people into the decision-making systems of the organisation can be

viewed as placing the instrumental rationality of the efficiently-managed organisation over the 'lifeworld' of the child:

Does an organisation see itself primarily as a deliverer of pre-defined services or as a reflexive learning mechanism for young people's expressed priorities and interests? Tensions in participation arise as a result of how an organisation is viewed or views itself, as well as from the assumptions held about young people and adults. This tension in public decision-making between the culture and structure of policy and public service systems and the lifeworlds of young people is a recurring theme in participation. (Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006, p.5)

It is important here to recognise that, within NPM, organisations are orientated as 'deliverers of pre-defined services', since they are measured strictly through the outputs that they achieve through strict forms of accountability within a managerial or audit-based state (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Power, 1999) in which efficiency and 'best value' are of paramount importance over being reflective 'learning' organisations (Sanderson, 2001). As such, they can be viewed as 'high-performance' organisations that do not structurally have space for attending to the lifeworlds of people (Fielding, 2006). While it is undoubtedly true that from the perspective of participation an effective organisation would be a 'reflexive learning mechanism', there is equally little doubt that within NPM the focus on efficiency through management would position such a role as a distraction from the proper purpose of the public service organisation (Hartley, 2007).

With regards to Percy-Smith's question regarding participation and how organisations understand themselves, the notion of improving the 'quality' of participation through management systems in the way that the Hear By Right framework sets out appears contradictory. The notion of quality is difficult to define

(Vinni, 2007), and is not defined in the Hear By Right framework, but the management of quality generally has the following associations:

- Quality as excellence
- Quality as value;
- Quality as conformance to specifications;
- Quality as meeting and/or exceeding customer's expectations.

(Reeves & Bednar, 1994, quoted in Vinni, 2007, p.105)

So it seems that 'quality' in each of the associations concerns a transaction between an organisation and a consumer or 'citizen-consumer' (Clarke & Newman, 2007). It is associated with ideas of delivering a service that is efficient, in the sense of being economical and meeting the needs of the customer in the specified way. As such, the management of participation through the management of quality appears to be concerned with organisations seeing themselves as deliverers of a service, rather than being reflexive. A critique of 'quality management systems' such as the Hear By Right Framework is that, although they often appear highly rigorous and robust, in practice organisational life is far 'messier' than they can account for and quality management systems might in practice not be particularly relevant (Knights & McCabe, 1998). In the case of participation, the crucial question is about values, and about whether participation is on the terms of the young people or the terms of the organisation (Percy-Smith, 2010). Quality assurance can arguably be inappropriate where it conceptualises participation within existing organisational frameworks rather than in terms of the lifeworld of children and young people.

A relevant and common complaint about children and young people's participation is that it is carried out on the terms of the organisation rather than the children and young people (Freeman et al., 2003; Hill et al., 2004 Percy-Smith, 2006, 2010; Wyness, 2006). While children and young people will be involved within the project, this does not necessarily mean that they are able to participate on their terms. It has been suggested that existing organisations such as schools, museums and galleries are 'antithetical' to meaningful participation (Percy-Smith, 2010, p.116). A recurring theme in research into children and young people's participation is the strong organisational control over the participation of children and young people, framing the questions to reflect the narrow interest of the organisation rather than the young people (Freeman et al., 2003; Percy-Smith, 2010; Fleming, 2013). The agency of the young person may be engaged with at the convenience of the organisation:

Whilst there are of course examples of where young people have been meaningfully involved in programmes and projects, on the whole it seems that 'having a say in matters that affect you' means having a say when it suits organisations and services, rather than when young people need to communicate needs, issues, ideas and concerns. (Percy-Smith, 2010, p.111-112).

Even where the organisation is involving children and young people in decisions that will affect the service provision for children and young people, participants will not necessarily be engaged, because of the dry inflexibility of the organisation: 'Working within the existing structures of council requires council staff to ascertain and incorporate the views of young people via specific, already established systems' (Freeman et al., 2003, p.67). Such mechanisms commonly do not enable participants to voice what they think on topics that matter to them, but they are

required dutifully to give their opinion on what matters to the organisation on the organisation's terms, and this is something at which they might be adept: 'children are often very good at expressing a view in response to professional agenda, but these may not be what is most important to young people' (Percy-Smith, 2010, p.113).

This implies that, while the story in the management-based Hear By Right Framework is one of 'continual improvement', whereby the organisation 'moves forward' through various levels, another way of approaching the problem of participation through and within management processes is that it ensures that the participation process is not on the same level as that of the lifeworld of the participants. While Sinclair (2004) has argued that the framework 'challenges' organisations, it could be argued that reducing children and young people's participation to a number of management-led processes has simply enabled the public services to incorporate children and young people's participation into their existing managerialist frameworks, without there being any meaningful engagement.

3.2.1 Project Management

In addition to the idea of organisations being themselves problematic as spaces for participation because of the way that they are structured (Percy-Smith, 2010), there is a particular issue about the organisation of participation as *projects that are managed*. The specific practice of project management, in addition to the wider structures and processes of organisations, could be viewed as potentially problematic in terms of making participation meaningful. While participation can

mean a variety of different activities in a variety of different contexts (Thomas, 2007), participation is commonly formally organised within a project. By this, I mean that participation often seems to be an initiative of an adult-run organisation that is involving young people for specified purposes and often for a set period of time. The 'project' label is commonly attached to participation projects in which a group of young people are convened to effect a particular change within the community, such as 'improving urban conditions for children and youth' (Chawla et al., p.54) or being involved in the planning process (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002). Common entities for children and young people's participation such as school councils (Tisdall et al., 2008) can loosely be regarded as projects, in that they are set up within an organisation to ensure that the voice of children and young people is heard within the organisation. Research that involves children and young people can also be clearly identified as a project, in that the researcher is involved for a set period of time for defined purposes (Mannion, 2007). In any participation project, there may be more or less space for participants to determine what the project should focus on and how it should be evaluated (Hart, 1997), but commonly the adult organisers of the project are accountable for the project externally to managers or funders, according to pre-arranged criteria (however flexible they may be) (Eliasoph, 2009); this is because participation happens through 'initiatives', rather than being embedded into the functioning of organisations (Percy-Smith, 2010, p.110).

Within NPM, the functions of an organisation are commonly broken down into manageable units (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994); each function of the organisation is subject to narrow forms of accountability and will be managed independently of the

others (Power, 1994). Project management offers a specific way of delivering the requisite forms of accountability, demonstrating that the organisation offers value for money and is controlled by management (Crawford & Helm, 2009). Where participation takes place within formalised systems with their own forms of accountability (cf. Badham & Wade, 2010) and where participation is an area in which organisations are accountable to funders, then project management is potentially of relevance. It can be defined as: 'the planning, organising, directing, and controlling of company resources for a relatively short-term objective that has been established to complete specific goals and objectives' (Kerzner, 2006, p.4).

Project management was developed within relatively closed technical environments, such as aerospace, where the tight control of all aspects of work was necessary to ensure that the outputs created were exactly as planned (Brady & Hobday, 2011). While it has received 'very little critical attention' (Hodgson, 2005, p.803), project management has spread to a range of areas of public life that had previously valued professional autonomy (ibid.). An assumption of project management that has implications for children and young people's participation is that any work should be broken down into a set of objectives that can be met through resources being strategically directed at them. It is modernist and positivist, in that it constructs reality as something that can be controlled, through creating comprehensive plans and working systematically towards defined objectives (ibid.).

It could be argued, particularly when applied to projects concerned with people's experience, that project management simplifies the world, and does not recognise that the reality of projects is far too complex and messy to be fully knowable and

controllable by management (ibid.). The rationalist nature of project management means that it does not acknowledge the limitations to its ability to control reality, and when faced with complexity it redoubles its focus on 'greater formalisation' (ibid, p.813). This attempt to control reality, even when it seems uncontrollable, can lead to organisational 'stupidity', which is a result of organisations functioning through tying themselves tightly to their own ways of working and perceiving the world without paying due attention to how the world actually is (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Thus, project management can function 'successfully' through ignorance of what is actually happening. It constructs the world in an oversimplified way and then acts as though this construction is accurate.

Project management can also be seen as a way of 'disciplining' professionals (Hodgson, 2005). It does this through giving senior managers responsibility for setting out how exactly the project will work and then requiring more junior staff simply to carry out the project as it has been planned, without having the freedom to change the strategy of the project if it seems necessary. At the same time, it increases management control over employees, through attaching them to particular set objectives against which they can be judged (ibid.). So, while employees have responsibility for achieving outcomes, they do not have autonomy in either choosing them, or choosing how they will be achieved. As a result, there is a danger that the individual will be judged because of how the organisation chooses to work.

Even though the problematic aspects of managed participation projects have been widely discussed, it is rare for project management itself to be brought into focus. However, the effect of the high degree of management within the projects can be

discerned from Eliasoph's (2009) investigation into the unintended consequences of top-down participation, with particular reference to attempting to create a flattened hierarchy within short-term, highly managed projects. Within 'newly prevalent projects that are top-down, funded, open to any members of the public, and usually short-term' (ibid, p.306), it is necessary to have clear aims and outcomes that are then demonstrated to funders. In practice, however, Eliasoph found that difficulties emerged from the constant need to demonstrate 'civiness' for purposes of audit, rather than simply act in a civic way. The close management of the project meant that 'all relationships turn at least partly outwards, towards these distant, hurried audiences with their unwieldy measuring devices' (ibid., p.301). In practice, many of the indicators of successful projects, such as bringing in a large number of adult volunteers, led to a 'destructive' situation (ibid., p.300) in which the 'helped' children who actually wanted to get their homework done had to escape the overly chatty volunteers, who effectively encouraged others not to do their homework so that they could be engaged with (ibid., p.303). This implies that, while effective project management can be seen as improving the effectiveness of projects, another way of understanding participation projects is in terms of the extent to which children and young people are incorporated within an organisation's formalised structures which impose a set form of how adults and young people relate to each other.

At its heart, the project management of children and young people's participation raises issues concerned with over-simplification and complexity. If clarity is seen as central to the success of participation, so that participants know what the boundaries of participation are, what the rules are, what is expected of them and

what is possible for them (Hart, 1997; Badham & Wade, 2010), then project management can be seen as an excellent way of ensuring successful projects. However, if the main problem in participation is that the organisation imposes its own agenda and processes on participants and on adult facilitators, and participants are unable to express their own perspective about what matters to them (Percy-Smith, 2006, 2010), then project management can be seen as a problem. The technical, predictive focus of project management can lead to fixed ideas about how the participants will behave in and experience the project, and how the professional should act to ensure positive outcomes. However, in practice the most important aspect of participation may be that participants and facilitators are freed from the formalised structures of organisations and contemporary life (Percy-Smith, 2010), and from this perspective project management can be seen as leading to failure. This happens when the organisation puts into practice the 'correct' procedures for making participation meaningful, suffering from a systematic blindness to the negative effects that the technical focus on making the projects successful can have on the substantive success of the projects (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Project management sets up a theory of what will happen and a means of turning this into reality, but it may be that in practice the theory inherent within the project management about the project and participants' experience of it is oversimplified (Eliasoph, 2009).

3.3 Management, Museums and Galleries

In children and young people's participation, the problem of 'tokenism' is 'an extremely common form of involving children' (Hart, 1997, p.41) and is a 'frequent criticism' made by children and young people (Tisdall et al., 2008, p.346). It occurs

when participation is introduced more for its 'symbolic impact' than with genuine involvement of children and young people in the organisation (Hart, 1997, p.42). While tokenism can be situated at the bottom of the 'ladder of participation', as a mistake made by committed but misguided organisations which can be improved (cf. Hart, 1997), or as a result of adults resisting the loss of status that comes with authentic participation (Cockburn, 2005; Skelton, 2007), I want to outline here a case for there being deeper, structural reasons for tokenistic forms of engagement. I will argue, with particular reference to museums and galleries, that a regime in which organisations are required to demonstrate outcomes against government-imposed targets within limited budgets leads to an emphasis on representing activities such as the participation of children and young people in a skilled way that may be de-coupled from what is actually happening in reality (Alvesson, 2013). Under management control systems there is always the possibility of a superficial compliance, where an organisation will represent externally its activities in a way that ticks the right box but without in fact acting in the way that is represented (Lapsley, 2009). While audit systems do not necessarily improve performance (van Thiel & Leeuw, 2002), they can have the unintended effect of organisations and employees excessively adapting how they operate, simply in order to ensure legitimacy in the face of monitoring audit processes (Power, 1999, 2003). In a hypothetical situation in which impossible demands are made of an organisation, under NPM it would be rational for it to *represent* that it is putting in place the necessary processes and achieving the necessary outcomes even if it is unable to substantively do so (Alvesson, 2013).

In this section, I will set out the political position of museums and galleries under NPM and discuss why there is a possible focus on the symbolic over the real, in relation to participation. While participation is a requirement across public service organisations, there is reason to believe that the pressure on museums and galleries to demonstrate children and young people's participation is particularly acute. This is because museums and galleries do not provide an essential service to the government, so that they have to constantly bargain for funding. Culture has never been a high priority for the national or local government in the UK, and both lack a coherent cultural policy (Gray, 2008). It is suggested that local museums and galleries receive public funding because they are considered important in a broad, long-term perspective, but they offer little to the short-term concerns of local and national government:

Few would deny their long-term value to society and the necessity of their long-term existence. But most of them are very dependent on public funding and in the short-term world of politics and social priorities they are not seen to be very important. Consequently, they struggle to have their long-term existence guaranteed by adequate funding now. These are weaknesses which do not usually lead to the immediate closing of museums and art galleries. However, they do lead to a slow reduction or withdrawal of many of the services which attract visitors and reduce capital investment in the sector. (Davies, 1994, p. 81-82)

It could therefore be said that museums and galleries have a complex identity. They are arguably more than a mere public service, in that they can be viewed as symbolising a national commitment to higher values of culture, art and democracy; in some cases, both the buildings and their objects represent our national heritage. They have an intrinsic importance (Duncan, 1995). At the same time, they are of lesser importance, compared with other public services, in that they do not

necessarily provide a tangible return on investment, compared with schools and hospitals (Gray, 2008).

The lack of cultural policy does not imply that government funds museums and galleries without taking a close interest in how the funds are used. It does mean, however, that government does not evaluate museums and galleries in cultural terms (ibid.). Instead, it is interested in the role that museums and galleries can play in the government's broader policy concerns; museums and galleries must demonstrate in measurable terms their impact within areas such as 'social inclusion' or 'learning' (Belfiore, 2002; Gray, 2004). In ensuring that museums and galleries perform their social role, government has reformed how museums and galleries are run, to ensure that they conform to the generalised management principles of NPM (Gray, 2008; Tlili, 2014). While in theory central government holds only the thirteen sponsored museums, such as Tate and the British Museum, directly to account, in practice it is able to influence how local authority-funded museums operate, through 'a wide range of tools to manage the policy process – particularly with regard to non-central government institutions' (Gray, 2008, p.213), including local authorities and quangos. In creating the criteria against which local museums and galleries are measured against, local authorities must take into account the indicators against which their public services are measured by central government, and this means that national government has an important, if indirect, influence on local museums and galleries (Belfiore, 2004).

It is argued that the constant need to demonstrate their usefulness in non-cultural areas puts museums and galleries in a fundamentally weak position because they,

as cultural non-statutory bodies, must demonstrate that they can provide outcomes in non-cultural statutory areas such as education (Belfiore, 2004; Gray, 2008). NPM's focus on evaluating the effectiveness of organisations through measurable outcomes means that the value of museums and galleries is reduced, in a significant way, to effects on visitors that can be demonstrated through Power's (1999) 'rituals of verification' (Belfiore 2004, 2012). In its policy guidance, the government makes it clear that funding the arts and arts organisations for a 'measurable' return:

Museums, galleries and archives will be required to demonstrate the benefits and outcomes of their social inclusion plans and activities. It is therefore crucial that objectives, criteria for success and performance indicators are set at the outset, and regularly reviewed and evaluated. (DCMS, 2000, p.27)

The necessity of evidencing its social impact in measurable ways leads to 'bargaining' for funding, in which the museum attempts to demonstrate, again in measurable ways, that it can be more than just a museum (Davies, 2008). This has come at a time when local authority budgeting for museums have come under increasing scrutiny, as central government introduces auditing practices to ensure that public funds are used efficiently (Lawley, 2003). One possible unintended consequence is that resources are directed at evidencing work, rather than the work itself, as advocacy 'becomes an area of museum activity in its own right' (Tlili, 2014, p.6). There is the danger that museums adopt a narrow approach in an area around which there are performance indicators, such as social inclusion: for example, they may focus on numbers of visitors ('getting them in'), rather than adopting a concerted authentic approach across the whole organisation (Tlili, 2008, 143).

While the arts have attempted to demonstrate their social effectiveness, the problem is that the complexity and difficulty of understanding the impact of the arts cannot be acknowledged and attended to, within a system in which impact must be demonstrated in specific, wide-ranging and immediate ways (Belfiore, 2004, 2012). It is argued that in the process of attempting to demonstrate the social impact of the arts, the arts sector has merely established a way of representing arts activities and their effects in a way that is de-coupled from reality; the arts have focused on rhetoric at the expense of reality (Belfiore, 2009). While there have been attempts to evidence such claims from actual arts projects, it is argued that the link between evidence and claims can be somewhat spurious (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010) as 'the sector still lacks a methodology for measuring its long-term contribution to society' (Lang, 2006; p.37). While museums and galleries have attempted to demonstrate their social impact in the required way (Belfiore & Bennett, 2012), it is argued, that evidence that the sector has produced is weak, distorted by the pressure to demonstrate positive social outcomes, resulting in a 'toolkit approach' to understanding outcomes from arts activities which demands excessive simplification: 'its popularity is linked to its perceived advocacy potential rather than to any demonstrable contribution it may make to a genuine understanding of the nature of artistic engagement (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010, p.121).

Understanding the outcomes of engagement with the arts is therefore tightly bound up with advocating for the arts, and there are 'good' reasons for portraying a rosy picture of the experience of arts activities, rather than a realistic one (Davies & Heath, 2014). Wide-ranging claims have been made about the possible social impact of the arts, in the process becoming 'detached from the complex intellectual

traditions that gave rise to' the possibility of talking meaningfully about the positive social effects of the arts (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007, p.148).

Whether or not it is a wise approach (Belfiore, 2012), the practice of making claims about projects that are excessive and may not refer to reality is institutionalised, within museums and galleries, and in the arts more broadly (Belfiore, 2009; Davies and Heath, 2014). From the perspective of participation projects, it is relevant that, in justifying their impact through NPM, museums and galleries operate within the symbolic realm, making claims that may be shaped more by what is demanded of them than by what has actually happened. Children and young people as participants are therefore important 'tokens' for gaining legitimacy at the organisational level. Tokenism is not, in this view, simply participation done inadequately (cf. Hart, 1997), but built into the structure of the projects.

3.4 The Professional under New Public Management

The position of the participation professional under NPM can be viewed as significant for a number of reasons. In the last chapter, I suggested that the policy of participation leans towards being controlling rather than liberating, and consequently the promise of participation is thought to be dependent on professionals to put it into practice in a meaningful way (Fielding, 2004; Whitty and Wisby, 2007). However, the limited agency of employees within NPM has led some to suggest that the very notion that young people can meaningfully share in decision-making is problematic:

Institutions such as schools are increasingly expected, and even required, to engage with young people's voices in order to shape and evaluate the quality of provision. Several commentators have noted, however, that schools are not well placed to engage with pupil voice, due in part to cultures of accountability that leave little room for

adults, let alone young people, to determine what happens in schools on a day-to-day basis. (Cremin et al., 2011, p.600)

In this section, I will argue that such constraints around the professional under NPM should be taken into consideration when considering the capacity of professionals to make participation meaningful.

Within museums and galleries, as in other public service organisations, NPM has placed professionals in a problematic position. Professionalism and managerialism can be seen as rival accounts for ensuring that the public services will function well (O'Reilly & Reed, 2011). In a professionalist account of the public services, the autonomy of professional expertise is protected from external modes of rationalisation, standardisation and commodification, in order to maintain standards of service provision. Staff ensure quality through self-control, rather than through formal, independent mechanisms that measure quality. According to the managerialist account, this professional independence from management controls is rather cosy and 'self-serving' (Gleeson & Knights, 2006, p.281), even leading to 'moral bankruptcy' (Hood, 1991, p.4), and the only way to ensure quality is through clearly defined responsibilities for each individual member of staff against which they could be judged (ibid.). Under NPM, a sense of independent professionalism in which professionals judge themselves and each other according to their own criteria can be 'identified as a fundamental drag' on the necessary changes of judging staff against management-led measures (O'Reilly & Reed, 2011, p.1088).

Under NPM, the professional needs to be able to demonstrate that they are doing their job sufficiently well against performance criteria. The potential difficulty is that their actual work is not identical with the performance indicators against which they

are judged (Power, 1999). Although the purpose of NPM is to capture what is important in terms of outputs and indicators, so that improvements can be made based on facts, there are serious limitations to this in practice, as the professional is judged, rewarded and sanctioned against terms and measures that could be, or appear to them to be, arbitrary and irrelevant in practice (Power, 2003). This leads to the problem of performativity, in which the professional has to provide accounts of their work that correspond to a managerial understanding of what is important in their work, potentially at the expense of what the professionals themselves consider important (Ball, 2003).

In terms of participation, it is argued that managerial elements such as the tight accountability measures, time pressures and established structures preclude staff from making participation work meaningfully (Pinkney, 2011). Although meaningful participation can be viewed as taking up considerable time and effort on the part of adults involved, organisations that are committed officially to participation may not properly resource it: 'children's rights compete with managerialism' as 'professionals often feel that they are too pressurised to be able to really involve, listen to, take seriously, and build trust with children. Participation takes time, which is a scarce commodity in social welfare settings' (Pinkney, 2011, p.278). Time is just as likely to be scarce within museums and galleries. Their political position as described already means that not only are museums and galleries in a particularly weak position in relation to NPM but so are the professionals who work within them (Tiili, 2014). The policy of linking museums and galleries to the wider social policy agendas of government means that there is an existing potential tension between the perspective of professionals within organisations and the external demands of

government about the purposes of museums and galleries (Gray, 2011). NPM exacerbates this tension as 'performance indicators, directly or indirectly, structure practice and organisational strategy in a way that leaves little professional autonomy as the museum's work becomes preoccupied with the imperative of feeding into local authorities' social policy agendas' (Tlili, 2014, p.16-17).

In this way, participation might be another part of professionals' work-life that they are expected to demonstrate that they are doing, without necessarily possessing the time and resources to make it meaningful. The potential problem as I understand it is that professionals do not have the autonomy to put participation into practice according to their own values as envisaged by Fielding (2004) and Whitty & Wisby (2007) but must conform to the image of participation held by the agendas that the organisation is responding to. As I argued in the previous chapter, there is considerable reason to suppose that there might be a clash of values around participation between an ethical and an instrumental approach. This close accountability of the quality of arts projects can be seen as a way of raising standard but, especially when budgets and resources are limited, there is the real danger that professionals are obliged to improve how they represent their work in the appropriate terms (Ball, 2003), in a way that is detached from the substantive down-to-earth work (Alvesson, 2013; Tlili, 2014); the various terms of accountability to which professionals are answerable can become a 'script' (Tlili, 2008, p.143) 'decoupled from what it is supposed to say something about' (Alvesson, 2013, p.211).

I will now look at a specific process in relation to participation in museums and galleries, in which the professional is placed in a potentially problematic position. In

a recent Arts Council 'Quality Principles' initiative, the professional is to be evaluated against the outcomes of children and young people in participation projects (Lord et al., 2012). As part of the management framework to ensure that participation is put into practice in the right way, the Arts Council 'set itself the challenge of raising the standard' of participative work with children and young people (ibid., p.1). The Quality Principles constitute the framework through which management processes can ensure that work with children and young people, including participation, can be improved; a 'key recommended next step' of the Arts Council commissioned report is that the Arts Council should 'ultimately, help ensure that all arts and cultural providers supporting work by, with and for children and young people are committed to monitoring quality and self-improvement' (ibid, p.4).

The report suggests that it is necessary to make the work of professionals calculable, through working out what constitutes 'quality' and then establishing relevant indicators against which the work can be judged. According to the report, it is accepted that it is important to be able to measure work with young people: it states that 'there is clearly a need for further consideration of the processes and tools available to measure or demonstrate quality' (ibid., p.36). The Quality Principles then appear, amongst other functions, to serve the purpose of forming a basis for measures against which to monitor arts professionals and hold them accountable. Although they might yet be subject to change as the pilot phase continues, in the original report they are as follows:

1. Striving for excellence. Having a clear vision and striving for excellence, through providing high- quality arts work and experiences, to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
2. Being authentic in every aspect of the work, through offering as real and meaningful an artistic experience or product as possible, to help young people develop artistic and aesthetic awareness, understanding and skills.
3. Being exciting and engaging, through providing inspiring and relevant opportunities that stretch, challenge and excite children and young people, to foster both positive dispositions towards the arts, and to enhance their self-esteem, wider aspirations and life and career choices
4. Ensuring a positive, child-centred experience for all children and young people, through having the passion, commitment, knowledge and skills for work involving children and young people, helping them to develop as confident individuals and celebrate their achievements. This would include encouraging individual contributions and valuing diversity
5. Actively involving children and young people. Emphasising the active involvement of the children and young people, through interactive opportunities – hands-on participation, direct collaboration, creative responses, or other interaction – to develop children and young people’s skills and creativity.
6. Providing a sense of personal progression. Taking account of children and young people’s individual needs, through recognising their different starting points, experiences and achievements; enabling them to achieve their potential, and progress on to next steps in their learning and achievement
7. Developing a sense of ownership and belonging. Focusing on children and young people’s sense of ownership and sense of belonging, through encouraging choice, autonomy, decision-making and creative responses, so that young people can make an informed judgement about ‘this is, or could be, or isn’t for me’. (ibid., p.8-15).

In each principle, it is the action of the professional (‘having a clear vision and striving for excellence’) which leads to a certain kind of activity (‘through providing high-quality arts work and experiences’), which in turn leads to a certain outcome for the participants (‘to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people’). In this way, the professional is deemed to have mastery over the

experiences and outcomes of the children and young people. This occurs in its most exaggerated form in principles 4 and 6, '*ensuring* a positive, child-centred experience' and '*providing* a sense of personal progression' (italics added). I would suggest that in practice the arts professional does not have the same mastery over the participants as, for instance, a surgeon would have over their patient, and that in practice the experience of participants is far richer, diverse, complex and ambivalent than the professional could possibly plan for or predict (Craib, 1994). The down-to-earth reality is surely far messier than is allowed in the principles (Alvesson, 2013).

More generally, the participants are always seen as present and keen, almost compliantly offering up their agency at the disposal of the projects. In the Quality Principles, there is no acknowledgment that arts projects and organisations are generally run by adults and take place in spaces new to the children and young people, or that the question whether a project is 'child-centred', 'authentic', truly 'involves' and provides a 'sense of ownership and belonging' in children and young people is far more complex. While a professional can aim to develop these feelings in the participants, the idea that they can be guaranteed by the professional depends on the participant being constructed as compliant to the professional's wishes. To return to the policy questions of the previous chapter, it seems that principles 3 and 4, in particular, correspond to a 'responsibilising' rationale for participation, in that participations will lead to enhanced 'self-esteem, wider aspirations and life and career choices' while 'helping them to develop as confident individuals'. So, as the participant is positioned as benefiting in socially-approved

ways through participation, the professional is potentially tied, to a greater or lesser extent, to a particular responsabilising rationale for participation.

While it would be easy to find fault with any universal set of principles, the problematic aspects of the Quality Principles that have been identified can be connected to the political pressures on the arts; through grandiose terms, the professional is deemed able to produce the right kind of outcomes for the participants on demand, thus ensuring that the arts can produce the necessary social impacts within limited budgets. Thus one of the difficulties with the Quality Principles is precisely that they are so politically correct, that they represent 'a sort of sanitised, polite world that is brave and new' (Craib, 1994, p.178), in which professionals 'strive for excellence' and participants are dutifully inspired, while the far messier and more mundane realities are glossed over. The issue here is that the Quality Principles are *too* grandiose to be of substantive use to understanding the role of professionals; through the use of rhetoric they offer a fictitious account of professional practice, according to which professionals and, by extension, the sector become ever more skilled at describing their practice in ever grander ways that make it appear ambitious, rigorous and efficient (Alvesson, 2013).

The Quality Principles can be seen as the advancement of a system which evaluates the success of participation by reference to the work of the professional, on the assumption that the organisational context is unproblematic. In the Hear By Right framework, the work of the professional is judged alongside the organisational processes that are put in place. This has led to the recent argument that the limitation of participation in practice is caused by the professionals within organisations, as the 'hard' organisational framework for participation is in place

(Fleming, 2013). Such an argument does not, however, take into account the fact that professionals are themselves constrained by organisational processes, and that the organisation both 'ensures' that participation takes place and ensures that it does not, because of the limited resources afforded, the focus on outcomes and the hierarchical structure. It follows that the ever increasing evaluation of participation professionals is taking place within a context in which it is impossible for them to make participation successful (Percy-Smith, 2010). Participation professionals can therefore be regarded as having a particular problem in relation to NPM, insofar as they are judged within a framework that limits how effectively they can do their job.

3.5 Distributed Participation

If under NPM power is retained at the top of the organisation and the autonomy of those within the organisation is constrained by management processes (Power, 1999; Diefenbach, 2009), what does this mean for the power afforded to children and young people as participants? Can the idea that 'children share power and responsibility for decision-making' still hold within hierarchical managerialist environments (Shier, 2001, p.111)? Whilst it could be argued that participants are empowered as consumers at the expense of professionals (Whitty & Wisby, 2007), an alternative view would position participants within the existing organisational hierarchy. The idea of 'distributed' power, borrowed from the practice in education in which headteachers share power amongst staff (Hartley, 2007), may also be relevant to participants. The concept of distributed leadership has 'come to prominence in school management discourse as a means to achieve the participation and empowerment of teachers and to create democratic schools.'

(Hatcher, 2005, p.253)

In the 'official' version of distributed leadership, the headteacher shares leadership over particular areas with members of staff lower down in the hierarchy (Youngs, 2009). However, leadership is shared within an organisational system in which authority lies with the government, which holds the organisation to account against certain measures, and senior management, who have the authority to set out the roles and responsibilities of each member of staff, including what they have leadership over (ibid.). Leadership is shared, but authority is retained by the state and the senior management, with staff 'participating' more but having no more actual power (Hatcher, 2005).

In practice, this means that distributing leadership is not the same as distributing power (ibid.). Distributing leadership does not distribute the power to decide what the organisation should be judged against, what the values of the organisation should be and how the organisation should operate. Rather than having a role in deciding the major questions of the organisation, distributed leadership is a means of encouraging employees to undertake their position within the hierarchy in a more committed way (ibid.). Children and young people's participation can also be seen in terms of distributing power, enabling children and young people to have a say in particular demarcated areas but not to shape how the organisation works in a broader way. In this way, both staff and children and young people within participation are constrained by the hierarchical, managerial nature of organisations; neither group has the power to make participation meaningful, while both are obliged to work within the participation systems that have been set up.

It is important to be clear about the difference between distributed power and

democracy. In participation projects, it could be argued that young people have the capacity 'distributed' to them to have their say in a particular area sanctioned by management and set according to organisational concerns. It is not a democratic approach, however, since they cannot shape how they participate according to their own concerns and desires (Percy-Smith, 2010). In organisation-led participation, participants are subordinated in a structural sense. Percy-Smith goes so far as to assert that participation on the organisation's terms can even entrench the marginalisation of young people rather than counter it (ibid.). A distributed perspective on participation emphasises that the participants are able to have a role in the organisational decision-making, but only in a way that is framed by more powerful people in the organisation.

It has been suggested that there is commonly a disparity between how the organisation views the child or young person and their own self-image. Cremin et al. (2011) studied the pupil as constructed in a whole range of different school policy documents, and found that pupils were seen as 'ideal', 'vulnerable' and 'challenging'. However, when the pupil's experience of the school was investigated through visual methods, the school's constructions of the pupils could not necessarily 'be related to individual pupils in the in the way that the school policy documentation suggests' (ibid., p.601). Thus the organisation has a systematic perspective on children and young people which regards them as, to a greater or lesser extent, more problematic than they see themselves, with the result that sharing power might be considered problematic by the school. According to Freeman et al. (2003), in children and young people's participation, the organisation can favour a particular type of participant: confident, passionate,

active and altruistic (p.65). Czerniawski (2012) interviewed pupils who felt alienated from pupil voice in a school, as well as those who felt more involved. Those who were involved positioned themselves as 'responsible' pupils and other pupils as 'bad'. Some of those who felt alienated from the school did not engage with the school's participation process, with one participant saying that the 'good kids' only 'say what the teacher wants them to say' (ibid, p.135). Those who were involved in pupil voice were those who shared the concerns of the school, as organisation-led pupil voice 'institutionally marginalises those voices that do not "fit" an idealised and conservative view of what a successful school (and pupil) should be' (ibid.).

Moran and Murphy (2012) suggest that pupils hold a certain position within schools and they have identities as pupils that are shaped by the everyday processes of schools. When they participate, when they give their voice, there is then the strong possibility that children are simply confirming these identities. Bragg (2007a) goes further, drawing on evidence from a 'students as researchers' model of participation in a school, and concludes that the participants adopted new identities through the study and came to adopt the perspective of the school. In the study, there were various quotations from pupils that seem to confirm the assertion made by the disaffected pupil interviewed by Czerniawski (2012), who claimed that there are some pupils who say what the school wants them to say. It appears that there is a tendency for the participation of children and young people to re-confirm differences between participants and the organisation as much as it challenges them (Percy-Smith, 2010).

In a case study of a participation project with young men who have been involved in selling sex, Batsleer (2011) found conflicting findings about the potential of such

projects in an arts setting. On the one hand, expressing themselves through the arts afforded participants greater freedom than they would have in formalised participatory settings. However, drawing on the idea of ‘pedagogic codes’ (Arnot & Reay, 2007) she argued that, even where people are able to express themselves, where “‘identity” is not marginalised but provoked’ (Batsleer, 2001, p. 421), it remains the case that only certain aspects of what is said are heard depending on whether it fits in with the organisation’s perspective. Like school settings, out-of-school settings will construct what it means to be a young person in particular ways, and some discourses will be more enabled than others. Any institutional setting places limitations on what can be said, even where there is a specific effort to enable people to express their voice (ibid.).

Another perspective on the distributed concept of participation is that participation can be productive without being democratic. This perspective is based on both the organisation and the participants ‘exploiting the space legitimated by young people’s right to have a say’ (Percy-Smith, 2010, p.108). Thumim (2010) focuses on the implications of museums’ and galleries’ use of voice practices to alleviate the ‘anxiety’ of not having a fixed public role in public life. Rather than seeing this position as the institution dominating the public, she sees it as a kind of partnership:

The question of legitimacy is, however, a two-way street. The prevalence of the discourse of participatory self-representation in museums... suggests that contemporary museums *need* participating publics in order to establish and maintain their legitimacy as public institutions. At the same time publics seek legitimacy (and with it, power in the democratic society) when they accept the invitation to represent themselves in the institutions. (Thumim, 2010, p.301; italics original)

The case study raises the possibility that within a project in which identity is 'provoked', the self-expression of the participants may not actually be the primary purpose for either participants or the organisation. The participants are engaging with the projects for their own reasons related to, and at the same time independent from, the rhetoric of the projects; they are interested in the legitimacy that the project may afford them rather than in the project itself.

In this section, I have looked at a sample of research that has regarded participation as being decoupled, in part, from the idea of sharing power. Such an approach enables us to move beyond the question of whether or not power is being shared with young people, to look at the experience of participants, using new concepts to examine participation as experienced within the organisational context (Tisdall, 2008).

3.6 Discussion

The distributed concept emphasises that children and young people's participation can take place within organisations under NPM without underlying power relations being disrupted. Children and young people are invited to be more active than they would otherwise be, without their fundamental position being altered. This is typical of how participation under NPM has been characterised in this chapter: from a number of different angles, NPM is seen to enable participation to happen, while simultaneously preventing it from being meaningful. This occurs in a number of ways: through frameworks which require organisations to put participation into place, but at the same time require participation to be part of their ongoing processes, which might be off-putting to young people; through NPM requiring museums and galleries to demonstrate the benefits of participation without paying

due attention to how this can be meaningfully done, leading to participation existing within rhetoric rather than reality; through judging the professional against principles derived from successful participation, without giving the professional space to make participation successful; and, finally, through creating hierarchical systems and then sharing power. Thus participation is a web of contradictions that the professional, participant and researcher must navigate in order to make sense of projects (Eliasoph, 2009).

While it is possible that, in certain cases, a more progressive form of participation could be put into practice, despite instrumental participation having greater political legitimacy, it is important to acknowledge the political will required to make ethical, person-centred participation routine, since this would necessitate a change in how the public services would be run (which will be explored further in the next chapter). In practice, it would fundamentally alter the basis on which public services operate, resulting in shared decision-making and the organisation being shaped around the perspectives of children and young people. This would require a shift from a managerialist efficiency perspective to a democratic one (Hatcher, 2005).

The main implication arising out of this chapter for the study of children and young people's participation is the importance of taking into account the organisational context. Policies and processes need to be studied closely, to see exactly what happens. In this research, detailed attention will be paid to the organisational context of participation, focusing on policies and processes, as a means of building on the existing research that has outlined the limitations of the organisational context on participants' experience.

This chapter would suggest that, within children and young people's participation, notions of degrees of empowerment and of 'having a say' are inadequate as a means of understanding experiences of participation in practice. Rather, the experience of young people is caught up in the organisational dynamics through which participation is put into practice. Considering children and young people principally through the extent to which they are marginalised is useful as a means of considering their overall position in society, but within specific participation projects, each participant will have their own perspective and orientation to experience that is far too complex to be reduced to participative terms such as marginalised or empowered (Tisdall, 2008).

It has been suggested that currently 'participation lacks its own distinctive theoretical framework' (Thomas & Percy-Smith, 2010, p.3). Much of the research explored the *complexity* of young people's experience of participation and, although some of the researchers engaged with the question of participants' experience from an identifiable theoretical position (e.g. Bragg, 2007a; Batsleer, 2011), this was less evident in others (e.g. Freeman et al., 2003; Czerniawski, 2012). While all the research, theoretical or not, has been useful in identifying some of the problematic experiences of participation, I would suggest that one way of deepening our understanding of participation would be to use and develop theoretical approaches that have been useful in understanding people's experience in related areas. This will be considered in the next chapter.

A further issue is to explore the position of the professional in participation within new public management. It is important that research, while not afraid of being critical of the professional, takes account of the difficult position that the

professional is in. Research should not take the 'simplistic' position of criticising professionals as being conservative, if they have reservations about participation (Bragg, 2007b, p.506), or the equally simplistic position of judging professionals against participation best practice that makes sense on paper but not in practice. It is important to understand how professionals resolve the tensions between the organisational requirements for participation to take place in a certain way, on the one hand, and for participation to be meaningful and to work as the professional would want it to, on the other (Ball, 2003). Attention will be paid to this tension in the research.

Chapter 4: The Personal Context

Having looked at the policy and organisational context of participation, in this chapter I will examine the personal context of participation. By personal context, I mean the orientation to experience that a person brings with them when they come to the project and how this affects their experience of the project (Archer, 2003). The personal context is far harder to ascertain than the policy and organisational context, and far harder than some 'universal' ideas of how we experience (ibid., p.154). Exploration of the personal context cannot provide a comprehensive overview of how people experience. Instead, on the basis of an appropriate approximate way of understanding how people experience, it can establish links between some of what is known about the limitations of participation projects covered in the previous chapter and theories of people's identity (Alvesson et al., 2008a). The aim is to approach the case study projects with an interesting and appropriate standpoint from which to view people's experience.

Before this, I will explore whether an arts education based approach to understanding experience will be useful in understanding the personal context (Pringle, 2009a). While there have been calls for the greater involvement of the public in decision making within arts organisations in particular, such involvement has been the result of wider government policy rather than arts-specific (Jancovich, 2011). While children and young people's participation is common within the arts (Rosso, 2010), there is no evidence to suggest, as far as I am aware, that sharing decision-making with children and young people is more common within arts organisations than in the wider public sector. However, it has been suggested that arts organisations are in a more advantageous position than other public service

organisations to make participation meaningful, since 'arts-based creative approaches are a means of challenging more rationalist, instrumentalist versions of voice and participation' (Batsleer, 2011, p.430). Batsleer suggests that working within the arts can mean that each participation project is more 'one-off', and less 'routinised and banal' (ibid.). Furthermore, using the arts as a medium of arts practice and arts education practice might bring together the participation activities and the lifeworld of the children and young people, which are too often kept apart within participation activities that have little meaning to the participants (Percy-Smith, 2006).

In this chapter I will therefore explore this possibility that an arts-based approach could make participation more meaningful to children and young people. I will do this by exploring the 'constructivist' or participative models of experience within museums and galleries (Pringle, 2006). The models were not necessarily created with participation, as 'having a say', in mind, but for the purpose of understanding and improving arts education activities. However, they do emphasise the activeness of the individual and they aim for participants to be able to create meaning for themselves (ibid.), so that they can be seen to complement the ethical purposes of participation. Having outlined the possibility that the constructivist models could lead to meaningful participation, I will then look at critiques of this idea, which are based on the idea that constructivism offers a limited understanding of human experience. Finally, I will explore whether there are additional concepts that may be helpful for understanding participation (Tisdall, 2008), and in particular whether a reflexive understanding of identity might offer a

more suitable basis for understanding children and young people's experience of participation.

4.1 The Promise of Constructivism

To return to the intellectual background of the ethical purpose of participation, explored in Chapter 2, the drive towards children and young people's participation came not only from the study of childhood but also the study of particular organisations, such as museums and galleries. The new museology, like the new sociology of childhood, is a social constructionist 'reflexive' way of understanding museums that has developed since the 1970s (Ross, 2004). It became popular within academia and to some extent within the museum and gallery sector in the 1990s, following the publication of the 'New Museology' (Vergo, 1989). It involved 'a shift to seeing the museum and the meaning of its contents not as fixed and bounded, but as contextual and contingent' (Macdonald, 2011, p.3). The new museology approach encompassed asking open questions about what constitutes an object in a museum, what constitutes a museum and, most importantly for the purposes of this study, what the relationship between the museum and the audience should be (Macdonald, 2011). In this way, it moved the focus of museum studies from a technical focus to a more sociologically-minded one (Vergo, 1989).

The 'new museology' argued that the experience of the visitor in museums and galleries is not natural or accidental, but the result of museums being organised in such a way as to 'discipline' the public (Bennett, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Starn, 2005). Just as a child does not have control over their environment, so in a more subtle way a visitor, historically, lacks control over their experience in a museum. Instead, the museum has been organised to have control over the

experience of the visitor. This can include cues, from the other visitors and from the architecture and display of the museum, to behave in a certain way; museums are seen as 'an exemplary space in which the rough and raucous might learn to civilise themselves by modelling their conduct on the middle-class codes of behaviour to which museum attendance would expose them' (Bennett, 1995, p.28). Another way that the visitor's agency is not present in the museum is in the way that knowledge is organised and the tacit model for what the visitor learns in the course of a visit. For Hooper-Greenhill, a central tenet of the 'modernist' museum is that the curator's view of the world is presented as the truth, and there is no space for the visitor's own meanings to emerge; 'the voice of the visitor is not heard' (2000, p.151). The way that objects are displayed in the museum, according to the classifying system of the curator, means that the visitor is 'excluded': visual culture is a technology of power. This power can be used to further democratic possibilities, or it can be used to uphold exclusionary values' (ibid., p.162). For Hooper-Greenhill, while the particular way in which museums and galleries have displayed exhibitions and the use of a learning model in which knowledge is 'transmitted' from the museum to the visitor is exclusionary, it can be changed: 'Museums have begun to re-evaluate their social roles, and to reposition themselves in relation to their audiences. New forms of museum pedagogy are demanded...the acceptance that culture has political effects and can be either empowering or inhibiting' (ibid., p.150). From this perspective, the museum must become postmodern, focusing on enabling the agency of the visitor to be at the heart of how the museum is organised, rather than the agency of the curator; this includes the audience being able to take an active role in the display themselves.

In museums and galleries, this ethical desire to enable the visitor to be active rather than passive led to the adoption of a constructivist perspective on understanding people's experience (ibid.); broadly understood, this implies that participants will find an activity or project meaningful if they have the space to make meaning for themselves rather than have meaning imposed upon them (ibid.). Constructivism concerns the way that people understand the world, and insists on a radical break between reality as it is and our representation of reality (von Glasersfeld, 1995). As a theory of learning, it can be seen as a philosophy based on participation and activeness, in which the individual creates meaning for themselves (Hein, 1995); it can be seen as a corrective of the old-fashioned non-participative transmission model, that had no role for an active learner, since the teacher explains, and the student passively receives, 'inert' knowledge (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995).

The appeal of constructivism is obvious to all those in positions of power who are wary of imposing their power on others: 'what we intend to teach is not the central concern in this theory; rather the focus is on what people learn, that is on what meaning they make out of whatever it is that we do and exhibit...our intentions are irrelevant!' (Hein, 1995, p.190). What is being expressed here is the post-modern view that the museum no longer has the authority to impose on people an experience (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). Instead, galleries should allow the audience to make the experience that is meaningful to them. Constructivism is adopted in the interests of openness, which is important because the galleries had become exclusive to a certain white upper middle-class group, and also of engagement:

gallery education had hitherto revolved around curators' version of knowledge being passed on to the passive audience (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

Co-constructivism, which is concerned with the process of how people actively making meaning in a group, strongly emphasises the activeness of the young person:

[Artist educators] locate learners as active makers of meaning, rather than passive recipients of so called 'objective' knowledge, and encourage them to embark on a process of enquiry. Experiential learning, with an emphasis on giving participants the opportunity to interact directly with the artwork, experiment, take risks and play, within a supportive environment, is foregrounded. Hence participants engage primarily through discussion and the exchanging of ideas and experiences. (Pringle, 2009a, p.176)

Central importance is attached to not using the potentially dominating position, in relation to the students, of being the artist educator. The expertise of the artist educator is used as a resource for the young people to make their own meaning, rather than as a basis for the artist educator to communicate what meanings the young people should be attaching to the artwork or activity. In this way, 'artists tended to define themselves in opposition to teachers' (Pringle, 2009b, n.p.). The task of the gallery staff is not primarily instructive but instead enables young people 'to have a deep and distinctive experience of specific artworks' (Burnham and Kai-Kee, 2005, p.67). The philosophy of artist-educators is entirely congruent with social constructionist arguments for participation. Both conceptualise young people as by nature active, and regard the challenge for the organisation and for the staff as being to enable young people to be active.

Co-constructivism is influential within museums and galleries in a number of different ways. First, it comes from practitioners themselves. The idea that the

individual should create meaning for themselves, within a community of learners, is shared by many artist-educators who work with children and young people (Pringle, 2009a, 2009b). Not all artist-educators hold rigidly to constructivist philosophy, but their values and ways of working are consistent with the position of respecting the participants' own experience and the artist-educators would not want to impose their own position on those they work with (ibid.).

The second way in which co-constructivism is influential is through the frameworks used by museums, galleries and other interested organisations to understand, measure and demonstrate participants' experience (Pringle, 2006). In these frameworks, such as the previously-discussed Arts Council Quality Principles, the practitioner is expected to hold to the principle that participants should be able to shape their experience for themselves; positive outcomes for the participants are linked to their freedom to make meaning for themselves. In this way, co-constructivism is supported at an institutional level, where it is seen as central to being a successful practitioner in the following kinds of projects that cover those that I will be researching:

- Artist-led workshop sessions involving practical activities in the gallery;
- Outreach projects taking place within the gallery and/or schools and community settings (Pringle, 2006, p.13).

From the perspective of participation, the appeal of co-constructivism is clear: it aims to enable the process of participation to focus on the agency of the participants within a collaborative environment, rather than incorporating participants within dry and alienating formal organisational processes (Freeman et al., 2003). co-constructivism can be seen as creating a meaningful 'mode' of participation in similar terms to Fielding's person-centred basis for participation

(2004, 2006). Having emerged from the same social constructionist intellectual routes as participation, it offers a way of moving beyond, or at least complementing, the Hear By Right-type framework that focuses on organisational processes. It is a model for working with an individual within an organisation with awareness of the potential dominance of the institution over the individual, and of the importance of enabling the individual to make meaning and express themselves on their own terms (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Co-constructivism can therefore be a possible means of participation evolving around the lifeworld of the participant, rather than the participant revolving around the organisation.

It has been suggested that co-constructivism has an appeal, as a potential basis on which to aim for meaningful participation within museums and galleries. In this section, however, it will be argued that the appeal of co-constructivism rests in part on constructing an imaginary person that may not have very much basis in reality (Craib, 1994; 1998). From this perspective, the appeal of co-constructivism is that on a theoretical and a practical level it offers a way of answering the museum and gallery's political problems, rather than offering a realistic account of how people actually experience museums and galleries.

A co-constructivist understanding adopts, explicitly or implicitly, particular positions about who a person is and how a person experiences the world (Alvesson, 2010). It emphasises the person's role in shaping themselves, and consequently attributes great importance to the agent's ability to express agency. For a young person, being active in this sense means gaining greater power to control one's own life and environment, rather than being the passive object of adults:

Identity is central to the desire to be a knowing subject, in control of meaning. Identity, meaning and self-determination are key issues in the production of a powerful sense of an active self. A person is active when what she says and does stems from her own beliefs and convictions; she is reactive when she acts or chooses what to do on the basis of what others want her to say and do. In being active, actions are generated from within; in being reactive, actions are a response to something outside you. Only by being active are you self-determining rather than passive, an independent agent. (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007, p.179)

Within a co-constructivist understanding of identity, the locus of control is very much within people, rather than within continuous negotiations through relationships with figures and objects that are outside of them (Lee, 1998). This implies that people have 'possession' of who they are and how they experience and are able (in the right conditions) to exert mastery over themselves and their experience (Craib, 1994). This view of agency may be regarded as over-simplified, resulting from the attempt to solve problems that are fundamentally political through sociological theory (Lee, 1998; Craib, 1998). Such a criticism can apply not only to the meaning-making models of experience, but also to ideas that underpin them, such as the new sociology of childhood. As has been explained, the new sociology of childhood was based on the idea that sociological theory, in common with society more widely, had marginalised children through imposing adult-orientated frames of reference that saw children as not yet fully human, 'becomings' rather than 'beings' (Lee, 1998). According to Lee, the theoretical position of the new sociology of childhood that 'causal and/or interpretative agency rests within children as their property and possession' (ibid., p.459) was a response to this political problem of the marginalisation of children, and it did not necessarily reflect an adequate understanding of the human being in reality. In

other words, as children's agency had been denied by society, it was to be privileged in sociological theory. By the same token, because the agency of visitors had been previously marginalised through the elitist nature of museums and the arts more generally, today in the new museology the visitor's agency is at the heart of how museums are theorised (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

The use of theories of people's identity to solve political problems is problematic (Craib, 1998; Lee, 1998). The political issue as regards museums and young people is concerned with the marginalisation of the individual, and by way of response constructivism places agency within the individual and create practices through which the individual can be central, rather than marginalised (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). The danger is that the theory is politically strong but conceptually weak, in that it serves practical immediate demands (improving marginalisation) but cannot adequately account for what actually happens (in this research, how young people experience in museum and gallery participative projects). It could be argued that basing an understanding of people's experience on larger abstract ideas about society is problematic, because 'a social theory which moulds its conception of the actor around the demands of the more abstract levels of theory will always be inadequate and open to criticisms of irrelevance and/or ignoring significant dimensions of the social world' (Craib, 1998, p.74). Although it 'solves' socio-political problems, by allowing more account to be taken of the agency of the young person, the theory of identity and experience is somewhat thin, and too neat (Bendle, 2002; Craib, 1994, 1998). When meaning-making is understood as a basis for understanding people's actual experience, it can lead to a 'fictional' idea of people's experience (Craib, 1998, p. 74). It suffers from 'abstracted under-

socialisation' (Cleaver, 2004, p.272), with insufficient understanding of how agency exists within the wider world and of the fact that it cannot be considered independently of the world.

There is no doubt that placing the authority to shape an experience within the individual is politically progressive, in that it privileges the participant over the organisation. However, as has already been argued, in reality the organisation may well shape the participant's experience in powerful ways. Further, as discussed in Chapter 2, from a responsabilisation perspective placing the emphasis on the individual's agency can be a means of control as well as liberation. Arguably, a co-constructivist model of the person does not share the problematic aspects of constructivism, since co-constructivism emphasises how meaning is made in collaboration with others (Pringle, 2006). However, in co-constructivism as in constructivism, 'experience... is driven by the learner's intentions and choices' (ibid., p.17), which implies that people's experience flows from activeness in the world and freedom to make use of their capacity to make meaning (whether it be in collaboration with others or not).

It is clear that, when a participation project is run along co-constructivist principles, it is easier to interpret participants' experiences as being meaningful. There is a danger, however, that the very real problems relating to the purpose, context and process of participation, which have already been discussed, can be theorised out of existence without being resolved. Therefore Tisdall (2008) has argued that it may be necessary, in order to understand the problematic aspects of participation, to move beyond participative terms. From this perspective, a co-constructivist approach to putting into practice and interpreting the projects may be less of a help

and more of a hindrance, rendering the tensions between the participants and project harder to discern.

4.2 Identity

Up to now, I have focused primarily on the gap between the ethical promise of participation and participation in practice. I have argued that the political legitimacy of participation rests more on an instrumental purpose of participation, and that meaningful participation within public service organisations is problematic because of the prevailing managerial environment. I have also looked at the extensive arguments that, at present, the lifeworld of the child or young person is commonly not recognised within participation projects. From a 'post-honeymoon' perspective, I would suggest that it may be time to move beyond suggestions for improving participation and to accept that, for the time being, participation projects are likely to involve children and young people in projects without enabling them to engage on their own terms. Once this is acknowledged, an important question then arises: What would an approach that was interested in the experience of participants of flawed participation projects look like?

In this section, I will outline an approach to understanding people's experience of problematic participation projects through the concept of identity. Identity is a concept through which to understand the individual, on the basis that agency cannot be separated from structure, or the individual from the world (Alvesson, 2010). Identity can be viewed as 'the conception of the self reflexively and discursively understood' (Kuhn, quoted in Alvesson, 2010, p.193). According to Alvesson (*ibid.*), identity researchers share two key ideas. First, there is the question of agency and structure: whilst the individual constructs their own identity,

in making sense of themselves and their lives they are reliant on the wider world. The world contains ideas about what it means to be a person that can be used as a resource to draw upon. However, parts of the world, such as schools, parents and employers, are both powerful and interested in 'who' you are; they therefore constitute forces that the individual cannot simply disregard, without – at least potentially - facing significant consequences (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Smith, 2011).

According to the second of Alvesson's key ideas identity is, on the one hand, fixed and stable and, on the other, fluid and adaptable (2010). As to whether identity is fixed or fluid, a postmodern position would be that we are blank slates, that we can adapt ourselves to any situation and endlessly recreate ourselves however we want (Craib, 1998, pp. 6-7). A more modernist position is that, for our existence to be meaningful, we are dependent on long-term relationships with people and institutions through which we can make sense of ourselves (Craib, 1994). From this perspective, the postmodern position that our personal and working relationships are ephemeral has a negative effect, as it undermines our meaningful ties with the people and institutions in our lives (Sennett, 1998; Bauman, 2000).

Identity can serve as a 'shift in perspective that illuminates novel angles and rejuvenates momentum' (Alvesson et al., 2008a, p.6) in studying participation through new concepts outwith the field of participation, as called for by Tisdall (2008). There have been extensive descriptions of participation projects which have identified the fact that the voice of the children and young people is engaged with only partially, and on the terms of the organisation rather than the participant. However, it is worth noting that the priority of participation research has been to

detail the limitations of participation processes rather than to explore in-depth the experience of the children and young people involved (cf. Freeman et al., 2003, Percy-Smith, 2006; Eliasoph, 2009; Batsleer, 2011; Cremin et al., 2011; Czerniawski, 2012; Moran & Murphy, 2012; Wyness, 2006).

The concept of identity is useful here, in linking an individual's experience to what is happening on an organisational level:

To understand human (organisational) experience...: Here, the concept of identity presents opportunities to enrich the study of organisations with in-depth, often empathetic insights and descriptions that can stimulate and facilitate people's reflections on who they are and what they do. (Alvesson et al., 2008a, p.17, emphasis original)

At the same time, using an identity approach means that the focus on the flawed participation processes can be maintained. Identity research is interested in understanding the experience of the individual in context, and it can be used to connect an individual's experience with wider processes (Alvesson et al., 2008a), in this case participation in museums and galleries. A further purpose of identity research is then:

To reveal problems associated with cultural and political irrationalities. For those taking a critical or emancipatory interest, focusing on issues of identity provides a means by which the 'darker' aspects of contemporary organisational life might be revealed and questioned. (ibid., p.17, emphasis original)

Identity research facilitates an exploration of people's experience, as important in its own right, and in terms of how people relate to organisational activities such as participation. It shifts the primary focus from the process of participation to the experience of participants (without, however, losing sight of flaws in the process).

The appeal of using identity is therefore that it provides a suitably flexible concept for understanding participation, sensitive to all the various relevant aspects of understanding people's experience of participation.

For the sake of clarity, it is worth setting out ways in which the concept of identity can be useful for investigating participation projects and people's experience of them (Alvesson, 2010). First, using identity shifts the focal point for understanding experience away from the processes of a participation project towards the meanings that young people attach to the project. This is because identity is not particularly interested in what participants are *doing*, because each person will attach meaning to their experience in their own way (Alvesson et al., 2008a). Secondly, by contextualising people's experience and investigating ways in which it is problematic, problematic aspects of the project can be revealed (ibid.). Thirdly, at the same time as being sensitive to the perspective of the individual, identity research does not lose sight of the fact that people are within an organisational context, which contributes to shaping their experience in important ways (Alvesson, 2010).

In this research all these ways of employing identity will help to illuminate the experience of young people as participants. I will now set out a particular theoretical position on identity that I will adopt, showing how it will help to understand young people's experience of participation projects in each of the three ways outlined above.

4.2.1 Attending to the Meanings of Participants

It is important in understanding people's experience of the projects to search for a 'deeper understanding of agency and the actor, of personality and the internal dynamic of the psyche' (Craib, 1998, p.74). Margaret Archer's thinking around identity provides a particularly useful way of focusing on the individual, in terms of their experience of meaning-making voice projects, and also questioning what it means to be active. Archer's work (2000, 2003, 2012) is relevant to research on people's experience of participation for three reasons. First, she shares with the co-constructivists an interest in meaning-making, although she adopts a very different approach to it. Secondly, she places meaning-making in its personal and social context, so offering a way of understanding participation in practice, with all the potential limiting factors discussed in the previous chapter. Finally, because she is interested in the subjective orientation of individuals, she offers a way of understanding participation from the perspective of participants rather than the organisation.

Archer has a particular focus on understanding meaning-making within context (2003). While she accepts that, in reality, agency and structure are indivisible, she argues that at an analytical level they can be differentiated, so that the effect of an individual's agency on their experience can be considered. She defends the importance of considering the agency of individuals in the following way:

- i. Structural and cultural properties *objectively* shape the situations that agents confront involuntarily, and inter alia possess generative powers of constraint and enablement in relation to
- ii. Subjects' own constellations of concerns, as *subjectively defined*...

- iii. Courses of action are produced through the reflexive deliberations of subjects who *subjectively* determine their practical projects in relation to their *objective* circumstances. (Archer, 2007, p.28)

Archer (2003) privileges the subjective way in which people understand themselves and their relationship to the world over the objective circumstances that they find themselves in. She emphasises the fact that people can experience the same circumstance in very different ways (2003, 2012) and that people's experience is constituted ultimately by themselves and is subjective and idiosyncratic; it cannot be reduced to their circumstances, from which she detaches the individual through the objective/subjective division. This is a useful counterpoint to the participative idea that children and young people find participation meaningful either because it offers their otherwise marginalised situation, as conceptualised within the new sociology of childhood (Tisdall, 2008), or because of the nature of the way that people experience the world, as with constructivism (Hein, 1995). From a reflexive perspective, people's experience of a participation project depends on how they understand the circumstances of the project and relate to it.

Archer defends both the 'inner psychological complexity' of people (Archer, 2000, p.94) and equally the complexity of being a person in the world (Archer, 2003). As people are perpetually conscious of who they are and what they are doing, they not only act in the world but also reflect on how they are acting and whether they want to continue to act in this way. For Archer, this sets up an endless 'internal conversation', in which people review themselves as a 'social object' (ibid., p.124). This 'internal conversation' is complex because people are a social object in

various different ways, as both private/public and as an individual/part of a collective: they are a private individual who reflects; they are a public individual who acts on the world; they are part of a public collective that acts on the world; and, as part of a public collective, they are an object that is perceived by others. Each aspect of their being in the world forms part of their ongoing 'internal conversation', and as people progress through a project, or through life, each aspect can lead to a change in their orientation and experience (ibid, p.123-129).

Although the complex picture which Archer paints has been summarised in a few lines, it becomes clearer when applied to a particular circumstance such as a participation project. Once a person has decided to join a participation project, they then consider how they want to act as an individual in it; what it means to them to be part of the project, how they want to be seen as acting, and then they re-form their idea of the project and reaffirm, or adapt, their continued commitment to the group. In this process, one area of reflection can influence others, so that their continued commitment to the group will depend in part on how they think they are seen by others, whether they regard the collective purpose of the group as important, whether they have a significant role in the group, and so on. As they change their attitudes to some aspects of the group changes (e.g. how they are seen), this might change how they want to act as an individual (e.g. what they do).

Although people's 'internal conversation' and how it influences how people act are complex, Archer argues that in practice it is possible to identify patterns in how different people orientate themselves to the world (Archer, 2003). On the basis of in-depth interviews about people's lives, she drew up a provisional set of different types, in terms of how people understand themselves and their experience. Some

people are more invested in the future (or perhaps elsewhere) than in the present time and place, so in a sense they are never, or are not commonly, fully present because they do not recognise present circumstances as their true ones (ibid., pp. 255-297). There are also those who are dependent on others to complete their understanding of the world, rather than having their own individual sense of themselves; these people thrive on dialogue (ibid., pp. 167-209). Others are largely unable to make sense of themselves and their place in the world, because their footing is too fragile and insecure (ibid., pp. 298-341). Finally, there are those who have a strong sense that the present time and place are fully responsive to them, they have a sense of mastery and thrive on making their mark (ibid., pp. 210-254). This implies that it is important to attend to the range of ways in which a person may experience a participation project, according to their orientation to the world.

From an identity perspective, a participation project is an objective circumstance in which people act while deliberating, on various levels, how they perceive the project and want to act in it. This perspective privileges psychological complexity and differences between people as the central focus of studying people's experience of participation. In so far as it differs radically from perspectives that focus on ways in which the project enables meaningful participation, it has the potential to make a significant contribution to research on participation.

4.2.2 Attending to the Problematic Aspects of Participation

The main contribution to understanding problematic aspects of participation from the perspective of identity is made by the work of Craib, touched on above, implying that participation projects are based on an overly thin and positive idea of the person (1994, 1998). Craib identifies that there are feelings inherent to life that

are difficult but important, such as regret, shame, embarrassment and so on, that he characterises as a group 'disappointment' (1994, p.1). Focusing in particular on the influence of psychotherapeutic thought, he argues that in contemporary society we try to arrange life so that we have positive emotions and a sense of 'meaning' while living without 'disappointment', and as a consequence we risk having a diminished and partial existence. By way of example, he refers to a certain programmatic strand of psychotherapy, in which it appears possible to control the experience of mourning, for instance, by following particular steps or adopting a particular approach, so that eventually the client is not unduly affected by grief in day-to-day life (ibid., pp.12-33). Within an organisational setting and armed with the proper expertise, such a psychotherapeutic approach seems able to direct experience, such that it is meaningful and the disappointments of life can be massaged away. This gives rise to an illusion that we can 'create ourselves' (ibid., p.i), that we are masters of our experience and our lives. This means that there is little room for the experience of disappointment, for thinking through the 'conflict – internal and external' that 'marks us off as human' (ibid., p.39), including regrets and disappointments.

The potential implications of Craib's ideas for voice, gallery and museum projects seem to be clear. Craib would be sceptical that children and young people's lifeworld could be present within short-term projects. For Craib (1994, pp.158-167), our agency can never be reduced to immediate statements, which are more likely to represent a 'false self', because it is a coherent and simple representation of a self that is by nature complex and ambivalent. From his perspective (1994, 1998), being active in a museum or gallery is no less, and may even be more, alienating

than being passive in one, because having space to think through all the various meanings that can be attached to any situation requires us to keep a distance between ourselves and the world. Consequently, Craib would not only be critical of the various limited participation projects as they currently exist, but might also be sceptical of the *potential* of participation projects (contra Hill et al., 2004; Cockburn, 2005; Percy-Smith, 2006; Lansdown, 2010).

This is because for Craib, it is almost oxymoronic to organise activities for positive meaningful experiences for the young people, because human activities are almost always bound up, to a greater or lesser extent, with a certain disappointment. Whilst projects are intended to offer young people opportunities of making meaning and expressing their voice, there will also be unintended aspects, giving rise to meaninglessness and difficult emotions. This is not necessarily because of any failure of the projects, but simply because we live in the real world rather than utopia. What is important, according to Craib, is not whether the project can be 'transformative' for participants (Cockburn, 2005; Fielding, 2006) but whether it reduces the scope of how people are able to understand their experience in relation to themselves and their position in the project. His position on identity, then, is to keep, analytically, that which is meaningful from being tightly coupled with organised practices such as participation.

4.2.3 Attending to the Organisational Context

In the previous chapter, I discussed the problem that, while participation in the public services aspires to offer young people the chance to have their say, in practice the process and topics are shaped by the organisation and there may well not be the space for young people to have a say on their own terms. I now want to

explore some of the implications that this has for the participants' experience. I propose to examine theories that have been developed in studying the experience of employees in organisations, since there are similarities between the dynamic of employees' experience and that of participants. In both cases, experience is shaped by people being incorporated into the processes of the organisation (Kunda, 1992; Freeman et al., 2003), and the organisation attempts to shape the identity of the individual, so that they are a more appropriate individual (Bragg, 2007a; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

One particular problem that employees have faced is that there have been various forms of 'corporate culture' (Willmott, 1993), ways of doing things in organisations that have emphasised the freedom of employees to 'be themselves', while at the same time expecting them to conform to the perspective of the company (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009). Companies have not only expected employees to do their job in a satisfactory way, according to the rules, but also attempted to make people feel that they 'belong' at work, so that working hard becomes meaningful to them, rather than a chore (Etzioni, 1964; Willmott, 1993; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). However, such attempts to make people feel that they belong and that they can 'be themselves' operate alongside traditional hierarchical rule-based controls (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2004). This can be summarised as a 'fun and surveillance' approach (Kinnie et al., 2000), or to put it another way, there is a 'simultaneous affirmation and negation of the conditions of autonomy' (Willmott, 1993, p.526). This dual process can be regarded as applying to participation projects, set up so that young people can have a say while simultaneously controlling what can be

talked about and what can be said (Freeman et al., 2003; Bragg, 2007a; Percy-Smith, 2010).

The experience of being at the centre of this process has been examined through the lens of 'identity regulation', which in the context of work identifies 'the self-positioning of employees within managerially inspired discourses about work and organisation with which they may become more or less identified and committed' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p.620). This idea can be applied by analogy to a participation project, whereby the organisation offers the young person the identity of being a 'participant', a person who has the opportunity to 'have their say'. Within the discourse of participation, this opportunity would be seen as meaningful for the young people, and something they could identify with (Bragg, 2007a). However, this does not mean that they will necessarily adopt the identity enabled or imposed by the organisation. For instance, research has pointed to tensions between some participants, who saw their project as an opportunity for themselves, and the 'ideal' participant – selfless and civically minded – as envisaged by the organisation's staff (Freeman et al., 2003). As Eliasoph (2009) suggests, the identity of being a participant or a 'volunteer' is experienced quite differently by different people, and for some the organisationally demanded identity might prove problematic (Bragg, 2007a), for example if it is seen as having to be unacceptably compliant (Czerniawski, 2012).

A relevant and important aspect of identity construction in organisations is identified by Watson (2008), who argues that it is necessary to form an identity at work that fits in with the demands and enablements of organisational life, but is also consonant with a sense of one's self outside work. So, the identity of a

participant who has a lot to contribute to a group might be easier for some young people to adopt than others. Some might struggle to construct a sense of themselves as participants, while maintaining a sense of themselves as themselves. They may not naturally behave in the way that being a participant requires, for example, if they are not an 'autonomous reflexive', someone who likes to engage with the world through confidently shaping it (Archer, 2003). If they engage with the world through not having a say, then the opportunity to have a say might well be experienced as a threat to their identity.

Being a 'participant' can be seen as arising naturally from taking part in a project, or it can be seen as an identity that participants either identify with, or reject (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). From this perspective, an important aspect of being active in an organisation is not to 'have a say', but to construct and maintain an identity. This sense of being 'active' can be expressed in not wanting to have a say, so as to maintain a 'cynical distance' from the project (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). The idea of being a 'participant' could then become alienating, requiring young people to communicate thoughts and feelings that they do not feel. This could become a particular type of self-alienation, in which young people's opinion of themselves goes down as they see themselves going through the motions of that which they deplore (Kunda, 1992). However, participation could work *through* this kind of cynicism (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). From the perspective of identity, therefore, the project as a process and the experience of the participants are decoupled, so that the project can be superficially meaningful with engaged participants, whilst beneath the surface the *actual, subjective* experience of the participants is far less involved than appears.

The purpose of this section has been to outline how taking identity seriously offers a number of different ways of understanding young people's experience as participants. I have suggested that the experience of participation might be widely varied between participants, and participation could lead to problematic experiences, which might even threaten a person's self-image. Consequently, in this research it is important to study the experiences of participants as more than just a way of understanding participation in practice and the potential for improvement. Since problematic participative projects and activities, exist in various forms in contemporary life, it is important to develop theories and ideas for understanding the experience of participants.

From an identity perspective, the sense in which participants are deemed to be 'active' is quite distinct from how they are seen within constructivist models of learning in the arts. In a constructivist sense, 'active' means being enabled to make meaning out of an activity as a result of freely engaging with it; activeness is equated with engaging with the current activity (Hein, 1995). From an identity perspective, however, a person builds up a sense of who they are and what is important to them over time, engaging with the world on their own terms rather than indiscriminately. Activeness is equated with 'struggling', engaging with the world strategically in response to perceived threats to one's self as well as opportunities (Alvesson, 2010). According to the 'struggler' view of identity, non-ideal experiences in an organisation are just another part of life, representing challenges from which people are able to draw positives:

The view of the identity constructor relates to more active efforts of oneself fighting through a jungle of contradictions and messiness in the pursuit of a sense of self. Insecurity and anxiety may be part of

the picture, but not necessarily the defining features and not necessarily the qualities that, at the end of the day, remain. Dealing with insecurity is, according to the struggle view, not an uphill battle all the time. (ibid, p.8)

This understanding of experience within organisations offers an alternative view of what it means to be active in the project, which involves maintaining a positive and secure sense of self even where organisational life is potentially a threat to one's self. In this chapter, young people's experience will be analysed separately from the project itself (Archer, 2003). This is important because their experience does not rely upon the project being implemented in an ideal way, since they are regarded as having the capacity to make their own experience out of the project, however compromised and flawed it may be.

4.3 Discussion

From the perspective of identity, the importance attributed to different modes of participation projects is problematised (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). The political focus on whether or not participation enables children to exercise their UNCRC rights and shape their environment on their own terms is put to one side, in favour of understanding the experience of the individual participant. The experience of a project is viewed as being dependent both on what happens in the project and on the individual's orientation to the project, in the context of the world. From the perspective of identity, participation is a particular circumstance about which people make up their own mind, rather than its being meaningful to everyone. Consequently, even a 'perfect' participation project might be experienced as problematic. This does not, however, imply that the nature of the participation

project does not matter: some projects will, of course, be more conducive to positive experiences for children and young people than others.

Having already explored the various unintended and unexpected ways that children and young people have experienced participation, in this chapter I have sought to contribute to the theoretical base for understanding participation in practice. If there is a consensus that children and young people's experience is not ideal, it becomes important to understand exactly how participation is experienced. Part of a 'post-honeymoon' approach to participation should be an openness to the various positive, ambivalent and negative ways in which participation is experienced. I have therefore suggested that a contextualised understanding of the person based on identity, sensitive to participants' experience of participation in practice, may be more useful than a participative, constructivist understanding people's experience of participation.

Chapter 5: Research Methods

In this chapter, I will set out how I will answer the research questions through two qualitative case-studies of participation projects with young people. It will be a multi-method approach, using discourse analysis, participant-observation and interviews to study participation projects and participants' experience of them from a number of different angles.

5.1 Restatement of Research Questions

In the literature review, I argued that the reality of children and young people's participation has not in a sustained and widespread way lived up to its radical, ethical promise of countering the marginalisation of children and that there are underlying reasons for this which means that hope transformation of participation within the current system seems optimistic. My approach up to this point has been based on two principles for understanding this disparity between the theoretical promise and disappointing reality. First, the whole way of organising children and young people's participation should be questioned, rather than focusing on incremental improvements to the existing system (Percy-Smith, 2006). Secondly, in order to understand the reality of participation in practice, it is necessary to draw on concepts outwith the theoretical field of participation (Tisdall, 2008). Based on the first principle, the overarching purpose of the literature review has been to contextualise the participation of children and young people, focusing on three levels: the policy, the organisational, and the personal. Based on the second principle, I understood the context of participation through two lenses not commonly employed, at least in the depth that I employed them, in the field of participation. The first was to consider in depth how the managerial aspect of NPM

within public service organisations may not lend itself to meaningful participation in a variety of ways. The second was to look at the person through the concept of identity; I argued that, from an identity perspective, there is not a direct connection between the qualities of the participation project and the experience of children and young people.

The research aim was to reconstruct the understanding of the participation and *experiences* of participation, on the basis that participation is a fundamentally problematic undertaking. With this in mind, and in the light of the literature review, I have formulated three research questions, each relating to understanding participation in context. The first research question is: *How were the participation projects framed by the relevant organisations?* This question relates in particular to the discussions in Chapters 2 and 3. In Chapter 2, I argued that within the intellectual and policy context of participation there are different ‘modes’ of participation that are radically different, and it is important to attend to the *particular* mode of participation that is being put into practice. In Chapter 3, I argued that, in the context of NPM, it is important to attend to whether or not a participation project is managed so that it will be meaningful for children and young people, or whether the management of the project instead incorporates children and young people within organisational processes, is used on a rhetorical level to justify the organisation externally, constrains the professional’s capacity to make participation meaningful, and positions the children and young person within the hierarchy of the organisation. This research question therefore concerns how the participation projects were shaped by organisational and policy contexts, and is related to the

broader problem of evaluating the suitability of the system of participation in the UK.

The second research question is: *How were the participation projects put into practice?* This question relates to the position of the participation professional working within the organisational context, as discussed in Chapter 3. Although the professional is commonly regarded as being of central importance to the quality of participation projects, I argued that it was necessary to understand the professional as operating under organisational constraints; a de-contextualised model of evaluating the professional risks creating impossible demands, whereby the professional is expected to ensure good experiences for the participants within problematic projects. This research question is aimed at establishing a more complete understanding of the role of the participation professional. The term 'co-ordinator' was used in the two case study projects and I will adopt it in discussing the cases; in practice, it is interchangeable with the term 'professional'. The question also relates to the necessity of looking at what actually happens in participation projects in detail, rather than talking about 'participation' as a vague and generalised concept.

The third research question is: *How did the young people experience the participation projects?* Because participation projects routinely involve children within the organisation without necessarily enable them to participate on their own terms (Bragg, 2007a; Percy-Smith, 2006, 2010), it is necessary to understand the complex experiences of participants. In Chapter 4, I suggested that the concept of identity offers a more useful way of understanding the experience of potentially problematic projects, compared with more participative concepts such as co-

constructivism. Understanding people's experience through identity permits a sensitivity both to the context of the project and to the complexity of human beings that should lead to a more useful and interesting way of understanding children and young people's experience of participation.

On the basis of the literature review and the research aim, the questions to be answered by this research are therefore as follows:

1. *How were the participation projects framed by the relevant organisations?*
2. *How were the participation projects put into practice?*
3. *How did the young people experience the participation projects?*

5.2 Reflexive Methodology

In this section, I will set out a reflexive methodology that will underpin the methods I will use for answering the research questions. Reflexivity can be described as:

Research that turns back upon and takes account of itself, to explore the situated nature of knowledge; the institutional, social and political processes whereby research is conducted and knowledge is produced; the dubious position of the researcher; and the constructive effects of language (Alvesson et al., 2008b, p.480).

A reflexive approach to research adopts a social constructionist epistemology, whereby knowledge is never context-free 'data' on the basis of which theory can neatly be built (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Knowledge is always finally constructed by the knower rather than flowing from the object of research into the researcher like a 'pipeline' (Alvesson, 2011). It is important to acknowledge the fact that the knowledge created about the participation projects investigated is inextricably bound up with the theoretical positions through which the projects are approached and the methods used to learn about the projects and people's

experience of them. The knowledge gained about the projects and people's experience of them will necessarily be partial and limited (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

From a reflexive position, this social constructionist epistemology leads to a particular way of approaching research that privileges neither existing theory nor empirical research (ibid.). This sceptical approach both to existing knowledge and to the creation of new knowledge has important implications for the process of conducting research. It necessitates avoiding dogmatic positions on what empirical research can and cannot do. This applies to the relationship between research methods and complexity: a positivist approach reduces the complexity of the social world to a set of variables, whilst the strong postmodernist approach considers all empirical research in effect impossible, because the infinite complexities of the world can never be meaningfully captured. Another form of polarisation to be avoided results from relying too heavily on an inductive approach of using existing theories to understand the world, which means that the area of study in research is explained rather than investigated, and on the other hand on acting as though we know almost nothing about the world and that in research we can build up our knowledge from the ground (ibid.).

From a reflexive position, both existing knowledge and empirical knowledge are treated on an equal footing, while acknowledging that there are flaws in both (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Methodologically, in order to justify a research approach, it is necessary to attend to both the limitations of existing knowledge and knowledge created through the research. According to Alvesson and colleagues, while existing knowledge is extremely useful in

understanding the world, it can also be limiting because it provides one particular window on the world. The danger of research that sticks too closely to existing ways of thinking about a problem is that it restricts the possibilities of the research to existing, fallible knowledge (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, 2013; Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). In the literature review, I set out a novel way of investigating participation: to conceptualise it within areas of irresolvable tension, within policy, the organisation, and within human nature. In response to Tisdall's (2008) call for ideas beyond the field of participation to be used to understand it, this research is not aiming to build on existing knowledge of participation using existing concepts such as the new sociology of childhood's passive/active dichotomy, so much as to 'sidestep' existing ways of thinking by exploring participation from a different perspective (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013).

In order to evaluate the validity of knowledge, it is important to attend to how knowledge is being constructed in the research. Being reflective means being aware of the shortcomings and limitations of the methods and theories used for understanding people's experience (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). From a reflexive perspective, the boundaries between theory and research are porous, since both are constructed, and it is important to be able to be aware of the connection between the research and theory throughout the research. This applies to the researcher's own theoretical position and that of the wider research community (Alvesson et al., 2005; Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Research is therefore regarded as an extension of theorising:

Empirical material can facilitate theorization because it provides resources for both imagination and discipline...although empirical material never exists outside perspectives and interpretative

repertoires, it nevertheless creates a relative boundary for imagination. Some constructions make more sense than others. Empirical material anchors the process of theorization in specific claims about the object under study, thus prohibiting arbitrary ideas from being put into play. (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007 , p.1266)

Locating empirical research as a continuation of theoretical work creates certain freedoms from dogmatic methodological positions that can and should be made use of to ensure that the research leads to 'interesting rather than obvious, irrelevant, or absurd' (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, p.1266). In particular, it enables the researcher to pay less attention to creating objective facts and focusing research on 'building' on limited existing theory. Instead, there is a duty to be creative in research (ibid.).

However, there is also the duty to be disciplined (ibid.). While there is a relaxation within a reflexive approach of the emphasis on creating rigorous mechanisms for discovering pristine 'data', there is a concomitant 'greater interest in the contribution of how data are *constructed* for the benefit of theoretical reasoning' (ibid., p.1265, emphasis added). The discipline of being reflexive is concerned with being clear about how the theoretical position of the researcher and the process of the research shapes the 'data' presented. Importantly here, the avoidance of dogma inherent in a reflexive approach should be extended to scepticism towards reflexivity itself: the mechanisms that reflexivity has at its disposal to position the research in context are not all-powerful, so that the reader cannot have an absolute knowledge of exactly how the data was shaped by the preoccupations of the researcher (Alvesson et al., 2005).

It is particularly important to maintain a dialogue, both between the data and theory, and within the different aspects of the data (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). Maintaining a dialogue between data and theory involves constantly considering the data collected in the light of existing knowledge, to avoid too much credence being given to the new data: this will help to preclude the danger of existing knowledge being challenged on spurious grounds. While data can influence existing theory in interesting ways, a finding must always be evaluated in the light of what is already known, so that due weight is given to the existing body of knowledge as well as the new (ibid.).

Maintaining dialogue within data required the researcher to consider one observation or interview in relation to everything else that has been discovered about the project. This entails a disciplined and creative iterative approach, in which the findings of the whole research are kept in mind when one particular aspect is considered (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Consequently, while for clarity's sake I will outline the research as a chronological sequence of steps taken in order to gain an increasingly complete understanding of the case studies, in practice the research process involved a complex interplay between theory and data and within data, with constant awareness of the limitations of the process.

Alvesson et al. (2008b, p.487) sets out a number of questions that the researcher should attend that concern how the research shapes the results obtained:

Multi-perspective: What are the different ways in which a phenomenon can be understood? How do they produce different knowledge(s)?

Multi-voicing: Can we speak authentically of the experience of the Other? If so, how? What is the relationship between Self and Other?

Positioning: What is the network of practices and interests that produces particular interpretations of knowledge?

Destabilising: What are the conditions and consequences of the construction of a theory or a 'fact'?

Central to this approach is a commitment to methodological and theoretical pluralism: instead of positioning one's self squarely within a particular research approach, being reflexive means that different approaches have merit and no one approach is perfect. As Alvesson states (2011, p.106): 'reflexivity for me stands for conscious and consistent efforts to view the subject matter from different angles, strongly avoiding the a priori privileging of a favoured one'.

To summarise, from a reflexive perspective knowledge is constructed and partial, and this has important implications for thinking about the existing body of knowledge and forming new knowledge through original research. Research should be ambitious in re-forming existing knowledge without losing sight of its inherent limitations.

5.3 Research Design

In this section I set out how I will answer the research questions with regard to the reflexive methodological position I have set out.

5.3.1 Qualitative Case Studies

5.3.1.1 Qualitative

The most common way of 'view[ing] the subject matter from different angles', as advocated by Alvesson is to use a qualitative case-study approach, which offers more flexibility than quantitative research based on the measurement of known variables. Although a reflexive approach is generally associated with conducting qualitative case-studies, it does not hold that qualitative research is inherently

superior (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In particular, Alvesson criticises certain conventions in qualitative research, such as the romanticist belief that qualitative research can access to what people are 'really thinking' (2010). It is, generally accepted, however, that qualitative research enables the researcher to be constantly reconsidering what it is that is being studied (Simons, 2009, p,23), instead of being 'constrained by method'. Because it can adapt to fit the requirements of the problem, a qualitative approach can be much more sensitive to the complex interaction between context and experience (Blumer, 1969). It can also take a generalised concept such as 'the family' and look into what it means in its complexity in practice (Silverman, 2006). 'The family' comes to mean specific practices, including living or more specifically watching TV together, that can be seen from a number of different perspectives, such as that of the children or the parents.

There are therefore grounds for concluding that, through qualitative research, understanding of participation can be transformed. The practice and experience of participation is related to various interacting factors concerning policy, organisational structures and processes, professional practice and the complex psychological make-up of participants. Qualitative research can facilitate an understanding of participation in its complexity and within the context that it takes place. Instead of being seen in terms of concepts about which generalisations are made, it is acknowledged to be a specific set of practices that are experienced differently by different people involved (Silverman, 2006). It is also particularly attuned to the complex meanings that an experience, such as participation, has for people (Merriam, 2009). This capacity to understand meaning in context where the

meanings that people attach to the participation projects will constantly be shifting in more or less subtle ways, and as such cannot be adequately captured in filling a questionnaire at a particular moment (Blumer, 1969).

5.3.1.2 Case studies

The term 'case study' is intended to indicate the intention to respect voice projects in museums and galleries as 'complex social phenomena' (Yin, 2009, p.4) in themselves: both a 'functioning specific' and 'bounded system' (Stake, 2008, p.119-120) . In addressing what I regard as the limitations of the existing theory of participation, the case study is 'particularly well suited to new research areas or research areas for which existing theory seems inadequate' (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.548-549). This is because a case study serves as an example of an issue such as participation in which none of the complexities of participation in practice are excluded (Flybjerg, 2006). It does not necessarily follow from this that I, as the researcher, will have access to, or be able to explicate, the various complexities (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000). However, using a case study approach will enable me to be more open to the various complexities than if I had approached the research from a more general direction, for example by interviewing a range of young people about their experience of participation projects.

From a reflexive perspective, the idea of a 'case' is above all a construct of the researcher rather than something that reflects real life in a perfect way (Ragin, 1992). In the course of the research, the case study will be shaped as much by the researcher's theoretical preoccupations, and this needs to be explicitly acknowledged (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). In this study, I am more interested in the experience of the participants, rather than the outcomes for the organisation,

and this interest has shaped what I term a 'case study of young people's participation' in an important way. There are many different ways of studying participation, and a case study approach is a convention that a researcher follows, as much as a specific way of understanding participation.

5.3.1.3 Case Selection

In selecting cases, it is important to consider why a case is being selected. For the purposes of this research, I wanted to research cases that conformed to a description of children and young people's participation projects according to the definitions set out by Chawla (2001) and Hill et al. (2004), the case studies had to fit into the following criteria:

With reference to Chawla's definition (2001):

- The projects aim to be meaningful for the young people
- Decision-making is shared between young people and adults
- Young people are able to reflect their perspectives within the projects

And with reference to Hill et al.'s (2004):

- The projects are a time-limited mechanism within adult organisations
- Young people must adapt to established ways of working within the organisation
- Expectation is that participants are representative of young people more broadly
- Outcomes for the young people as well as the organisation

In this way, the case studies offered a way of studying children and young people's participation projects in practice. No theoretical criteria were used for selecting between cases, as *any* participation project in an organisation necessarily exists within the tensions of the policy, organisational and personal contexts set out

above. Within the broad definition of participation advocated for this research, any participation project with young people can be considered as a typical case, with regards to the context within which they operate, and I have treated them as such. It is important to acknowledge, however, that from other perspectives there are ways of forming distinctions between projects. For instance, to investigate the promise of participation, it would have been important to choose a 'leading-edge' case study that exemplified the possibilities of participation in practice (Schofield, 1990). Such a case study could also be viewed as 'normative', exemplifying practices which could be transferred elsewhere (Thacher, 2006).

It is also important to consider how many cases should be used. The strength of qualitative research lies in its sensitivity to real-world complexity, rather than in offering a numerically representative example of participation projects. Therefore, from a qualitative perspective, more case studies does not equate to better research (Silverman, 2006). However, this does not mean that numerical factors are not applicable in any way to qualitative research, and that one case study is necessarily as good as more than one. One clear advantage of more than one case study is that comparison can be made between cases, as well as between the data acquired from different sources within a case (*ibid.*). From a reflexive situation, the purpose of case study research is to explore a problem from different angles (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), and more case studies can reveal more issues. Further, multiple case studies can extend the scope of the research since what can be researched in each case is limited: there is, for example, a limited number of participants to interview.

Equally, it is imperative in reflexive qualitative case studies that depth is not sacrificed for the purpose of making comparisons. Above all, understanding the research questions in adequate depth requires: 'a situational and detailed understanding of organisational phenomena, being more 'close' to experienced reality and everyday practice, focusing on specific instances of identity presentations and identity struggles...This approach calls for a concentrated and intensive study' (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p.1165). Consequently, it was important not to spread the net too thinly, so as to gain the understanding of a larger number of participation projects in less detail. Because of the focus on understanding experience in depth, however, the experiences of the participants that are reported cannot be regarded as representative of the groups or of participants more broadly. In other words, my reflexive intention here is 'entirely exploratory' (Archer, 2003, p.154): I am working towards an understanding of the various complex effects of context on participation, rather than offering conclusive statements about participation projects and young people's experiences of them.

The first stage of the research was to select case studies. Within AR in 2013, there were twelve associates, eleven of which were running participation projects with young people. Each of the eleven projects fitted the description of children and young people's participation as set out in the introduction. Since the only theoretical criterion for selecting case studies was that they corresponded to a broad definition of participation, the selection criterion was convenience: I selected the projects arranged on dates that fitted in with my timetable for conducting the research.

In the course of conducting the research, I made the judgement that the interviews with two case studies, involving interviews with participants and observing sessions, would provide an adequate basis for answering the research questions. From a reflexive position, terms that are sometimes used to suggest that qualitative research has achieved its goal, such as reaching 'saturation', are never definitive, because the researcher only has limited understanding of the cases and the possibilities of the research (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). A subjective judgment has to be made, as to how useful the cases are in enabling theorising about the problem. In this case, I found that two appeared to offer sufficient data and an understanding of participants' experiences in depth. This was a decision finally taken at the end of the data collection phase of the research – it is impossible to know beforehand how many cases will be necessary to answer the research questions satisfactorily, and I would have researched further cases. In the event, to have done so would have been a defensive measure that would have produced more data but given less space for it to be processed and analysed in sufficient depth, and I would have been making generalisations about participation and experiences of it rather than specific claims (Silverman, 2013).

Having made claims about the research establishing an in-depth and detailed understanding of the case studies, it is necessary to qualify these. While qualitative research of a small number of case studies does provide more depth than other quantitative forms of research, there is variation within qualitative research about the level of detail and information that case studies provide to the reader. Fine (2003) argues for understanding qualitative research on a spectrum. One end consists of theory-led research, which is interested in cases principally as a means

of illuminating theoretical ideas. In such cases little might be discovered about the people, organisations and processes of the cases studies as the researcher privileges theoretical discussion over detail. On the other end is the case study that provides a great deal of information and detail about a case, in which the reader will come to feel that they know the people, the organisation and what happens. While the latter approach can be a great deal more satisfying for the reader, as reflexive research, these case studies are far more theory-led, providing detail that is sufficient for the necessary theoretical analysis, but not as much as to provide readers with a full and thorough appreciation of the projects. The defense for this is that currently participation projects with young people are now familiar amongst academics, and it is necessary to focus on understanding them through new theoretical perspectives.

5.3.2 Research Methods

In this section I set out which research methods will be used for each research question. For a quick guide of which methods were used for which question, see *Figure 1*, below. While the methods are used because they offer a way of understanding the case studies in practice, it is important to note that the methods are used together in an iterative process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), and that the linear presentation of methods is for the sake of clarity. In this section I outline the purpose of each method and the rationale for using, and in the next section I describe how I put these methods into practice.

Figure 1: Methods Employed by Research Question

Research

		Method			
		Discourse analysis of documentation	Participant- observation of project sessions	Interviews with co- ordinators	Interviews with participants
Research Question	1. <i>How were the participation projects framed by the relevant organisation?</i>	X			
	2 <i>How were the participation projects put into practice?</i>		X	X	
	3 <i>How did the young people experience the participation projects?</i>		X		X

5.3.2.1 Discourse Analysis of Documentation

In exploring the question of understanding how the projects were framed, I will employ Fairclough's version of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2001b, 2005, 2013; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2010). While a broad definition of discourse analysis is that it is 'the close study of language in use' (Taylor, 2001, p.5), CDA is particularly concerned with the linguistic aspects of understanding social processes (Fairclough, 2013). It is based on the idea that language is connected and shaped by the world, but equally language is able to shape the world and our understanding of it. CDA is particularly concerned with how language is used by the more powerful in society to frame issues in the world in a way that is compatible with their own interests (ibid.). CDA is relevant to

understanding children and young people's participation projects for several reasons. First, in the way I have framed the problem of participation, an important aspect is the top-down nature of the projects, where participation is shaped by adults according to particular political ideas (as covered in Chapter 2), managerial regimes (as covered in Chapter 3), and ways of understanding the person (as covered in Chapter 4) that cannot be detached from questions of power. Hence the critical aspect of CDA is important. Further, participation is a flexible term, and the differences between conflicting modes of participation, such as meaningful and controlling, are a question of framing participation in particular ways (Fairclough, 2001a). It is therefore necessary to pay close attention to language in order to sufficiently understand participation in context.

The term 'discourse' can be used in a wide variety of ways and from different theoretical perspectives (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In its stronger, post-structuralist sense, discourse is a 'structuring principle' that defines individuals and organisations in society (Weedon, 1987, p.41). It is something that we are bound up in and cannot escape from. In a more moderate form, discourse is seen as something that has a role in shaping the social reality amongst other 'material' such as people, money or buildings (Fairclough, 2005). Discourse is a perspective on language, where language is seen both to be shaped by existent power structures but at the same time has a power to shape the world (Fairclough, 2013). As stated by Watson, discourse is a 'connected set of statements, concepts, terms and expressions which constitute a way of talking and writing about a particular issue, thus framing the way people understand and act with respect to that issue' (quoted in Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000, p.1131). In

adopting this moderate form of constructionism, CDA can be used in an interdisciplinary way as a means of understanding participation alongside other methods (Fairclough, 2005).

In the case of the case studies, I was interested in how the organisational and political context shaped the participation projects. CDA offers a way of examining in detail how the management of participation projects are shaped by the political context and, in turn, constrain the co-ordinator and participants attached to the projects. It does this through paying particular attention to the role of language in the framing of projects in the planning documentation (ibid.). Using CDA in relation to the case studies enables an understanding of the nature and effects of the top-down management of the projects through understanding the position of the documents within the organisational context and also through offering a way of understanding the way that the documents imagine and construct the projects. It does this through the concepts of 'genre' and 'discourse' (Fairclough, 2001b):

- Genres are 'diverse ways of acting, of producing social life' (ibid., p.235). Here the planning process of the projects is seen as a form of 'project management', a particular top-down way of organising participation projects.
- Discourses are 'diverse representations of social life' (ibid.). I am interested in how the discourses of the application documents represent the participation projects, with particular reference to how the participants and co-ordinators are positioned within the projects.

Taken together, understanding the genre of the application documents and the discourse within them will offer a detailed understanding how the participation

projects with young people are framed by adult agendas, structures and processes. It has previously been used in similar ways to understand how project management can serve to control professional practice, imposing a specious consensus on how work should be done that does not allow space for professional autonomy (Räsänen & Linde, 2004).

I used discourse analysis only in answering Question 1, asking how the participation projects are framed by the relevant organisations, and not to examine the experience of participants and co-ordinators. This is because a discursive approach to identity focuses on how people represent themselves publicly, and denies the independent existence of their inner psychological complexity (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This would have important implications for the analysis of interviews with participants: a discourse analysis approach would attend to the social reasons why people represent themselves in a certain way, instead of taking at face-value what they are communicating of their inner feelings (Alvesson, 2011).

5.3.2.2 Participant-observation

The principle advantage of participant-observation is that it provides a 'holistic' understanding of the project that would not be possible through other methods (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002, p.92). Participant-observation enables knowing about the details of the group, such as how much time is spent on each task, relationships within the group, the different ways of being between participants, and how the project developed over time (ibid.). In participant-observation, the researcher takes up a position within the group and therefore has more immediate access to rules and meanings than by employing methods in which the researcher is more removed from the group (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Being within a group with

others does not provide direct access to their experience, but it does sensitise the researcher to the context within which the other participants experience the project (Hammersley, 2006). Adopting the role of a participant within the group, rather than being merely an observer or an interviewer, enables the researcher and participants to be more than strangers. This is necessary if the observer is to understand participants' 'identity', their experience in context, in a meaningful way (Kunda, 1992). The researcher has to 'inhabit' the context for participation as fully as possible, in order to understand it, and this perspective is forcefully expressed in the following passage:

Do we seriously believe that we can throw much light on such matters by, for example, analysing what we extract from the digital tape recorders that we sit between ourselves and the 'subjects' to whom we say hello, interview, and bid fare thee well? To talk of someone's identity surely requires that, to a reasonable extent, we get to know them and the context in which they live and work. We can rarely go all the way with this. We have to be realistic. Nevertheless, a degree of talking to people, watching them, and sharing tasks with them over a period of time in the varying settings or circumstances that are relevant to our investigation might be expected before we can convincingly claim that we know what we are talking about (Watson, 2011, p.204, emphasis original)

There is a large body of participant-observations research, in studies of both organisations and education, exploring what happens in organisations and how people experience them, with a particular focus on understanding the complexity of how people's experience is negotiated (Kelly & Majerus, 2012; Watson, 2011). Particularly notable ethnographic studies of the experience of people within organisations include Willis (1977), Kunda (1992) and Casey (1995).

The social life of the group and people's experience of it are deemed to contain patterns that are to some extent identifiable, but only through a series of

observations that are considered as a whole rather than as a disjointed series of facts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). While the entire research process is iterative, from a reflexive perspective, the process of participant-observation is in this way inherently iterative: any observation or reflection on the group is considered in the light of previous observations and reflections, which are themselves reconsidered in the process (ibid.).

While it can be viewed as a specific method, participant-observation should also be regarded as an umbrella term that covers a range of different approaches. Participant-observation has different theoretical origins in social anthropology and sociology, and more recently it has fractured into a number of different ways of doing research as it has spread across the social sciences (Fine, 2003). Up to this point I have outlined what can be considered as common to participant-observation – detailed observation of a group or culture over time with the adoption of both an insider's and outsider's perspective. Below, I outline the particular form of participant-observation that I adopt in order to answer the research question.

The particular form of participant-observation that I adopted was a result of the nature of the theoretical interest in young people's participation projects. In particular, I was interested in the nature and experience of adult-organised participation projects for young people that aim to be meaningful for participants. For participant-observation, this means adopting a particular theoretical perspective on observing the groups, to understand them as both top-down and bottom-up. As top-down projects, the organisation outlines what the aims and outcomes of the project will be, and then the co-ordinator puts them into practice.

In these projects, while it is intended that the young people will find the projects enjoyable and meaningful, they have little influence over the procedures of the project. Any project is also bottom-up, as participants (and co-ordinators) do not simply live out the project as it was planned. Rather, they will engage in their own way, both as individuals and as a group. They will form a 'culture', establish ways of doing things, that are related to but in their own way independent from the official procedures of a project (Kunda, 1992).

While observation is a way of researching both top-down and bottom-up aspects of participation projects, methodologically two different types of observation are required. It is necessary to be able to observe how the co-ordinator makes the project work in practice through establishing a set of procedures for the participants to take part in. In a top-down participation project, the participants must be involved within the organisation in a practical way, and understanding the specific ways that this takes place is important. However, from a bottom-up perspective this in itself is inadequate: the procedures matter but more important are the particular ways of experiencing the project that emerge. Observing the procedures of the project can only go so far in establishing people's experience of the project – it is also important to understand what it is like to live 'within' the procedures (ibid.).

This meant that there were two specific purposes of participant-observation:

To answer Research Question 2 - *how were the participation projects put into practice?* - by setting out as 'objectively' and in as much detail as possible the procedures of the projects.

To answer Research Question 3 – *How did the young people experience the participation projects?* - by exploring in as much detail as possible the subjective experiences of the participants

Participant-observation and Research Question 2

Here, participant-observation will be used to set out in as much detail and with as much 'objectivity' as possible, what happened in the projects (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002, p.123)). The stress here is on the 'observer' aspect of participant-observation – it is assumed that through being present in the case studies over a period of time, and adopting a rigorous approach to recording observations, then the researcher gains an 'authority' to set out for the reader what happened in the projects (Fine, 2003). This approach is related to ethnomethodology, which focuses on the objective details of how life is organised, and the *particular* ways that people behave (ten Have, 2004). At the heart of ethnomethodology is the idea that experience has to be understood through close observation of what people actually do; it is interested in the 'lived and local orderliness' (Burns, quoted in Garfinkel, 2001, p.127) and in situating people's experience within their specific context, rather than making too many generalised assertions about people's experience (Silverman, 2006). However, unlike ethnomethodology, this form of participant observation does not reduce social life to a myopic perspective in which social life is nothing but a sequence of actions (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Rather, there is a wider theoretical interest, which in this case is to relate the exact procedures of the group to the question of the extent to which adult-organised participation projects can be meaningful for young people.

Specifically, participant-observation in this sense means taking down as many notes as possible describing what happened in the group, focusing in particular on how the groups were organised in practical ways by the co-ordinators to put the projects into practice in accordance with the project plans, their own values, and the nature of the setting. It also means interviewing the co-ordinators about how and why they organised the group in the specific ways that they did (ten Have, 2004, pp.76-77; Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Finally, it means improving on the 'objectivity' and capacity of the participant-observer by using a digital device to capture the discussion between the participants and co-ordinator. The use of the audio device is seen as pragmatic, given that it is able to capture in far more detail the interactions within a setting in far more detail than traditional note-taking methods (ten Have, 2004). While it is true that the digital device is likely to have a real presence in the sessions, and may well cause those present to adjust how they act, this is justified by the fact that as a participant-observer it is impossible to not have an effect on the group (Laurier, 2010), and the impact of the digital device on the research setting in this way is a matter of degrees rather than introducing an observer effect that was not previously present (ibid.). Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of the possible additional effects the audio device could have on the group.

Participant-observation and Research Question 3

Here, participant-observation is directed towards understanding the 'subjective' experiences of the project. This entails the researcher using their own insider status in the group, and knowledge of what happens, to construct a representation of how others might be experiencing the group. The purpose here is to understand

the project from an insider's perspective, but to remain an outsider with one's own theoretical perspective and academic reason for being involved in the group (Cook & Crang, 1995). In practice this means maintaining a dual identity throughout the research process (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). It also requires extensive note-taking and informal, ongoing discussions with participants and co-ordinators, so that the reflections of the researcher are anchored in the experiences of others as well as their own (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

An important aspect of participant-observation is discussing people's experience with them (*ibid.*). While, below I present interviewing as a separate method, in an important way it can be seen as part of or a continuation of participant-observation. The participant-observation shaped in crucial ways the line of questioning that I adopted in the 'active interviews' that I undertook with the participants. The basis for this approach is that there are limitations to the way that I as a researcher can speak for someone else, although through the process of taking part in the projects alongside others it is possible to develop a sense of what it is like to be in the group. Equally, while a person has a far greater first-hand sense of their own experience than another person can, nevertheless there will be much about their experience that is tacit and which they would not necessarily have ready access to when asked (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). Therefore, participant-observation and interviewing can complement each other by bringing together an outsider's and insider's perspective on a person's experience (see 'active interviewing' section, below).

In summary, participant-observation is invaluable in answering Research Questions 2 and 3 because the process is aligned with a flexible approach to

simultaneously considering empirical material and theoretical concerns, it offers a detailed account of the context of the project, and it opens up a way of understanding the personal experience of the projects.

5.3.2.3 Interviews

The purpose of interviewing is clear: it enables the researcher to find out about people's experiences in their own words, instead of relying on second-hand interpretations (Kvale, 2008). In this research, there is a particular importance attached to this, because the situations, because of the nature of some of the problematic aspects of top-down participation projects, as I have described them in the literature review. While such projects are 'about' young people and their experience, they are at the same time shaped by adult processes and agendas. The interviews then provide a space for young people to describe their experience of the project in their own words, in an environment that is more open to their experiences than that of the project.

While this account of interviews is appealing, it should be regarded an over-simplified account of what an interview can achieve. From a reflexive perspective, the account is seen as romanticised – both in its view of the participants, the role of the research, and the relationship between the researcher and participants (Hammersley, 2003; Alvesson, 2011). To summarise the problematic aspect of this perspective on interviewing many researchers do not give sufficient credence to the claim of 'localism': the idea that the social world determines, to a large extent, how people act and how they represent themselves. Drawing in part on social constructionism, localists argue that people are always 'doing' something with words rather than simply reflecting their true or authentic selves. The interview

transcript, for example, should be seen as a *particular* way in which interviewees are representing themselves and their experiences at a *particular* moment in a *particular* social context for a *particular* motive. This means that interviews, or other forms of qualitative research, can never simply provide a 'pipeline' from the authentic self of the participant (ibid.).

There is then some controversy, particularly when used as a single method, as to how much an interview can reveal about people's identity and social action, and it is a method that has been problematised (Hammersley, 2003; Alvesson, 2011). My position on identity is that people have psychological complexity and are by nature able to reflect on their experience. We do not, however, have a transcendent mastery over ourselves, and the capacity for reflection is limited, so that we are to an extent shaped and limited by the world. From this perspective, the purpose of an interview becomes more complex. On one level, what people say as a 'subject' represents their thoughts and feelings about their experience, even though their experience cannot necessarily be reduced to what they say. On another level, what people say is connected to their position as a social object but, here again, cannot be reduced to this (Archer, 2003; Alvesson, 2011).

While this does not negate the possibility of interviews offering a useful perspective on participants' and co-ordinators' experiences of the projects, it is necessary to be clear about the purpose and the limitations of the interview method. The purpose of the interview is to find out about people's experience both directly and indirectly:

- As a direct source of self-analysis. Here, interviewees are asked to reflect on their behaviour, attitudes, character, or personality, and their interpretations are subjected to critical assessment, as components of explanations for what they (and perhaps others) do or did.

- As an indirect source of evidence about informants' attitudes or perspectives. Here, instead of focusing on interviewees' own analyses of themselves, the researcher uses what they say to draw inferences about their intentions, motives, preoccupations, preferences, perspectives and attitudes. (Hammersley, 2003, p.120)

In this research the first of the above reasons is particularly important. In chapter 4 I outlined how an identity perspective means that participants approach the projects actively, in the sense of bringing their own orientations to how they are in the world with them. This means that it is important to find out about their own analysis of their experience, or in Archer's phrase about their own 'internal conversation' (2003). The limitation of the interview method is that it is shaped as much by the circumstance of the interview and the relationship between the participant and researcher as it is by what the participant 'really thinks'. A type of interviews that enable the participants to analyse their experience but which recognises the limitations of the interview must be adopted.

The 'active interview' fulfills these criteria (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). The relevant assumption of the active interview is that while it is impossible for the researcher to be uninvolved in the discussion, this does not preclude the participant from being able to make sense of their experience within the discussion. In the active interview, the purpose is to 'activate' the participants' understanding of their experience through shaping the discussion. The active interviewer makes it clear what they are interested in, and set the parameters about what should be spoken of (ibid.). The researcher then works with the participant in order to enable the participant to make sense of their experience in a way that is relevant to the research: 'the consciously active interviewer intentionally, concertedly provokes

responses by indicating - even suggesting - narrative positions, resources, orientations, and precedents for the respondent to engage in addressing the research questions under consideration. (ibid., p.123).

In this way, the active interview is built on the limitations of the interview, while still aiming to enable the participants to communicate their experiences. Instead of the interview being treated as a 'pipeline', it is treated as a joint construction between interviewer and participants that makes sense of the participant's experience (ibid.). Clearly, the interview data must be treated with caution here, but the active perspective on the interview is consistent with a reflexive approach. The active interview as a research method enables ongoing dialogue between theory and research, since the theoretical interests of the researcher play an important role in shaping the interview. In this way, I used interviews to enable participants and co-ordinators in the case-study projects to consider their own experience and to elicit descriptions of their time in the project as a basis for analysis, alongside my observations.

5.3.3 Note on Research with Young People

In research on children and young people, it is common to create a research strategy that takes into account the marginalised position of children and young people, and to undertake methods that enable the young people's voice to be present in research (Jones, 2004; Thomson, 2008, pp.1-8). There are several reasons for this. The first has been covered obliquely already: the understanding of agency in relation to voice practices in my view relies on an oversimplified, 'knowable' idea of agency. The relationship between the researcher and young people is complex, the difficulties that it raises cannot be resolved through

formalising particular practices, such as visual methods (Newbury and Hoskins, 2008). Like Silverman (2006) and Alvesson (2010), it seems to me that research cannot reach people's voice in an unproblematic way, whether they are young people or not.

In conducting the research, I have therefore taken the view that working participatively with young people will not necessarily make better research (Holland et al., 2010). In part, my scepticism arose out of my experience of working for two years as a teaching assistant, and especially a year spent in a primary school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. In the school, there were various formalised ways for the young people to be and express themselves. These ranged from aspects of the curriculum, which enabled them to talk about their personal goals, to specially-equipped areas of the classroom that they could go to, when they were finding it difficult to 'cope'. I found, from my own work and from observing others, that what was most important was the relationship between the adult and child; engagement with the child depended on the quality of this relationship, rather than the particular nature of the interaction. I have used this understanding to inform my approach to this research, by I concentrating on creating good relationships with the other young people to gain 'access' to them as informants as is standard in ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pp.41-96).

The research methods used need to be understood within the context of the project, and it is significant that I was forming relationships with the young people within an environment designed for them to be themselves and express their voice. My methods of participant observation and interviewing were such that I was a part

of the projects, while as far as possible being designed so that they would not intrude on the projects. The interviews that I carried out with the young people could be regarded as a continuation of the projects themselves: they were carried out during or immediately after the projects, and I had established relationships with the young people interviewed within the projects. If the research had been carried out in a more formal setting, such as a school (Gillies & Robinson, 2012), particularly if I had not had an opportunity of creating relationships with them before interviewing them, more attention would have been needed to the danger of marginalising the young people in the research.

5.4 The Process of the Research

In this section, I will set out exactly how I collected and analysed data in the research. From a reflexive position, the process of data collection and analysis cannot be regarded as straightforward, requiring a checklist of steps to follow in order to produce unarguable and pristine results. It is, rather, a flawed and messy process and the steps outlined below are a necessary simplification of the process of research.

In following out the research design, in the process of the research I identified the relevant project documentation, interviewed the majority of core participants, interviewed one co-ordinator, recorded part of two sessions in each case study, and observed the majority of the sessions (see *Figure 2*, below). In this way, I gained a rich understanding of the case study participation projects in-depth and from a number of different perspectives. Where I did not interview co-ordinators and core participants, and where I did not attend sessions was not selected in

accordance with the research design but was an unintended limitation. Below I set out the data collection process in more detail.

Figure 2: Data Collected by Case Study

		Case Study	
		<i>Bolworth</i>	<i>Riverton</i>
Data collected (against total number)	Documentation	All relevant AR Application Documents	All relevant AR Application Documents
	Participant-observation notes (no. sessions)	9/13	10/15
	Interviews with co-ordinators	1/1	0/1
	Audio recordings of project sessions	2/13	2/15
	Interviews with core participants	5/8	5/7

5.4.1 Access

Gaining access was a complex process. I had gained access to AR as an entity through my status as an ESRC Case student with a position as a Tate PhD student. However, this did not automatically grant me access to the AR projects, as the projects took place within organisations that received funding from AR but were independent from them. The first stage of gaining access was to introduce my research during the first year of my study at an AR event, attended by many of the associates who would be running participation projects suitable for the research. At

the event, a member of staff approached me after the project and invited me to conduct research at her organisation. She was overseeing the project but was only directly involved in a limited capacity, as a freelance project co-ordinator was to be employed for the project. This meant that the next stage was to gain the co-ordinator's agreement to my gaining access. I met with her before the project started, outlined my research and how I proposed to undertake the research, stressing how I could adapt certain aspects of the data collection in order to fit in with the projects.

In the other case study, my first point of contact was the Learning Co-ordinator at AR, who sent an email on my behalf to the organisation, copying me in, explaining the research and raising the possibility of undertaking research. After the organisation had agreed, I attended a meeting at the organisation with a member of its staff, a member of staff from AR and the freelance co-ordinator. I outlined what I proposed to do, again emphasising that I would be flexible in how I collected the methods. In both cases, everyone involved in the running of the projects, including the freelance co-ordinators, agreed to the research as I proposed it. The final stage was to gain the permission of the participants in the project. At the first few sessions, and in any session where a new participant arrived, I was introduced to the group as a researcher, and I explained my purpose in being there, and the participants signed a form consenting to their involvement in the research (see section on 'ethics' below).

5.4.2 Discourse Analysis of Project Documents

The first process was to identify the relevant documentation. Throughout the research, as a Tate Student I had access to AR documentation. With this access, I

was able to identify the relevant project documents for the planning of the participation projects. There were three relevant documents identified:

1. The 'Information Pack' sent to AR associates with guidance about the application process and the nature and purpose of AR, including about young people and participation projects .
2. The 'Application Form' for receiving an AR exhibition. In this application, the associate would outline the work of which artist they were applying for, and how they would interpret and market the exhibition, and engage young people.
3. Once an associate had secured an AR exhibition, they would receive funding to run special marketing campaigns and engage young people. In the 'Funding Application' the associates would outline how they would run their participation project with particular reference to meeting AR aims (as set out in the 'Information Pack').

The case study participation projects were 'framed' through the application process. The associates would state what the young people would do in the project, and what the outcomes would be both for the organisation and the participants. At this stage funding was secured around a consensus of how the project would be organised, in terms of its purpose, process and outcomes.

Employing Fairclough's CDA (2001b, 2005, 2013) entailed analysing the project documentation both in terms of how they relate to the organisational structure of AR ('genre'), and in terms of the content of the documents ('discourse'). The process of analysing the documents was complex. It was necessary to relate the purpose and content of the document to the theoretical interest of the way that project management processes such as the application process may affect the

case study projects in practice. The documents were analysed with the following themes in mind:

1. Genre: What particular constructions of participation projects do the background and questions invite?
2. Discourse: What are the possible contradictory aspects in the projects that are being framed, and how are the participants and co-ordinators being positioned?

In practice, the process of analysis is complex and laborious, requiring open-minded close reading of the documentation while holding the wider theoretical interests in mind (Gill, 2000). I analysed the document in a Word document using a number of different thematic codes to capture the 'salient' aspects in regards to understanding the document in relation to the theoretical concerns (Saldaña, 2012, p.3). These were always provisional and they developed over time (Gill, 2000). I regarded the process as completed when I had accounted for the whole of the documentation without falling (in my judgement) to the various possible shortcomings of discourse analysis such as over-interpreting isolated fragments of the document or at the other hand, simply offering a summary of the whole document (Antaki et al., 2002). Since in the process of discourse analysis the researcher effectively re-writes the document in relation to their theoretical concerns, and since there is no one true interpretation. I produced the main body of the description of the projects in the documentation for the reader to compare the documents against my interpretation of them.

5.4.3 Doing Participant-observation

Having secured access in the field, the next step was to adopt a role in the group.

This was both simple and complex. The simple aspect was being consistently

clear and open about why I was there, which is important ethically as well as helping the research process by enabling people to become informants (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002) emphasising that I was studying for a PhD, and I was also a participant. I also had to adopt a role within the group, since doing participant-observation involves living alongside people rather than standing back and observing as if in an experiment (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). It is impossible to pre-determine one's role and relationship to the group, and as it played out my role and position in relation to the group was multi-faceted, fluid over time and in relation to different participants (Brockman, 2011); this is normal for participant-observation, and it is important to be aware of and make use of as a way of understanding the project (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). At various times, I was a fellow participant, an auxiliary member of staff assisting the co-ordinator, a representative of AR. Within these roles, there are further distinctions that can be made – for instance I was a more confident, or established participant at times, and at others I was an art novice being taught by others. I was sometimes a student as a relaxed presence, at other times I was anxious to be collecting data. While the complexities of participant-observation are endless, I will limit my discussion here since it was only one aspect of the methods used. In summary, my understanding of the projects was shaped by the relationships I formed within them (*ibid.*), and these varied considerably. To give two contrasting examples. At one moment I was in the pub listening to participants (aged 18 and 23) complaining about the project and in another moment I was trying and failing to persuade participants (aged 16-17) to take down something inappropriate (in my view) from the wall in a setting when I adopted momentarily the role of responsible adult. As I was a student, and

reasonably young, but also reasonably old (being ten years older than most participants) I found myself in a range of different situations and had a number of different perspectives on the projects (ibid.).

In practice, much of the time I adopted the role of being one of the more reticent participants: not necessarily saying that much, but at the same time present. Whenever the participants were sitting in a circle, I would be part of the circle; when they were delivering a workshop, I helped them; when they were doing art, I would too. I was also at the disposal of the co-ordinator, to help clear materials away, set the room up and so on. Being present from the beginning of the project and attending most of the sessions meant that, it appeared to me, that I was accepted by everyone as part of the projects (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002).

All the while, I was observing. In the sessions at the beginning of the project, the task of observation was simplified by the group carrying out organised activities together, so that it was possible to observe the whole group at the same time. The meetings were usually held in a room at the organisation, with between four and ten young people attending each session. Often, the whole group sat around a table, and it was easy to observe the whole group unobtrusively while sitting at the table with them. There were some conversations that I could not hear, but on the whole the group talked altogether, and I would contribute little.

Once access and a role has been negotiated, it was necessary to build 'rapport' with participants in order to gain the perspective of 'insiders' in the group (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This was facilitated by the nature of the project itself, a new participation group in which I was present from its beginning. Consequently, everyone as new members was open and the atmosphere was

intentionally friendly. The important thing was to ensure that I built rapport with a majority, or all, of the participants rather than building up a particular rapport with particular participants, which may skew the research to their particular perspective (ibid.). The participants and co-ordinators are then treated as informants, sources of information about what happens in the project and about their own experience.

In addition to using participants and co-ordinators as informants, participant-observation entails extensive note-taking. There were two levels to the note-taking in the research between observation and reflection that is common within participant-observation (Kawulich, 2005). On one level, I simply recorded what happened. While I would take notes immediately after the sessions, I would often be able to take notes during the sessions if there was a task that everyone was getting on with activities within the project. I would try to note down as much as possible, with exact quotes of conversations, and to be as precise as possible about everything that had happened (Hammersely & Atkinson, 2007). In the second level of the note-taking I reflected on what has happened in the group against pre-existing theoretical interests and being flexible about how the groups were considered (Kawulich, 2005). This meant constantly reflecting through the notes on trying to understand each observation, as well as how each observation fitted in with the rest of the observations, while considering the dialogue between empirical material and theory. In the two case studies, there were a total of fifteen core participants. This meant that there was space in the process of the research, and in the format of the PhD, to focus on the experience of each participant individually, rather than having to make generalisations about the 'experience of participants' as a group.

I attended the majority of sessions in each case study, nine at Bolworth and ten at Riverton. I attended throughout the project and saw the project develop over time and rather than having to complete my research while the projects were still ongoing, my participant-observation lasted as long as the projects did. Roughly, I attended as many sessions as the 'core' participants, and people would share gossip about what was happening as though I was a full 'insider' (Fine, 2003). In each session there was a lot to note down, as everything that was happening within the sessions was potentially relevant, and by the end of the projects I felt that I had gained an extensive understanding of the projects in context.

5.4.4 Conducting Interviews

With regard to interviewing participants, I did not use any criteria to select between participants but was open to interviewing all participants and co-ordinators. There were a total of fourteen core participants, seven more peripheral participants, and two co-ordinators, and my intention was to interview everyone. However, I also wanted to wait until the second half of the projects to conduct recorded interviews, for a variety of reasons. This was necessary in order to build up a rapport with them, to allow time for them to develop their views about the projects and their experience of them, and to refine a theoretical perspective on the projects to be used as a guide for the interview (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Whilst these reasons were legitimate, it was in practice difficult to interview everyone. Some participants were not available towards the end of the project, and I was able to conduct recorded interviews with only ten core participants (out of fifteen) across the two case studies and one co-ordinator. When it came to analysing the interviews, I concluded that there was sufficient material for the purposes of the

research, and I did not attempt to schedule interviews with participants after the projects had ended. In addition to the recorded interviews, I was in contact with participants and co-ordinators throughout the project, and we talked extensively about the projects and their experience of it informally, noting down the comments made as soon after the event as possible (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In this manner, I spoke to all the participants at some point. The participants whom I did not conduct recorded interviews with are, of course, less represented in the results sections of the research. However, my conversations with them and observations of them helped guide my thinking about the projects, and I was aware how far their experience was significantly different from the participants whose interviews I recorded.

In active interviews, the process is a semi-structured one (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). The interviews were structured around finding about their experience of the research projects, with particular reference to both a detailed understanding of their experience in reference to actual events in the project, and at the same time with reference to how they think they orientate themselves to the project. As the interviews were based on my participant-observation of the participants in the group as well as ongoing informal discussions with the participants, by the time I interviewed the participants and co-ordinator I had a general sense, of their experience and what to talk to them about. In this way, the interviews were structured slightly differently for each participant (ibid.). For instance, if I had observed, or we had talked about, the participants having a striking (to me) experience, such as not contributing in the sessions, or having difficulties with other participants or the co-ordinator, then I would ask them about it. The interview

is structured in reference to itself; by this I mean that the questions I ask are guided as much by the flow of the conversation as it is by my pre-set agenda. The narrative that the participant is following is being respected, rather than the researcher imposing their own priorities (ibid.).

The beginning of the interviews was important to establish that the participants understood what I was interested in, who would hear about what they said, and above all that it was a non-judgemental environment, and that they did not have to take part or talk about anything they did not want to (ibid.). This process depended in part on the participants and the relationship that I had with them. With some participants I felt that it was necessary to place particular emphasis that they could say whatever they wanted, as it appeared that they saw me in a sense as a project-figure and did not want to be too critical.

The interviews would begin with open questions about their experience, such as 'how has the project been for you?' (ibid.). Following this I would listen to them and sometimes offer them a particular way of framing their experience that might have been different from the one they were offering. For instance, when one quieter participant was saying how she likes to be asked questions by the co-ordinator, I asked if that did not make her feel 'on the spot?' It was important to be conscious of keeping a balance between making suggestions for the participants to interpret their experience in respect to different themes that I was interested in, and determining what they said (ibid.). It was necessary then to be respectful that the interview was finally about their perspective – this meant adding 'or not?' to questions, and to make it clear that I was interested in their experience in relation to my theoretical interests, rather than thinking that I knew their experience better

than them. The interview process was facilitated by many of the participants, and the co-ordinator, having a lot to say about the projects and their experience of them. In practice, it was not necessary to interject very much and redirect the conversations in an abrupt way.

I conducted the recorded interviews either after sessions, if it was convenient, or at convenient moments during the sessions when there was space for people to leave for a short time. For the interviews, we would go to a nearby café or park. The interviews were mostly not constrained by time, as they were carried out during particularly long sessions or sessions in which not everyone was required to be present. The interviews lasted approximately twenty minutes: this seemed to be the time that was needed for me to ask all the questions that I had, and for the participant to say what they had to say. Given that the contact with the participants was ongoing, it was possible where necessary to pick up any further points later on.

5.4.5 Data management and analysis

In presenting the interviews and discussions within the project meetings, I have tried to ensure that the format is clear and easy for the reader. I have tried to set out the meaning of what the participants were saying within the context without including the details such as the exact timings of overlapping speech, or of pauses, that I would have if I was to have conducted a finer-grained conversation analysis. I have presented a naturalised transcription, with most pauses and stutters removed (Oliver et al., 2005). As the methods and aims of this study are closely related to Alvesson, I have adopted his format of presenting interviews (2010), and also used it for the discussions.

For the purposes of the research, the main priority was to have the data securely stored and easily accessible. This meant transcribing the interviews and discussions from the sessions recorded, and typing up observations. Since a reflexive approach takes a flexible and sceptical approach to data, I did not code the data using software; I had found during a training course in methods at the University that the coding system in NVivo was too specific and definitive. Instead of using the software I continued the immersion in the data that had begun during the course of the research. In reflexive qualitative research, analysis of the data begins with the collection, since no data is thought to be context-free and how it is interpreted is important in the construction of data (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Analysis is an ongoing iterative process whereby the theoretical position of the researcher as well as shaping the data develops in reference to the data as more is collected. There is therefore no fixed start and end point for the analysis of results other the timescale of the research itself. Throughout the process - from the theoretical position adopted to the methods selected, to the cases selected, to how the data is interpreted and represented - analysis is an inescapable and ongoing action of the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). In practice, this meant that the data analysis phase meant taking ongoing notes in relation to the data that were similar to the reflective notes taken during fieldwork.

There is no fully satisfactory 'endpoint' in the process of the research, inasmuch as full and unproblematic answers to the research questions are not achievable (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Rather, the conclusion of data analysis must be to answer the reflective questions attending to the limitations of the research as set

out by Alvesson et al. (2008b). As well as being conscious of the limitations of the research throughout the process, I reflected on the results I came to and the way I presented them, which is set out in the conclusion.

5.5 Ethics

In the research, the two groups that might be harmed by the research were the participants and the staff, and there was also the reputation of the organisations to consider. Since I have already discussed the issues of access, of my presence as an observer and of including young people in research, I will not return to them here. Before I started the research, I completed an ethical approval form administered by the Business School and I wrote the consent forms (see Appendix), and showed them to my supervisor at Exeter University, that would be used in the research for both young people and staff. As the research involved young people I also underwent a police CRB check. These were approved, I was also aware of any potential ethical issues throughout the research.

In terms of parental consent, according to the NCB guidelines, it is not usually necessary for research with 16-17 year olds, except in certain circumstances: where an interview is taking place in the family home, the research covers a particularly sensitive topic, or the young person is particularly vulnerable or cared for (Shaw et al., 2011). None of these circumstances applied to this research project.

Apart from AR, I have anonymised the names of all participants and organisations in the study. It is already knowable on the internet that I am researching learning projects through AR, and so I have not anonymised this aspect. As there are many projects in museums and galleries through AR that are similar to ones that I am

researching, I concluded that it would not be possible to identify the organisation from the description that I have given. I have avoided using any terms within the project that might link the description to the project. I consider that the projects have been sufficiently, though not totally, anonymised. There is always a risk – of a breach of confidentiality, for example - attached to any research. However, throughout the research my priority was to ensure that the participants, staff and organisations were protected from harm.

In my dealings with the young people, I was aware of the unequal power relations, and the possible harm that could arise from my observing and interviewing them. So far as I am aware, there were in practice no such issues in terms of causing harm. As with my relationship with the co-ordinator (described above), my main concern was to have an 'ethic of care' which 'emphasises concrete circumstances over abstract principles' (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p.70). As each circumstance arose, I was careful not to cause any harm to the participants. I sought to be sensitivity towards them to identify times when participants were feeling self-conscious and the presence of a researcher might exacerbate their uncomfortable feelings. In the interviews, whilst endeavouring to investigate participants' narratives about their experience, I was always careful to respect what they were saying (Alvesson, 2011).

5.6 Trustworthiness

From a reflexive position, research cannot provide guaranteed context-free knowledge through technical procedures. Research is placed within the context of the academic community, and it is the academic community who will be the final judges of whether the research is influential (Alvesson et al., 2005; Alvesson &

Sköldberg, 2009). It is therefore necessary to make the case in favour of the research being trustworthy (Shenton, 2004). While from a reflexive position the idea of checklists is problematic, because they provide the appearance of rigour without necessarily delivering it (Alvesson et al., 2005), I have identified individually the ways in which this chapter has addressed issues of 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability' and 'confirmability' (Shenton, 2004).

These issues can be compared with the positivist issues of validity and reliability. While qualitative research is not as methods-driven as positivist approaches and takes a more sceptical attitude to measures, this may raise doubt as to whether it can be trusted by the wider research community (ibid.). I have therefore paid particular attention in this chapter to identifying why, from a reflexive position, the research is to be trusted. This has entailed the following processes as listed by Shenton (ibid., p.73):

Credibility

- Adoption of appropriate, well-recognised research methods
- Development of early familiarity with culture of participating organisations
- Random sampling of individuals serving as informants
- Triangulation via use of different methods, different types of informants and different sites
- Debriefing sessions between researcher and superiors
- Use of "reflective commentary"
- Description of background, qualifications and experience of the researcher
- Examination of previous research to frame findings

Transferability

- Provision of background data, to establish context of study, and detailed description of phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made

Dependability

- Employment of “overlapping methods”
- In-depth methodological description to allow study to be repeated

Confirmability

- Triangulation to reduce effect of investigator bias
- Admission of researcher’s beliefs and assumptions
- Recognition of shortcomings in study’s methods and their potential effects
- In-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinized

This chapter has described how the research will engage with the three research questions. It has outlined a position whereby the research community should trust it as an authentic attempt to develop existing theory through examining a real-world example without necessarily having to accept it as context-free ‘truth’.

Chapter 6: Framing the Projects

The research question that this chapter responds to is ‘how were the participation projects framed by the relevant organisations?’ This will be answered through a discourse analysis of the planning documentation through which the participation

projects are proposed by the case study 'associate' organisations and agreed to by AR. To recap, the associate in AR is the organisation that receives artwork and funding for participation projects from AR. The discourse analysis of the documents is based on Fairclough's (2001b, 2005) approach to understanding the role of language in social action, set out below. In the chapter, descriptions of the two case study projects that constitute a consensus between the associate and the AR about what will happen in the project are set out and analysed. The focus of the chapter will be to explore how the intention of the organisation and AR to create a *meaningful* participation project together may lead to the unintended consequences of creating a *controlling* project, as discussed in Chapter 2.

As the chapter concerns the organisational context in particular, it is useful to restate the argument of Chapter 2. It considered the importance of the participation projects being top-down, organised through adult organisations within which children and young people are involved. Several key tensions were identified: participation being 'ensured' through management processes in the organisation, yet management processes by definition incorporate young people within the organisation; participation is an important means through which organisations such as museums and galleries demonstrate their value, through narrow forms of accountability; the professional is seen as central to the success of participation and is accountable to management processes that 'ensure' meaningful participation while constraining the professional's freedom of action to make participation work; finally, in hierarchical organisations, participation is bound up with children and young people accepting their position within the organisation.

Project management is in this chapter positioned as the specific process that is most relevant to understanding the management of participation within AR. Project management can be defined as ‘the planning, organising, directing, and controlling of company resources for a relatively short-term objective that has been established to complete specific goals and objectives’ (Kerzner, 2006, p.4). AR is a particular organisational form of participation in that involves the collaboration of different partners; short-term collaboration within organisations in this way is common within the public services, and the purpose of project management here is used to ensure that everyone involved in the project is working towards achieving the set goals in the agreed way (Crawford & Helm, 2009). This does not necessarily mean that project management does ensure this consensus, since the project documents can be interpreted differently within and across different organisations even when there is a shared language (Sapsed & Salter, 2004). From the theoretical position I have adopted, project management as a management process can be considered both useful and counter-productive, in that it ensures that a participation project is created according to the participative ideals of AR (as set out below), but at the same time the problematic aspects of management and participation (as set out above) are likely to be present. In this chapter I will use the same principle that I used to analyse the organisational context in Chapter 2, which is that the project management of the participation projects represents a possible ‘functional stupidity’:

Functional stupidity is organisationally-supported lack of reflexivity, substantive reasoning, and justification. It entails a refusal to use intellectual resources outside a narrow and ‘safe’ terrain. It can provide a sense of certainty that allows organisations to function smoothly. This can save the organisation and its members from the frictions provoked by doubt and reflection

In this way, I will take a critical approach to the AR application process; in the discussion I will reflect on this position and set out an alternative positive way of understanding the application process.

According to Fairclough, it is important to understand the linguistic elements of social practices such as project management, since the effect that project management has is on the creation of consensus through language (2001b, 2005). As a way of doing so, he suggests paying particular attention to genres and discourses. In this chapter I will consider:

- A) The project management genre of the application process in AR. This entails analysing the format and purpose of the application forms in order to consider the means through which participation projects are framed through language?
- B) The discourses through which the purpose and plan of the projects are represented. How are the processes of the projects framed and what is the position of participants and coordinators?

By exploring the genre and discourses of the AR application process, it will be possible to produce an understanding of the role of project management in the example of the case studies and by extension the role of management in participation.

6.1 Genre of AR Applications

Significantly, within AR the projects are managed between AR and the associates through processes of project management whereby the associate sets out what will happen in the projects and against which the associates are held accountable. In this section I am interested in the format through which AR participation projects

are planned through the application procedure. I explore the 'genre' of the application forms in two stages. In the first stage I have explored the way that AR has presented itself to the associates in the information provided with the application forms, in particular focusing on its aims and principles of working with young people. This is relevant because it provides important cues to the associates for the way that they frame their AR participation projects. The second stage focuses on the format of the particular questions to which the associates respond in planning their participation projects.

6.1.1 How AR Frames Itself

Here, I will investigate how AR constructs itself within the documentation sent to prospective associate galleries in the application packs when they have expressed interest. The principles of AR and its learning aims are also publicly available, including on the Tate website. As set out in the introduction, since its creation in 2008 AR has received ongoing public funding connected to learning projects for young people (aged 13-25); engaging young people is one of the foundational 'guiding principles' of AR, as is set out in the information pack for associates:

The three guiding principles for ARTIST ROOMS are that it is:

- Experienced through the framework of monographic exhibitions and displays;
- Shared with museums and galleries for audiences across the United Kingdom;
- Used to engage young people with the art of our time in order to inspire future generations. (AR, 2010)

While it is entirely legitimate to use an art collection such as AR in order to engage young people, it is important to acknowledge that there is not necessarily a 'natural' connection between the AR collection and young people. Much of the collection

was formed in the 1970s and 1980s, and while the collection continues to grow, most of the artists could not themselves be described as young and much of the collection does not appear to be concerned with 'youth' (c.f. Tate, n.d.). The connection arose in part because of the priorities of AR partners Tate and National Galleries of Scotland (NGS) to engage a new young audience (AR, 2009) and in part because the collector and donor became interested in art as a child, and has a commitment to engaging young people with the art, which was one of the reasons why he donated the art (d'Offay, 2014).

I would suggest that the connection between the collection and young people needs to be understood on a political level. Work with children and young people, around the term 'learning', has been one of the chief ways in which museums and galleries have justified the funding they have received (Earle, 2013). More generally, the arts have had to demonstrate their social role, and Chapter 3 examined how the social role of the arts, including work with young people, was represented in grandiose terms that did not correspond closely to reality (Belfiore, 2004, 2009). It is worthy of note that the third principle of AR that covers young people is expressed in far more grandiose terms than the first two principles that seem to describe AR in more everyday, verifiable terms. AR is monographic, and it is shared with organisations around the country. Young people have a political currency for the arts, not shared by the display and sharing of art for its sake. I would suggest that this has resulted in the third principle referring to young people being dressed up in particularly grandiose rhetoric, which I am not sure makes sense. Are the young people expected to inspire their children, or are 'young people' and 'future generations' meant to be the same here? Such grandiose

representation is common within contemporary society (Alvesson, 2013) and within projects with young people in the arts (cf. Lord et al., 2012). I am not suggesting that howAR represents its connection to young people is out of the ordinary. However, it may initiate the professionals in the associates into a certain way of talking about AR and young people that is based in part on politically facing rhetoric.

The information packs set out a specific set of learning aims to which the associates are asked to refer in their applications:

- To engage 'new' young audiences (13 – 25 years old) across the UK with the ARTIST ROOMS collection and artists, in a meaningful and enjoyable way.
- To establish and maintain effective collaborations between curators, educators and other gallery staff to maximise the potential of ARTIST ROOMS and realise its key objectives.
- To build and make available a body of learning material and resources by and about young people connecting with ARTIST ROOMS.
- To explore sustainable ways of developing and maintaining communities of young learners engaged in ARTIST ROOMS and contemporary art. (AR, 2010)

The learning aims were formed by consensus between AR and NGS in part on the basis of conventional thought within the museum and gallery sector (AR, 2009). It is important to acknowledge here that the language is not grandiose, and the aims do not appear to be over-ambitious. They are relevant as the two case studies in this thesis are clearly influenced by the learning aims (covered below). Of particular relevance is that, other than the second and part of the third aim which are directed at the organisation, there is a shared notion in the learning aims of an 'engaged' young person and a focus on the experience of young people. This notion of an engaged individual is unquestioned throughout the planning process, and I discuss

the effects of this in terms of how the participants and co-ordinators are positioned within the projects.

6.1.2 Structure for Framing AR Participation Projects

In this section, I outline the AR processes through which the associates apply for learning projects with young people. In the literature review, I have reviewed the complexities involved in participation projects with young people (Alvesson & Spicer, 2013). It is important to explore whether or not the AR processes enable the professionals involved to be open and attentive to these complexities.

The selection process for receiving an AR exhibition is competitive one, with prospective associates completing an application process. The prospective project with young people holds a particularly important position within this selection process as it is the one criteria that the associate has significant control over. Aside from the learning programme, the criteria are:

- Geographical spread.
- Range of organisations (large and small)
- Artist spread
- Programme balance (to ensure the balance of exhibition concepts and programming)
- Associates: (to ensure there is a mix of existing Associates who have been involved with the programme). (AR, 2010)

As is made clear to the associates, the learning programme is a particularly important area to be selected over other associates:

Learning activities: how venues intend to animate exhibitions and how special learning initiatives would be developed to engage young people...Please pay special attention to this section of the application. (Ibid.)

This unequivocal statement of the importance of the learning project in the award of AR exhibitions can be regarded as having a significant impact on the projects planned by prospective associates. It means that the projects are, in an important sense, facing outwards, towards AR as an external funder with its strong representation of the possibilities of what young people's participation can achieve, as set out above and in Chapter 3. Representing the project externally in this way could be at the cost of its not facing inwards, towards creating a project that will work well in practice (Eliasoph, 2009). In other words, the project may appear impressive on the page but prove difficult to turn into a reality. This means that the phrasing of the requirement for participation projects to be outlined is particularly important. It states as follows:

Please outline ideas for learning and outreach activity/events related to your preferred artists/ exhibition concept and state how you would meet the objective of ARTIST ROOMS to engage young people (13 – 25 years) in order to inspire future generations. (AR, 2011a)

It seems to me that this wording reveals a potentially problematic combination of project management and grandiose language, in which the associates are asked to 'meet' an objective that is both ambitious and nebulous. In Chapters 3 and 4 it was argued that, despite efforts of the arts to view experience as knowable, controllable, and as something that can be turned into outcomes, these efforts are likely to be thwarted, because of the nature of experience. Consequently, it appears that the associates are being required to describe their projects in relation to somewhat empty and grandiose language (Alvesson, 2013). This does not necessarily mean that the descriptions of the projects will themselves be empty

and grandiose. The phrasing of the requirement could be regarded as useful, in the sense that it offers the associates something to strive for. However, associates are required here to state how they will meet the objective of engaging young people; since this is essentially a matter of the young people's experience, which cannot be controlled for, there is a danger that the description of the project will be longer on rhetoric than substance.

Further requirements apply to successful applicants, who then apply for additional funds as they elaborate on their plans outlined in the original application. At this stage, the notion of meeting AR objectives is retained, and there are additional requirements, one of which is to work in new and ambitious ways:

It should be stressed to Associates that where possible, the additional funding available should be used to aid special learning initiatives that go beyond usual offers. (AR, 2010)

Associate are also required to state in detail what their learning programme will be and how it will be new:

Please detail below how the funding would be used, detailing how it will enhance your existing committed budgets and activity, and how it meets the aims and objectives of ARTIST ROOMS as detailed in the guidelines. Statements should illustrate how this differs from existing plans and programmes. (2011b)

Please supply a full breakdown of costs to show in detail how the funds would be used.

Here again, there are possible tensions around what level of control is appropriate for a learning project. It is a standard procedure of project management to account specifically for the funds that are used, and therefore for AR to want to know how

the additional funding will be used. In the funding process, the primary concern of AR is that the funding that it provides is not used as a substitute for existing funding, being used for projects and workshops that the associate would run for any exhibition. The potential problem here is that, taken as a whole, the demands being made of the associates may be problematic. They are being asked to:

- Work in a new and innovative way,
- Meet a grandiose objective
- State in detail how they will do this.

This seems to amount to a tacit demand that the associates turn away from a substantive consideration of how they will work with young people in an ambitious and ethical way, in favour of a glittering description of a project that may have little relation to what can or will happen in reality. Matters are further complicated by the associate facing in two directions as they complete the application forms:

- Attempting to secure funds from AR
- Planning the projects

In order to secure funds, the associate must write a convincing account of how the funds will be used to meet the objectives, which I have argued might lead to empty notions of how the young people will experience the project. In the planning of the project, there may therefore be false assumptions about how the young people will experience the project. Because of the nature of the project management, the associates are tied to the plans that they have made, and so any false assumptions must become a pivotal part of the project. Having to work in a new way, state exactly what will happen, and meet unrealistic objectives, the associate

may end up by creating a narrative which, however convincing it may be on paper, is impossible for the co-ordinator and participants to put into practice.

At this stage, every associate is awarded additional funding from AR. However, associates are sometimes asked to re-write the application form, and in many cases AR will not fully fund all the activities described in the form. Common reasons for not funding an activity include a perceived lack of relevance to AR learning aims and similarity between the proposed activity and the associate's usual practice (for example, funding extra workshops of a type that the gallery already runs) (from discussion with AR). The application process can be regarded as a negotiation, in which AR is mindful of its stake in the projects run with AR funding and of the need for the projects to work towards the aims of AR, but equally mindful that the associate galleries are independent and will have their own pressures and ways of working.

At the end of the project, the associates send in an evaluation report, containing figures and questionnaires completed by visitors and participants. While it is an aim of AR to learn about the experience of participants through the questionnaires, in practice AR's main priority is to ensure that the funds have been used in the manner agreed. For the purposes of this research, it is important to note that once funding for a project has been agreed on, the associates will carry out the project set out. Within the logic of project management, there is limited flexibility once something has been agreed, and so it is important to attend to the project as it is framed in the funding agreement.

6.2 Discourses of the Participation Projects

In this section, I will consider how the projects are constructed in response to the funding application questions set out above. I will explore the emergence, in the construction of the projects the different 'modes' of participation, which from reviewing the literature and examining the aims of AR I have described as 'meaningful' and 'controlling'. I will investigate the ways in which associates' plans can be regarded as privileging a meaningful mode of participation, and how the potential contradictions of the project militate in favour of a controlling mode. A 'meaningful' or 'ethical' project or mode will be defined as one in which participants are able to engage on their own terms about what matters to them in a process through which bonds are formed amongst participants, and between participants and staff, and resulting in positive outcomes for participants (Chawla, 2001; Fielding, 2006; Percy-Smith, 2006; Pringle, 2006). A 'controlling' or 'instrumental' mode is one in which the young people are asked to participate, but participation happens for adult interests, whether this is for an organisation to demonstrate its value, for participants to be shaped so that they share the appropriate adult-approved beliefs and values, or so that it will improve the efficiency of the service (Fielding, 2006; Bragg, 2007a; Whitty and Wisby, 2007).

The content of the project plans of the two case study projects is reproduced below. They are important because they set out the details of the project, in the organisation's own words. Careful reading of the plans also reveals that there are inherently contradictory aspects in each project.

6.2.1 Riverton's Project

Riverton is a large, local authority funded museum and art gallery. Founded in the 19th century, it has an eclectic permanent collection with objects ranging from worldwide ancient civilisations to the natural world to Old Master European and more recent artworks. It is one of a group of cultural organisations funded by the Local Authority across the city. As a well-established and well-attended organisation, the ongoing funding of the organisation was more secure than in some other arts organisations around the country, including organisations exhibiting AR. However, at a time of ever-reduced funds available to local authorities, the organisation was conscious that it was required to continually justify its funding from the local authority. Furthermore, the organisation was continually aiming to supplement the local authority funding with further projects in partnership with funding bodies such as the Arts Council.

One of the main ways that funding was secured, both from the Local Authority and from external partners was through learning activities. The core learning activities was work with school groups. This work was carried out by a team across the different Local Authority cultural organisations in the city. While there was a sizeable and experienced group of learning professionals to which Riverton Museum and Art Gallery had access, they were mostly tied up with the ongoing work with school groups, and there was limited capacity beyond this. Funding for longer participative projects with young people outside school groups and with adults, while supported in the Local Authority plans for cultural organisations work with their audiences, had to be secured through external funding. Prior to the AR project, Riverton had secured funding for a significant participative project with

adults. According to staff at Riverton, while AR project and the previous participative project were useful in changing how the organisation relates to its audience, a major limitation is that a large part of the funding is committed to securing freelance professionals to implement the project. This means that the permanent staff at the organisation are only able to have limited engagement with the project and much of what is learned from the project departs along with the freelance professional at the conclusion of the project. While the AR funding is useful to Riverton in that it enables them to work ambitiously with their audience in a way that is expected by the Local Authority, the limited, short-term nature of the AR funding means that it cannot be used to secure the extra capacity that the organisation would require to ensure that the organisation could work participatively with young people and other audiences over the long-term.

In their funding application, this is how Riverton described their project (redacted for anonymity):

Riverton would like to recruit a diverse group of young people from across Riverton and aged between 16-24. We envisage that the group will consist of young people who have already participated on projects (through the looked-after children's service, partner schools and [the] volunteer scheme) as well as recruiting young people from local schools, colleges and through the youth service. The group will have the opportunity to share experiences and support one another as they take a lead role in developing an arts offer for all young people in the [area]. We regularly receive requests from young people to undertake voluntary placements and would see this initiative as a way of being able to offer a meaningful and structured approach to developing new talent, building new audiences and shaping the future of provision for young people across the service.

We are also currently looking into accreditation for volunteers involved with the service.

We are aware that this will be a demanding project requiring a dedicated member of staff to support the needs of the young people, in addition to in-house staff. Therefore to fulfill this project we are seeking support to employ a Project Co-ordinator to work with a group of up to 12 young people, to co-ordinate meetings and develop each stage of the project. The successful person will have a background in both arts and youth work, supporting and guiding the [participants] in a mentoring and creative role. The project aims would be to develop confidence in young people in participating in the arts, taking an active role in re-shaping Riverton's approach to working with young people, and in turn, explore the social and public benefit of the arts. With a creative and vocational approach, the project will also aim to foster skills that the young people can carry forward to their future careers in the arts. Outcomes would be different for each stage of the project but might include design and print of gallery guides, marketing materials, exhibition interpretation, gallery tours, public events and social media including a project blog.

The proposal is for a year-long project which will begin with the [participants] working closely with Riverton's learning, exhibitions and marketing teams as they prepare first for the touring exhibition of [x]. This will introduce the group to [Riverton's] service and existing strategies for engaging audiences, the formal learning programme and community partnership projects. The [participants] will work on the two planned free Teachers' Seminars for primary and secondary school teachers in which Riverton will introduce teachers to both the [x] and ARTIST ROOM exhibitions. They will take part in discussions with teachers around teaching visual art in schools.

The group will then have involvement with the events programme for ARTIST ROOMS, working on the school and college study days and

the family events programme. They will develop peer interpretation of ARTIST ROOMS through printed and social media, creating a web page for the exhibition that links to [Riverton's] web page, and developing an ARTIST ROOM blog. These areas would have a target audience of other young people aged 16-25 and the [participants] would be encouraged to explore the most relevant and suitable methods to engage with this key audience. The resources produced and the approach taken by the [participants] will be available to other venues. We intend to make use of quick response coding (QR, see marketing section below) to link to web-based interpretation that visitors (young but not exclusively so) can access through smart phones.

As part of their learning process the [participants] will visit other art spaces including...

The ARTIST ROOMS project will culminate in the [participants] devising and running a launch event for the exhibition in the form of an exclusive private view aimed at their peers.

The [participants] project will be an opportunity to pilot an approach specifically aimed at encouraging young people to visit and engage with the [Riverton] in new and exciting ways. This approach will also allow for reflection and revision of strategies which can feed into work with ARTIST ROOMS.

Meaningful Project

The ways in which this participation project is constructed so as to be meaningful emerge clearly from this description. First, there is a clear attempt to change the balance in the power relations between the adult organisation and young people by enabling the participants to 're-shape' the organisation's engagement with young people. While the purpose of the project is to work with the participants recruited, it also aims for a much wider impact in changing how the organisation works. There

is a thoroughly documented commitment to establishing a collaborative and empowering culture that enables the participants to engage with the project on their own terms is thoroughly documented. The new culture consists of the following aspects:

The group will have the opportunity to share experiences and support one another

[The project is] able to offer a meaningful and structured approach

[The co-ordinator will have] a mentoring and creative role

[A project aim] would be to develop confidence in young people in participating in the arts

[The project will adopt] a creative and vocational approach

It is interesting to note that the project forms part of an ongoing initiative in re-shaping the service, and can best be understood within this broader context. There is space for the young people to choose exactly how they re-shape the service, with the participants able to 'explore' how they do this. In summary, the plan documented here can be regarded as a valid description of a meaningful project, as understood within the literature. By making reference to a 'community of learners', 'meaningful and enjoyable' engagement for the young people, and 'collaboration' within the organisation, it also expressly conforms to the aims of AR.

Emergent Controlling Project

It can be seen that the plan expresses a clear intention to create a project that is meaningful for participants, without acknowledging any potential contradiction between this commitment and the organisational aims of the project to create usable outcomes. The two are framed as being complementary, as in the following sentence, for example: 'The group will have the opportunity to share experiences

and support one another as they take a lead role in developing an arts offer for all young people in the [area]'. This sentence presents the participant and organisation as working harmoniously. A different picture emerges, however, if a critical analysis of the plan is undertaken, informed by the research revealing how participants tend to be incorporated into the organisation's agenda. From this perspective, there are implicit tensions within the plan that could lead to a controlling mode of participation. For example, the role of the young people in creating resources is strongly shaped by the framework through which the organisation aims to attract young people. This emerges from the following extracts:

[The participants] would work on three key areas designed for their peers including interpretation, events and marketing.

It is intended that the group would act as advocates for the [organisation's] service, promoting both the exhibitions programme and our growing contemporary art collection.

The proposal is for a year-long project which will begin with the [participants] working closely with the [organisation's] learning, exhibitions and marketing teams ... This will introduce the group to the [organisation's] service and existing strategies for engaging audiences, the formal learning programme and community partnership projects.

These extracts strongly suggest that the young people are to be incorporated into the organisation (Freeman et al., 2003; Fielding, 2006): the role conceived for them is clearly limited to their playing a role within the 'service'. They are to create resources within the framework of the organisation's service, and the organisation's service has ways of working, strategies and teams, and uses particular terms such

as marketing and interpretation. These constitute constraints on their freedom of action. While in practice they might experience their participation as a useful opportunity, there is little space for them to negotiate their own role within the organisation, and this may mean that they are unable to engage on their own terms (Percy-Smith, 2006).

There is a tension here between the constrained role that the young people are to play within the organisation's service and the stated intention that the young people will 'take a lead role in developing an arts offer for all young people in the city'. In practice, this 'lead role' is restricted to learning about the organisation's approach and playing a particular part in it. They have autonomy to decide how they create resources for other young people. They are not, however, authorised to decide how to engage other young people, or what to create for them: their role in these areas is not to lead but to follow. The project should therefore be seen as 'distributed', with the opportunities for participants residing within a particular space within the existing structures.

As part of these structures, the freelance project co-ordinator has a complex role: to 'co-ordinate meetings and develop each stage of the project', while 'supporting and guiding the [participants] in a mentoring and creative role'. In accordance with the logic of public institutions that feature tight forms of accountability, the co-ordinator is responsible and accountable for the project. From the perspective of participation as the transfer of power from adult institutions to young people, however, this is problematic. It means that the project can be seen as being organised and led by adult professionals; the young people are, in a sense, of secondary importance, and might even be regarded as forming part of the co-

ordinator's 'team'. This adds weight to the argument as to whether participation in its current form has potential to be meaningful in organisations as they currently operate (Percy-Smith, 2006).

A further potential problem arises out of the ambitious scope of the project, which envisages that the participants will create a large number of resources and participate in a range of activities. While such ambition is not in itself problematic, it may result in the project expecting a great deal - or even too much - of the participants. The organisation will be required to demonstrate that the kind of resources outlined in the project have been created, but there is no equivalent way of accounting for or demonstrating that the experience of the young people has been meaningful. This increases the likelihood that the young people will have to fit their experience into the project, rather than the project adapting to the experience of young people. In this analysis, the limitations of the project plans have been linked to the AR process of project management. This analysis needs to be qualified by taking into account the political context within which Riverton finds itself. Quite apart from AR, like other arts organisations Riverton faces pressure from funders such as the Local Authorities and the Arts Council to demonstrate that it is meeting objectives in working with audiences. In particular, Riverton is required to demonstrate that it is transforming how it operates to enable the public to have greater influence over its decision making, and also to demonstrate that it is having an impact on young people, and especially disadvantaged young people. In this light, AR is the means through which Riverton is able to meet existing priorities. The overambition of the project planning can also be partly attributed to

the political pressures that are on arts organisations such as Riverton as well as the project management processes of AR.

6.2.2 Bolworth's Project

AR works with a range of organisations in the UK outside of Edinburgh and London, some of which are small and would not ordinarily have the resources to exhibit as celebrated art as in the AR collection. Bolworth was a small arts organisation, with one permanent member of staff, set in a small town fairly remote from any city. Rather than permanent staff, there was a small group of freelance professionals who would work regularly with the organisation. The core work of Bolworth was in working with young people in drama and dance and it did not commonly exhibit art. While it was the only arts organisation in the town that worked with young people, it did not receive funding from the Local Authority and was reliant on external funding from a range of sources for the ongoing activities and upkeep of the building, including from private donations.

The impact of the AR exhibition for the organisation was much more significant than at Riverton, with its large permanent collection, ongoing temporary exhibitions and staffing. For the AR exhibition, Bolworth was required to renovate the exhibition space so that it was a safe and secure environment for the artworks, and to recruit volunteers to staff the exhibition space. The AR exhibition was potentially very useful for Bolworth in raising its profile and in helping to secure long-term funding. The government policy of attaching the arts to education means that for many cultural organisations the policy of attaching the arts to education work with school groups is one of the core ways in which Local Authority funding can be

received (Gray, 2004). Unlike at Riverton, at Bolworth there was no continual work with school groups. Enabling work with school groups can therefore be viewed as another way in which AR enabled Bolworth to raise its profile for future funding.

In Bolworth, the same kind of tension can be identified between a meaningful mode of participation and an emergent controlling mode that is unacknowledged and unintended. The plan for the project is set out as follows (again redacted for anonymity):

[The project] has the potential to recruit young people (24) ... and to build links between young people from around the area as well as foster partnership and collaboration between a large number of local organisations. It aims to provide a range of work experiences, to develop a life-long involvement with the arts and can contribute towards Arts Award.

Under supervision of Project Coordinator, [participants] will also develop and deliver curriculum for excellence-related drama and/or art workshops to [students] as well as older members of the community relating directly to the [AR] works and themes on display.

A small group (4-6) of [participants] interested in a different range of work experiences will work collaboratively with Project Coordinator to create arts-based workshop(s) related to both the curriculum and the exhibition. Under supervision of Project Coordinator this workshop will then be delivered by [participants] with either visual or performance art outcome that will form part of an ever-evolving exhibition in an adjacent space.

[Participants] will create an educational resource pack under guidance of Project Coordinator and be involved in overall evaluation of the programme and devise a means by which to collect feedback as part of programme delivery.

This programme will offer [workshops to schools].

Meaningful project

The meaningful participation project is not as clearly articulated here as it was in the Riverton plan. At its heart, it consists of young people working with the co-ordinator to re-shape the service for young people. In one respect, however, it represents a significant departure from the traditional relationship between arts organisations and young people, in which young people are instructed on what they should think and feel about the artworks, because it offers young people an opportunity to create their own works and display them in the gallery.

The intention that the project is to be meaningful and enjoyable for young people is expressed at a rhetorical level. For example, the plan states that the work of the young people and the co-ordinator will be 'collaborative', and that the young people are to benefit from the project through gaining work experience. What is striking is the extent to which the participants will create resources and the extent to which they will serve the organisation in a variety of ways: acting as gallery staff, creating an exhibition, creating and delivering workshops, and creating an educational resource pack. The plan clearly meets the aim of creating a community of young people engaged with AR and with creating resources.

Emergent controlling project

The same tension exists here as in the Riverton project, between the AR aims of the young people creating resources and having an enjoyable and meaningful

experience. However, in this instance, a particular problem exists both because of the extent of the resources and services that they are expected to provide, and the challenging nature of the contribution that is expected of them. The idea that young people will feel confident enough to, develop and deliver workshops and create an educational pack seems highly contestable, and it is equally uncertain that they would find meaning in these activities.

The role of project management is important here. The project management format has meant that the project is clearly articulated in terms of the outcomes that it will create. However, the experience of the young people is far less assured. In the event that a conflict arises between achieving the set outcomes of the project and ensuring that participants have a positive experience, there is in practice likely to be very little room for negotiation. Any flexibility which the co-ordinator might wish to exercise will be constrained by the tight project management, focusing on measurable outcomes. It is also relevant that there that there is no extensive evaluation of the projects, leaving the organisation free to construct the experience of the young people in positive terms, without needing to supply extensive evidence or obtain independent validation.

A further issue around project management is the problem of the associate appearing to overinvest in the AR aims. The AR aims are not necessarily problematic in themselves. However, in the application form it appears that the associate has been particularly assiduous in demonstrating that they are meeting the AR aims. The main problem here is that the AR aim of young people creating resources has led to young people being required to create endless resources, some of which appear difficult. Another aim is to engage communities of young

people with AR, and groups of young people are incorporated into the organisation's service working on the AR learning and marketing activities. In other words, the AR aims are followed to a fault.

An alternative perspective is that the root of the problem is not in the AR aims themselves, but in the way that the organisation is making use of AR funding. Working with school groups is not an AR priority, and its appearance in the project plans should therefore be attributed to Bolworth's aims of establishing links with schools possibly as a means of securing future funding. In this perspective, the problem is in fact that Bolworth is attempting to marry its own priorities (working with school groups) with AR priorities (working participatively with young people) to create the potentially problematic project outlined above.

6.3 Positioning of Participants and Co-ordinators

In this section, I will summarise the ways of being that are constructed for the participants and the co-ordinators to follow.

6.3.1 Who are the participants?

As regards young people, the AR learning aims assumed that they would be engaged with AR art, if they were provided the opportunity. In the planning documents, a particular kind of participant was constructed in each document.

Participants were to be:

- *Industrious*. There was a lot for the participants to complete in the projects.
- *Collaborative*. The work of the project was to be undertaken by young people and the co-ordinator together.

- *Active*. The projects anticipated that the participants would want to re-shape the service.
- *Career-focused*. Each project offered a vocational approach, particularly emphasised in Riverton and present in Bolworth, whereby the participants would learn about working in an arts organisation.
- *Intelligent*. The work of creating workshops and materials is quite complex and difficult.
- *Willing to be subordinate*. In the projects, the co-ordinator is given more authority than the participants.

In relation to the discussion of participation and identity in Chapter 4, I would characterise the project documentation as a means whereby the organisation draws on the rhetorics of participation to construct a participative subject that may well not be related to actual people (Craib, 1994; Freeman et al., 2003; Czerniawski, 2012). Within the projects, there is a danger that young people may have to perform being a participant in a way that is foreign to them, rather than being able to engage in the project on their own terms.

6.3.2 *Who are the co-ordinators?*

In both Riverton and Bolworth, the co-ordinators played a central part in the project. They did not write or have any input into either application, and they were only recruited after funding had been agreed. This meant that their role was created for them, and constrained by the project plans. They are required to work 'creatively' and 'collaboratively' with the young people to create the resources, and can be regarded as occupying the space between the young people and the organisation, as has been explored above. In practice, they are left attempting to solve an intractable dilemma, in which the young people are supposed to have a

positive experience while having to produce resources that they find unenjoyable or difficult.

Much has been written about how important the member of staff delivering a participation project is to its success (Lord et al., 2012; Fleming, 2013). However, here I want to emphasise that the co-ordinator is faced with an impossible task. Whilst the project designed for them to implement is superficially coherent, it contains a fundamental contradiction, in that it expects young people to enjoy and find meaningful that which they may well not. At the same time, the process of project management constrains their capacity to act by fixing outcomes and ways of working that they are to deliver. I would argue that, rather than focusing on the role of the co-ordinator, it can be more fruitful to look at the deeper organisational ways of working and assumptions about how participation will work.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that the co-ordinator arrives at the project with their own values and approaches to working with young people. These may include a focus on process rather than outcomes, a commitment to the young people having a positive experience, and a reluctance to overtly control the young people as far as possible (Pringle, 2009b). There is therefore another potential source of tension between the values of the co-ordinator and the demands made upon them by the project to provide outcomes for the organisation through working with the young people. They are expected to produce extensive resources within the relatively short timescales of the projects. This means that the main role or identity of the co-ordinator is a person who can make the project work, and in practice this means engaging with the inherent difficulties of the project.

6.4 Discussion

This exploration of the genre and discourses of the AR application process has revealed problems concerned with project management and the rhetoric of the arts: in particular, participation can be controlling and young people's experience is not predictable within project management formats. The format of project management has been at the heart of many of the problems identified. In particular, it requires the associates to state in detail in the application forms what the young people will create. The format can also be regarded as privileging the resources being created, rather than the experience of the young people, as the resources can be demonstrated in a way that experience cannot.

From the reflexive perspective which I have adopted, the two case studies can be shown to have important similarities. Having been constructed through the same process, there are tensions in both around participant experience and organisational outcomes. This means that, rather than comparing them with each other, discussion in this chapter, and discussion of the results generally, will refer to both case studies.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the approach I have taken here and the findings that I have made. First, a discursive approach that focuses on the process of the applications clearly cannot yield a full understanding of the planning process of the projects. Beyond the application forms, there are discussions between organisations and within them, and this study has not included the voices of those who wrote and judged the applications.

Methodologically, the purpose of discourse analysis is to understand problems in the world (Fairclough, 2001b), and in this chapter I have focused on the

problematic aspects of the planning process within AR. However, while discourse is a factor that exerts influence in the world, it does not determine people's actions (Fairclough, 2005). It follows that the fact that there are problematic aspects of the project plans does not necessarily mean that the projects themselves will be problematic.

According to Alvesson (2002), the fact that organisations do not necessarily have a close relationship with reality can have productive effects, as well as problematic ones. There is an inherent paradox in living within an institution that has an idealised theory of people's experience. On the one hand, the idealised theory is problematic, because the harmonious relations it imagines cannot always exist in reality, and so tensions and inconsistencies about what to do emerge. On the other hand, it can help to resolve these problems, by offering a yardstick and a way of thinking about experiences in the group:

Cultures [or plans] do not necessarily establish clarity, shared orientations and consensus among broad groups of people, but still offer guidelines for coping of instances of ambiguity without too much anarchy or confusion. Bounded ambiguity may mean broadly shared rules and meanings for how to steer around tricky issues, e.g. avoid decision-making or involve as many people as possible in a difficult decision. We can thus say it offers 'meta-meanings' – clues for how to deal with tricky meanings. It may also mean a preference for vague, positive sounding vocabulary, a tolerance for certain, not to say considerable amount of inconsistency and even contradiction without reacting, the use of 'mediating myths' between a strong discrepancy between what is preached and what is practiced. (Ibid., p.166)

Bounded ambiguity does not mean that experiences of ambiguity are avoided. It offers shared meanings that can minimise potentially destructive experiences of confusion, contradiction and notorious uncertainty.

Applying the notion of 'bounded ambiguity' to the project plans enabled them to be understood in the following terms: at the moment, there is concern that young people and art galleries fit awkwardly with each other. Young people have desires and habits that mean they might not spend very much time in galleries, even if they are interested in art. One way of bringing young people into galleries is to create projects in which they have meaningful experiences within the galleries, and shape the organisation's service for other young people. A project in which there is a guiding principle of connection between young person and gallery might serve to create this relationship. This might not happen exactly as imagined: in the project, there may very well be numerous instances in which the young people feel alienated from the gallery and the project. However, the project offers a way of living with these tensions while still maintaining the integrity of the project.

The 'stupidity' perspective (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012), which has been largely adopted in this chapter, is concerned with the possible problems that the applications might lead to. Describing ideal projects which meet AR aims, the application and evaluation forms can be regarded as implying that projects must conform to an ideal. This may impose pressure on the co-ordinator and the participants to perform the project as it has been imagined. Young people may be expected to produce the specified outcomes and have a certain kind of positive experience, even if it is at the cost of suppressing or ignoring the challenging or difficult experiences that they have had within the project. Whether or not the project applications are problematic or not then depends on one's theoretical perspective. In this chapter, I have focused on the problematic aspects in part because it fits in with my own theoretical position as set out in the literature review,

and in part because it is congruent with previous findings about participation projects (Tisdall, 2008) and in part because it is congruent with my findings on the case study projects from different angles as set out in the next four chapters.

In this chapter I have related problematic aspects of the project plans to the way that the AR funding process is managed by Tate and National Galleries Scotland. Arguably the focus on the AR funding process is too narrow, and that the project plans outlined in this chapter are symptomatic of a wider problem that relates to the political position of arts organisations in which they are obligated to continually bid for short-term funding without necessarily having the secure resources to properly implement long-term plans for work with audiences including with young people (Gray, 2008; Tlili, 2008). The gap between rhetoric and reality in relation to projects with young people is in this light built into the political position of the arts and the AR funding process is another example of the awkward position that the arts organisations find themselves in, rather than the funding process itself being the problem. The criticisms of the AR funding process and the project plans should be seen as moderately held given that both AR and the case study organisations are each positioned within a wider funding situation for the arts that requires that statements of intent around audience outcomes may well outstrip the reality (Gray, 2008; Belfiore, 2009).

Chapter 7: Putting the Projects into Practice

Up to this stage of the thesis, I have placed particular emphasis on the distinction between a *meaningful* and *instrumental* project. In the literature review, I explored the roots of the two types of project and how the organisational context appears to be orientated to favouring the controlling project over the meaningful one. In the previous chapter, I suggested that the project documentation constructs the project as both controlling and meaningful and that the projects that the co-ordinators inherited were fundamentally problematic. The project plans contained potential contradictions, inasmuch as the various outcomes and processes that they *specified* seemed to lead to an emergent situation in which quite different outcomes appeared more likely in practice. In this chapter, I will look at how the projects were put into practice by the project co-ordinators, with a particular focus on how they managed to resolve, or at least work with, the inherent contradictions of the project. This chapter then will answer Research Question 2, *how were the participation projects put into practice?*

As regards the function which the co-ordinators were expected to perform, it should be noted that the professional in participation is commonly seen as a figure who can make participation work by putting the project into practice in accordance with the appropriate 'values' and principles (Lord et al., 2012; Fleming, 2013). In participation involving children and young people, in particular, it is sometimes argued that the adult figure may not be minded to cede power to children and young people (cf. Cockburn, 2005). In this chapter, I will critically examine these viewpoints, exploring how far the role of co-ordinators was, in practice, to work within and attempt to resolve some of the fundamental contradictions of the

participation projects that emerged out of the policy and organisational context. Instead of considering the professionals themselves as a potential limiting factor in participation, I will investigate how far professionals are able to resolve the inherent contradictions in participation projects. It is important to acknowledge at this stage that within the process of the research I only managed to obtain one short interview with one of the co-ordinators and failed to interview the other co-ordinator. This is an important limitation which I will discuss in the Conclusion Chapter.

In order to explore the co-ordinators' efforts to make participation work within organisational constraints, I will look at three different 'social orders' that emerged in the projects. Having described the background in which the projects were set, I will consider in the first section those elements of the projects that were designed by the co-ordinators to enable the participants to engage on their own terms: these can be termed 'meaningful projects'. In the second section, I will look at the 'controlling projects': the elements of the project which, despite the efforts of the co-ordinators, constrained the participants, and even subverted some meaningful aspects of the projects. In the third section, I will look at the 'negotiated projects', in which the co-ordinators attempt to reconcile the meaningful and the controlling projects. The purpose of looking at three levels of the projects in this way is to acknowledge as fully as possible the complex role of participation professionals within a challenging environment, without overestimating their capacity to make the project meaningful for participants.

7.1 Background

A guiding principle of AR is that the art exhibitions engage with young people (AR, 2009). It should be noted, however, that AR came into existence as part of the art collection of an individual, Anthony d'Offay, in his position as an art dealer. The purpose of AR to engage with young people occurred when the collection passed into public hands. Whether or not the collection of modern art is actually engaging for young people or not is open to interpretation; of course each young person will have their own experience of the artworks and there are likely to be a broad range in the degree of engagement between young people. It is one of the roles of the co-ordinators to attempt, through the activities and discussions within the projects, to engage the participants in the art. Throughout the project, the co-ordinators designed activities and discussions that attempted to establish a creative connection between the artwork and the young people. Commonly this would mean enabling the participants to create related kinds of artwork to the exhibition art while ensuring that participants had creative freedom over what exactly they produced. Below I describe how this happen in specific cases.

It is important then to outline what kind of artwork was exhibited. At Riverton almost all of the artworks incorporated text within images, including photographs and paintings. According to the curator in discussion with the participants, this commonly was done to question what an artwork could be and to question the authority of the art gallery as institution; the artworks would also playfully investigate our relationship with language and with images; the artworks did not necessarily contain a fixed message or point in themselves for the viewer, the purpose instead being to provoke and stimulate. At Bolworth, the artworks were

portraits, including the artist's self-portraits, of individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds. Based on how the co-ordinator described said to the group about the artworks, the portraits commonly incorporate poses or objects that reflect in some way the person in the portrait; the themes within the portraits are often controversial, including depictions of sexuality; the individuals portrayed are often in striking costumes and poses, which can be seen as an exploration of identity, social constraints and their transgressions.

At both Bolworth and Riverton, the co-ordinators undertook much of the work involved in recruiting participants for the project, mainly through their contacts with art teachers in schools and colleges. Across the two case studies, all but four of the participants found out about the project in this way. Of those who did not, one was searching for volunteering opportunities online, another contacted the organisation because of a particular interest in the artist, and two others had already participated in a separate arts project in the organisation. While being aware of the diversity in participation is important (Wyness, 2006), and it has been suggested that participation projects can be excessively selective as to who is recruited to take part (Tisdall and Davis, 2004), in this case recruiting through art colleges seemed to ensure a range of participants in terms of gender and class (although I did not investigate this formally).

At Riverton, recruitment of participants was initially a slow process. Whereas Bolworth worked regularly with children and young people, Riverton did not have any established projects working with children and young people. Perhaps this was why the co-ordinator had some concern about the low numbers, particularly in the first week when three people attended. Attendance at the second session was six,

and there were eventually around fourteen participants who took part in the project at some stage. This exceeded the target of twelve. For the research I have differentiated between core members, who attended the majority of sessions, and peripheral members who attended less frequently. I have focused on the experience of core members. Differentiating between core and peripheral members was in a sense difficult, since some participants who came less often contributed more when they were present. However, there were about seven participants who attended the majority of the meetings throughout the project. At Bolworth, there were eight participants, and each participant attended the majority of the sessions (see Figure 3, below). At each project, the drop-out rate was low: across the two projects, one person decided the project was not for them and three others cited other commitments as a reason for not continuing.

At Riverton, none of the participants had previously had very much contact with the organisation. Two of the participants (Emma and Sara) had been in previous participative projects, with Emma having been involved in the National Youth Parliament. Out of the sixteen participants, only three did not know any other participant, and perhaps it is noteworthy that two of these were Emma and Sara who had previously been involved in participation projects. Participants knew each other either because they had been recruited at the same time by a teacher at art college or because they told friends about it. No participant knew more than three others prior to the project. Once the project started friends did tend to gravitate towards each other and work on the activities together but this did not overwhelm the project and by the end it could be easy to forget who previously knew each

other as new friendships are formed and the atmosphere of the group becomes much more easygoing.

Most of the participants in the two projects were aged 16-17. At Bolworth, out of the eight participants, five 16 year olds came from the same year in school and had previously been involved in projects at the centre. Within the group from the same school, while all were on friendly terms with each other, some were much closer than others, and the dynamic between them did have an important effect on the project, with Nathalie feeling in the 'shadow' of another participant (as explored in Chapter 9). There was also an 18-year-old and two in their early 20s, one of whom had taken a Masters degree in art (Izzy), while the other was already volunteering at the organisation. All the participants apart from one (who was interested in volunteering) had an interest in modern and contemporary art, and most were studying it at school or college. They all knew that the project was about engaging with art in the organisation, but only one participant had significant prior knowledge of the artist involved. Every participant that I spoke to was interested in the project, if only in order to gain work experience. By the time of the first session in Riverton, all the participants had been in contact with the co-ordinator via email, and in Bolworth the co-ordinator knew who was coming via her contacts in the schools and colleges. At both Bolworth and Riverton, the co-ordinators were freelance artist educators, with extensive experience of working with young people in arts projects. The recruitment process for the co-ordinator was not identical. At Bolworth, the co-ordinator had worked with the organisation previously. At Riverton, it was intended that the participants themselves would recruit the co-ordinator: although only one participant had been recruited by that stage, he was involved in the interviewing

process along with staff at the organisation. In both places, the organisation was relying on the co-ordinators' expertise and experience in working with young people in arts projects, and they had a degree of autonomy in implementing the project. This autonomy was not limitless however, as the co-ordinators were constrained by the project as it had been agreed with AR, as well as by the resources and decision-making of the organisation. It is also important to note that the co-ordinators did not have a pre-existing stake in the organisation, so that they were not likely to withhold power from participants to protect their entrenched position. Also, as artist-educators, their values were far more likely to be aligned with ethical, or meaningful participation (Pringle, 2009b). In my discussions with both co-ordinators, they repeatedly affirmed that they were involved in the project to make it meaningful for the young people, and I found no reason to doubt their sincerity in this respect.

Each co-ordinator was employed for a fixed period and paid a fixed fee to put the projects into practice. In each case, the co-ordinator found that as the project developed, they had to work for more hours than they had been paid for. This was because the organisations had under-estimated the time it would take to make the project work and neither had a contingency in place for supplementing the fee if necessary. In each case, there were a number of complex arrangements to make beyond the sessions, such as ensuring that all participants knew about the time and location of the next session and arranging for the necessary supplies and locations for each session. At Riverton, part of the project was ensuring that the education room was decorated and ready for the workshops with schools, which took up a lot of the co-ordinator's time outside the sessions. Organising the time of

the workshops with the schools also took up considerable time. At Bolworth, the number and variety of resources created meant that much of the co-ordinator's time outside the sessions was spent liaising with staff and organising which participants would be working on each resource and overseeing the development of each resource. As freelance artist-educators, each co-ordinator had other projects and responsibilities running alongside the case studies. The work required of the co-ordinator in each project was, as I will outline below, particularly challenging. The lack of adequate funding and competing time pressures meant that the circumstances within which the co-ordinators faced these challenges were not ideal.

7.1.1 The projects

In general, the two case study projects were sufficiently similar to be considered alongside each other, as embodying similar processes. They interpreted the two projects and what was significant about them in similar ways, and there were additional, more objective shared properties: each project was short-term, arts-based, involved young people of a similar age within an arts organisation, recruited participants after the project had been designed, had a strong theory of participants' experience, was a new 'pilot' group, and was organised through a series of meetings at or around the organisation. The intended outcomes of the two projects were different. At Bolworth, the aim was to create workshops for peers - this later became primary school children - in addition to creating art for the education room. At Riverton, the purpose was to create resources to engage other young people in the gallery, leaving the young people some autonomy in deciding what was created. In this chapter, I will describe what happened in the projects,

making reference to the aspects that were ‘meaningful’ and ‘controlling’, as outlined above. Where there were significant differences between the projects, I will distinguish between them.

Following the planning of the project and the recruitment of the participants, the projects were organised chiefly through meetings in the organisation or in other arts spaces nearby. The meetings were scheduled so that participants could fit them around their college commitments. For each meeting, the co-ordinator would have an idea about what its goal and a plan for what the participants would be doing. The purpose of the meetings would change as the project developed: initially, the purpose was to introduce the project to the participants, then to plan what the young people would be creating, then to put the plans into practice (see Figure 3, below).

Figure 3: Summary of Case Study Projects

	<i>Bolworth</i>	<i>Riverton</i>
Number of Participants	8	14
Core participants	8	7
Peripheral participants	0	7
Number of sessions	13	15
Introductory sessions	2	2
Planning sessions	5	6
Doing sessions	6	7

7.2 The Meaningful Projects

In this section I will describe the 'meaningful project', by which I mean the ways in which the co-ordinator attempted to make the project meaningful for the participants. A 'meaningful' project is regarded as one that conforms to Chawla's definition of participation:

A process in which children and youth engage with other people around issues that concern their individual and collective life conditions. Participants interact in ways that respect each other's dignity, with the intention of achieving a shared goal. In the process, the child experiences itself as playing a useful role in the community. Formal processes of participation deliberately create structures for children's engagement in constructing meaning and sharing decision making. (Chawla, 2001, p.9)

In the previous chapter a 'meaningful' or 'ethical' project or mode was defined as one in which participants are able to engage on their own terms about what matters to them in a process through which bonds are formed amongst participants, and between participants and staff, and resulting in positive outcomes for participants (Chawla, 2001; Fielding, 2006; Percy-Smith, 2006; Pringle, 2006). It is worth noting that in relation to meaningful participation the work of the co-ordinators can be interpreted in two ways. The first is of general relevance to participation. It examines how the co-ordinator as an adult attempted to 'empower' the young people as far as possible through sharing decision-making, including them in the organisation and enabling them to have as much of a say as possible (Hart, 1997; Hill et al., 2004; Fleming, 2013). The second employs the art-specific idea of co-constructivism, according to which the participant finds meaning through

having the freedom to engage in an activity in their own particular way (Hein, 1995; Pringle, 2006).

The introductory sessions were intended to ensure that the participants felt comfortable and at ease within the organisation, so that they could engage with the project on their own terms, rather than feeling subordinate to the organisation. It was also hoped to engage the participants with the work of the artist, so that when the participants came to creating the resources that were relevant to the artist, they were doing so from a position of knowledge and engagement. In this way, they would be creating resources that were relevant to them, on their own terms, as well as being relevant to the organisation.

The planning sessions were crucial, because they were the main point at which the connections were established between the outcomes for the gallery and the agency of the participants. The introductory sessions needed to pave the way for this connection, but it was in the planning sessions that the groups decided concretely what they would achieve and how they would go about it. It was therefore important to ensure that each participant was able to put forward their perspective and have their view taken into account. By the next stage, when the participants came to create the resources, it was hoped that the group had agreed on a course of action that had broad legitimacy within the group.

Finally, in the 'doing' stage of project, each participant had volunteered to create a particular resource that they were particularly interested in. When creating resources, the participants worked collaboratively. At each stage of the project, there was therefore an alignment between the agency of the participants and the organisational goals of the project. The young people were engaging with the

project on their own terms as they collaborated with the organisation. I will outline in detail how this was achieved.

7.2.1 The Introductory Stage

As participants arrived in the education space in the organisation, they were welcomed informally and offered refreshments. Once people were sitting in a circle, they introduced themselves, led by the co-ordinators who did their best to ensure people were relaxed and no one felt that they were too much on the spot. In both places, there were books about the artist to look through, offering people something to be busy with while everyone introduced themselves, and this was a way of ensuring that the atmosphere was not too formal. The next stage was for the co-ordinators to introduce the project, which they did simply by stating that it was a project for young people to get involved with the gallery. They then explained what the group would be doing at different points, including some of the relevant outcomes that the group might create. At Riverton, the co-ordinator addressed the group again at the end of the session, when she highlighted the opportunities it provided for the young people, including 'interacting with other similar groups of young people around the city' and 'lots of networking'. It was known that one of the participants had seen some of the work in another gallery, and he was asked what he thought about it. At Bolworth, particular emphasis was placed on the participants being free to make the educational space their own, throughout the project, by decorating it and displaying their work. The introduction at Bolworth was particularly informal, partly because the key to the educational space could not at first be found, and so the first part of the session took place in a staff room.

After the introductions to the project, the group got involved in the activities that the co-ordinator had planned. These were all designed to facilitate participants' engagement. In each activity, the freedom of the participant was emphasised, and they were told that they could engage with the activity however they wanted. At the end of the activities, people had an opportunity of sharing what they had done with the group, while the co-ordinator noted down what people were saying. In this way, the participants were able to communicate their perspectives on various relevant issues. Below is a brief outline of the activities:

Riverton

- *Photographing something from the gallery and discussion (session 1)*

We were told to go into the gallery and take pictures of 'whatever caught our eye', including but not limited to the artworks from the permanent exhibition, and then write down something on a label that we thought would go well for it. The activity meant that the participants would create pieces that were related to the artwork in the exhibition with a shared composition of image and text. Through taking pictures within an art gallery, including more traditional artworks, the activity also lent itself to questioning the authority of the art gallery space to confer elevated status to the artworks in a similar way to the works in the AR exhibition. The particular skill of this activity was that the participants could actively create related artworks while retaining their autonomy within the task and be introduced to the artworks without having to drily think about the intention of the artist. We were given around fifteen minutes for the activity, and were accompanied by the curator. The gallery by this time was closed to the public so we had the space to ourselves. The two participants and I completed the activity. When we returned to the space, the co-

ordinator asked us how we found the activity, while the pictures were uploaded to a computer with a big screen at the front of the room. Each of the participants then talked about what caption they had for each picture, with the co-ordinator and the curator listening and asking questions.

- *Drawing something from the gallery and discussion* (session 2 from here)

We were told to go down to the exhibition space with the sketchbooks we had just been given and 'respond to something in the room in some way you want'. It could be a particular drawing or the room as a whole. The thinking behind the activity again was to question the authoritative space of the gallery but it was slightly adapted from the previous week's activity so that people who had attended both sessions would not be repeating the same activity. As in the previous week, there was emphasis on the participants to have authority to think about the gallery space on their own terms rather than be inhibited and intimidated by it. As there were more people, the sharing process was slightly different. This time it was more voluntary, people could share what they had drawn if they wanted to. Mostly people talked about what they felt about the space and what they sketched.

- *Mind maps*

Towards the end of the session, the co-ordinator asked the young people to do a mind map about what they wanted to get from the project. She said that what the group did depended largely on what the group wanted to do, and that the mind maps would be really useful for her to work out what people wanted; it could be about getting to know behind the scenes at the gallery, or social, or anything. Large pieces of paper were handed out. The young people did them quietly in the first

session, while in the second session there was some chatting going on at the same time. This activity was not related to the artworks exactly but was a creative way for the co-ordinator to organise the project.

- *Looking out for text in the street*

One task was given for the young people to complete between sessions: to take pictures of any signs that might have been of interest; this could be shop signs or anything else. It did not matter how it was captured, by camera-phones or any other way. As with the previous tasks, this served as a way-in for the young people to start thinking about how the artist worked and how they might work in a way that was relevant to the artist but also relevant to young people. In particular, the task enabled the participants to begin to consider how text and image can co-exist in interesting ways, and how the text can be visually interesting in itself as well as conveying language. Whatever the participants collected would be shared at the next session.

- *Discussion of last cultural activity*

Following the introductions, each person was asked to turn to the person next to them and find out what the last cultural event or exhibition it was people went to and why it was they went. Each person then had to tell the whole group about the other person's answer. The co-ordinator explained that as the project was interested in attracting more young people to the gallery, it would be useful for the group to begin thinking about what attracted them to exhibitions. This in turn would enable the participants to consider how other young people might be attracted to the exhibition through the work of the group.

- *Naming the group*

The co-ordinator put a question out to the group about what people wanted the group to be called. The purpose of the young people naming the group was to communicate to them that they had ownership over the project and the co-ordinator also said that a name chosen by them might also make the group more attractive for future participants. No one had any name to give, and the co-ordinator said this was not a problem and a name could come in time. However, the idea of having a Facebook group had just been raised, and the co-ordinator said that this would mean that we should 'have a quick vote' now to come up with a name. When no one came up with a new name, the co-ordinator did not push it any further in that session.

- *Discussion about the organisation*

Emerging from the discussion around the drawing task, the discussion about what the organisation means to young people was based around questions asked by the co-ordinator such as 'What does it mean to you?' The discussion was framed in terms of attracting more young people to the organisation, and the young people were encouraged to put forward their suggestions for how this could be achieved. The co-ordinator and the curator listened carefully, and the co-ordinator took down notes. The purpose here was to enable the young people to have the authority to think and talk about how they would change the organisation for young people, which they would have a chance to do over the course of the project through creating the events and resources for other young people.

Bolworth

- Self portraits

At Bolworth, there was one extended introductory task. The first stage was to take expressive self-portraits, pictures that captured in some way the essence of the person. The young people took pictures of each other. The co-ordinator did not participate in the task, other than to find the group and check that everyone knew what they were doing and to re-explain the task. The second part of the task involved the pictures being projected onto the wall of the educational space, and the young people tracing the photograph and drawing large self-portraits on the wall in thick black pen. In the task, the participants were able to create expressive self-portraits in a way that was similar to the art in the exhibition. This introduced the participants to the artwork in a practical and creative way.

From the perspective of making the project meaningful, the tasks outlined above constitute a sophisticated achievement on the part of the co-ordinators, because they aligned the two fundamental aspects of the project: enabling participants to express their agency and creating usable resources for the gallery. Importantly here, the tasks operated on different levels. On one level, they made the workshops interesting for participants to become immersed and engaged in. On another level, they captured young people's interest in eventually creating the resources for the gallery, and introduced to participants ways of thinking that would be relevant for creating the resources.

The briefs to take pictures, sketch, capture text, and create self-portraits were unconstrained by further practical considerations, such as what the usable

outcomes from the activities would eventually look like. Where there were discussions, the participants were able to simply relate their opinions and experiences about galleries and similar cultural institutions; they were not pushed to provide practical answers. Important basic conceptual ideas for engaging participants with the art through creating flyers, guides, and other material, and for creating workshops for children, were introduced in an enjoyable way in each case study, without the co-ordinator needing to tax the group about exactly what it was they had to do. As an introduction to the gallery outcomes, the tasks were also an introduction to the artist's work.

The alignment between the participants' agency and the task at the basic level was important to the stage of the project where the tasks were eventually addressed directly. The expectation appeared to be that the tasks had begun to get the participants thinking about some of the issues around the gallery while attracting them on their own terms. Then, when the specific task of designing a workshop or a flyer was introduced, the participants would feel comfortable in sharing their opinions on the subject and able to present their own ideas for what to create. In this way, the possible tension that I identified in the previous chapter between the participants' agency and the outcomes of the gallery was managed and aligned before the tasks are even introduced.

7.2.2 The Planning Stage

In the planning sessions, the group, together with the co-ordinator, had to decide what resources the group would create. Numbers of participants would range from four to around ten, depending on availability. Occasionally, other staff from the

organisation, such as those in marketing, would be present to answer questions and provide relevant information, but usually the only people present would be the participants and the co-ordinator. At Riverton there were six planning meetings, at Bolworth five; meetings at Riverton would be two hours long, at Bolworth around four. Batsleer (2011) has suggested that participative arts projects manage to avoid some of the problems of other types of participation projects. A common problem is that, in decision-making, the perspectives of participants are not taken into account if they do not align with the perspective of the organisation (Czerniawski, 2012). To be a 'successful' participant, it is important to think in the same way as the organisation and be suitably selfless (Freeman, 2003). In these projects, from a participative perspective, there appeared to be several ways, set out below, in which the project being arts-based helped alleviate these issues.

First, the organisation was flexible in response to the participants' suggestions as to what they would create. In both places, the resources that the group were to create had to an extent been agreed before the group was formed; this limited the need for planning. However, there was agreement only in general terms. At Bolworth, this agreement covered the creation of workshops for schools, while at Riverton it specified only that the participants would create some kind of resources with a view to engaging other young people. Subject to this, the participants were able to choose exactly *how* they would achieve the goals of the project. The planning sessions can be viewed as consisting of the group moving from a position of freedom in which they could choose a number of different ways of fulfilling the aims of the project to a position in which the group has agreed that they will work towards the creation of particular resources without alienating the participants.

In addition, the tasks could be described as pluralist, enabling the goal of running a workshop or engaging participants to be met in a number of different ways that could happen simultaneously. Consequently, there was no requirement for a consensus, which could drown out the individuality of participants. Instead, the outcomes of the projects were broken down into smaller tasks, which could be carried out by a small number of participants without there being any need to obtain the agreement of the rest of the group. The workshops could be broken down into different activities that the children might want to do, offered by different sub-groups; at Riverton, the plan was to create a number of different resources, which again could be created by a number of different sub-groups. Generally speaking, what one subgroup did would not affect what another subgroup was doing, which meant that so long as a small number of young people wanted to work towards a particular resource, there would not be a challenge from others.

Thirdly, throughout almost all of the planning meetings in both case studies, the participants were getting on with an arts activity as they were discussing what they wanted to do. There were some limitations to this. At both Bolworth and Riverton, the co-ordinator would occasionally ask people to stop what they were doing so that a decision could be made. Also, two meetings at Riverton and part of a meeting at Bolworth had the sole purpose of making decisions, and no artwork was carried out. However, in general the co-ordinators kept in mind that the participants did not attend the groups in order to have formal discussions, and where possible the planning process was centred on creative activities.

In the focus on engaging activities, the basic structure for informal meetings was similar to the introductory meetings, insofar as the participants would be carrying

out tasks. The difference between the introductory and the planning meetings was that, during and after the tasks, the group would discuss exactly what they would create for the final outcome. For example, the informal planning session at Riverton, which was attended by three young people, was about creating a guide that would appeal to young people. The activity, which was explained at the beginning of the session, was to look around an exhibition in the gallery (not the gallery that the group was attached to) and think about how they would do the exhibition guide differently to appeal to young people. There was then a discussion about what the group thought would make a more interesting guide for young people. The group started 'playing around' with designs for the guide they would be working on, and they discussed each other's ideas, led by the co-ordinator. As with the introductory meetings, the activities that the participants discussed were related to the artworks as well as to the purpose of engaging young people. There is a description of how the activities related to the exhibition artworks in the next section.

The co-ordinators' strategy for planning was to put the ideas into practice and allow the group, as far as possible, come to understand whether or not they were workable and how they would need to be refined. The group's focus on the creative task, with its own rhythm and interests, seemed to help alleviate any awkwardness in the conversations in which people's ideas were changed and dropped. At Bolworth, the co-ordinator suggested that they think of activities that they thought would 'work' with children and that they themselves were interested in. In this way, the participants' agency was connected to the outcomes for the gallery.

At Bolworth, suggested activities included mask-making, collage-making, face-painting and dance, and various types of portrait photography. Each activity was related to the artworks from the exhibition, in various different ways. During and after the activity, the group and the co-ordinator discussed how interesting they found them and how interesting and practical they might be for children in a workshop. The activities would generally take an hour or more, while the conversations about their suitability and possible modifications varied in duration. Generally, the group seemed to enjoy and become immersed in the task. The subsequent discussion about what children would do and their suitability for children followed naturally and did not adversely affect the group's enjoyment of the present moment. The secondary goal of the project – creating art for the educational space – played an important role in ensuring that everyone participated fully. It meant that the group was not limited to creating workshops, which might be experienced as inhibitory. Each participant had the option of focusing on the secondary task, thereby avoiding the difficult aspects of the project without opting out of the group. I will discuss the importance of this to the experience of some of the participants in Chapter 9.

Pringle emphasises the importance of non-judgmental dialogue to the practice of artist educators (2006, 2009a, 2009b) and this was apparent in the planning sessions. In working out what the group would create, in addition to putting it into practice, the co-ordinators encouraged the group to think openly about how it would work. This would often take the form of the co-ordinator asking someone who had made a suggestion a series of questions, while communicating that the questions were intended to encourage the person to elaborate on the idea rather

than to criticise it. The participants had freedom, at any time, to suggest an idea for the workshop.

7.2.3 The Doing Stage

While the format of the introductory and planning stages was similar in the two cases, the process of creating the resources were quite different and will be treated separately

Bolworth

There were a total of seven school visits (out of eight planned). Typically, a school-group would consist of between eight and twenty children, and between one and three staff. There would be two sessions in a day, in the morning and afternoon. The sessions would last for around two hours in the morning and one and a half hours in the afternoon. The sessions would begin with the group coming into the educational space. At the beginning of the sessions with the schools, the pupils would come into the educational space, the participants and then the pupils would introduce themselves briefly, and the structure of the visit would be explained. They would then go into the gallery space, and one of the participants would give a tour of the exhibition, talking about what she liked about it, before the participants talked more informally to the pupils in smaller groups about the exhibition. The session proper would then begin. By the time that the workshops were to be delivered, each of the participants had been involved in creating and developing at least one workshop activity. The following activities had been developed by the participants in collaboration with the co-ordinator, and each activity was in certain ways related to the exhibition artworks:

Maskmaking: in discussion with the participants, the pupils would consider what kind of a mask they would like to make and then create and decorate paper masks.

Photobooth: the pupils would pose for their portrait, sometimes with objects that they had brought with them. There were also objects in the educational space for pupils to pose with. The pictures were taken on iPads, and the pupils were able to use the iPads to play around with and distort the images. The portraits created were similar in form to the portraits in the exhibition, and the pupils were able, through the effects on the iPad, to create similarly stylised portraits.

Face paint and dance: the pupils would choose how they wanted their faces to be painted, with the aid of a number of face-painting books, and then paint each other's faces. They would then perform the role of the animal or character painted on their face while dancing to music from the era of the artist.

During the planning stage, the workshops had been thoroughly planned out. The participants knew what their role would be and had taken part in the activity themselves, as a run-through for what the children would be doing in the workshops. This ensured that they had had the necessary practice to run the workshops themselves, without the input of the co-ordinator. They had planned the exact sequence of the activities, for instance the length of time that should be allowed for each part of the activity. Also, the number of people that would be needed to help with each activity had been thought through and, loosely, participants had been attached to different activities based on their interests and preferences.

The ratio of participants to pupils would vary, from 1:1 to 1:4. This meant that in the activities the participants were able to concentrate on working with a small number

of pupils, rather than being spread thinly around the group. The participants were able to talk to the pupils about what they wanted to do and show them ways of creating particular animals on masks, or how to work with the portraits on the iPads. These sessions also contributed in an important way to the secondary activity of animating the educational space. All the activities, whether artwork (pictures and photos) created by the children or documentary photos taken by the young people, created displays for the room. At the end of the sessions, and depending on numbers during the sessions, the participants would print out these resources, arrange them and create displays. The co-ordinator would also do this between sessions, and over time the room was transformed from an empty space to an animated one. In general, it seemed as if creating workshops for children (rather than the originally intended activity of engaging their peers) was not necessarily an ideal participation project, but it enabled the participants to engage on their own terms as much as possible.

Riverton

In Riverton, as in Bolworth, by the time the participants came to create the resources, the co-ordinator had ensured that they knew what they were required to do, having planned and discussed them extensively. They had also been helped to choose to create the resources that interested them. The group expressed interest in and created the following resources:

Playlist for the opening event: Participants would choose five songs that they thought were connected in some way to the exhibition. This was principally concerned with young people making the gallery space their own, but it was also related to the artworks through questioning the role of the gallery as a silent, austere and authoritative space.

Wristbands: wristbands were designed that were related to the exhibition that were distributed at the opening event. The wristband had text in it that related to one of the artworks.

Flyers: two flyers, with similar designs, were created to engage young people with the exhibition. The design of the flyers, with stylised text on a colourful background, was related to certain artworks in the exhibition.

Stickers: stickers were created with the logo of the group on.

Exhibition guide: an exhibition guide was created that reflected the participants' ideas about the artworks. The format of the guide, with pieces of text scattered around the page, reflects the playful attitude towards text of the artworks.

Audio guide: for visitors to listen while looking through the exhibition. The idea behind the audio guide was for the participants to attach any sounds that they felt were related to the artworks (which mirrors the interest in the artworks of text understood in a non-literal way), rather than necessarily straight information about the artworks.

Pop-up shop: The participants chose art by young people that related to the exhibition and showed it in a nearby space and were present to discuss it with members of the public. The criteria for a connection to the artwork was that the art must incorporate text in some way. It also involved an opening event for the exhibition involving young musicians.

YouTube 'trailer' for the exhibition: aimed at young people, including relevant information.

As regards designing the resources, it was not difficult for the co-ordinator to engage the participants, as they were almost without exception keen on design and having their designs used by the organisation. In the design of the flyer and the sticker, for example, the co-ordinator's role was to ensure that all the

participants had a chance to put forward their views. The co-ordinator took a fairly hands-off approach, mostly by grouping people together and asking them to work together. The co-ordinator took an active interest in the design and discussed working designs with the subgroup of participants involved, focusing on what she liked and how it might be improved.

Two of the resources created – the wristband and the YouTube video – were initiatives of participants. The video was created by one of the participants, who then told the co-ordinator about it, while in the case of the wristband, a participant suggested the idea and a design for it. This demonstrates that there was space for the participants to put their ideas into practice without any input from the organisation or the co-ordinator other than providing the necessary resources.

When the content of resources had to be decided upon, as well as the design, the co-ordinator made clear the parameters within which the participants would have freedom to create anything. In the case of the exhibition guide, for example, they were to create something different and engaging for young people. In the case of the pop-up shop, the art that was shown had to be connected in some way to the art in the exhibition, such as exploring similar themes. In each case, the participants initially struggled with the activities, despite having indicated that they wanted to participate in them. At first, the exhibition guide was not really aimed at young people and had to be re-drafted, while there were not many suggestions for art to show in the pop-up shop, and some pieces of their own that the young people wanted to exhibit were not related in any way to the exhibition.

So, while the projects were not ideal, there are clear ways in which the co-ordinators aimed for the participants to be able to engage on their own terms and

make their own meaning. Throughout the stages of the projects, the co-ordinator tried to ensure that the participants were working on that which was meaningful to them, and tried to organise the projects around the agency of the young people. While in the next section the limitations of the project as meaningful are addressed, it is important that there was a skilled and concerted effort by the co-ordinator to make the projects meaningful.

7.3 The Controlling Projects

Having in the previous section interpreted the projects through a 'meaningful' lens, in this section I will interpret the projects through the lens of the constraints of the organisational context as controlling projects. In the previous chapter I defined a 'controlling' or 'instrumental' mode of participation as one in which the young people are asked to participate, but participation happens for adult interests, whether this is for an organisation to demonstrate its value, for participants to be shaped so that they share the appropriate adult-approved beliefs and values, or so that it will improve the efficiency of the service (Fielding, 2006; Bragg, 2007a; Whitty and Wisby, 2007). This section entails investigating how the co-ordinator's efforts to make the project meaningful were countered and undermined by the necessity of making the project work on the terms of the organisation. I will also reinterpret the role of the co-ordinator within the organisational context, from that of an autonomous individual with their own values (Pringle, 2009b) to a professional constrained by the wider management of the project. The arguments made in Chapter 3 are relevant here: the predominant system of participation in the UK is top-down and managed, takes place within adult organisations, in which the autonomy of both participants and professionals is constrained by the managerial

focus on efficiency and narrow accountability. I will examine how, where the project is top-down, the basis on which the professional attempts to make the project meaningful may not be very firm. This means that, however well-intentioned the co-ordinator, where a project takes place within the context of, and on the terms of, an organisation then the participants may well not find the project meaningful in the intended way (Percy-Smith, 2006; Eliasoph, 2009).

Whereas in the participative project, the agency and perspective of the participants is *central*, from the perspective of the controlling project it is *peripheral*, and reactive to the co-ordinator. In this section, I will re-visit and re-interpret each stage of the project, with an emphasis on the limited space for the participants to engage on their own terms and express their views.

7.3.1 The Introductory Stage

It was apparent from observing the projects, from the introductory sessions onwards, that the participants often did not engage with activities designed to engage them. To give some examples: in an introductory session where seven participants were asked to look at the use of text in the street, only one participant carried out the task]; when participants were asked to complete mind maps about what they wanted from the projects, most of them chatted and took only a desultory interest in the task; in every activity and discussion, it was noticeable that some participants contributed, and others did not. It appeared to me that, although the co-ordinator's intention was clear, the projects could be seen as consisting of a series of requirements of the participants in which they were not fully invested.

The clearest example of how the introductory activities had the unintended consequence of constraining the participants was the self-portraits task at Bolworth. Two slightly older participants who knew each other from college, went off on their own, applied make-up and took a whole series of photos of each other. Meanwhile, the remaining six participants undertook the activity in one group. Initially, they did not know what to do and appeared reserved, with participants engaging in small talk and discussing the space rather than attending to the task. Then, one of the participants, who were more socially confident and outgoing, took one of the props and posed for pictures. Everyone looked at the photos for a while and talked about them, not wanting to have any pictures taken of themselves. Then the group listened as one participant who had a Masters explained about the artist and what the purpose of the pictures was.

At this point, the group was talking around the activity, volunteering to take the photos, encouraging others to have their picture taken, without anyone else actually wanting to have their picture taken. Then the participant who had already had her photo taken took charge of the group, cajoling people into having their photo taken, sometimes collaborating with them but mostly telling them where they should stand and how they should pose. In this way, the participants followed the directions of the active participant, rather than being active themselves. There was no longer any pressure to be active, and the atmosphere in the group completely changed, so that everyone became much more relaxed. I, along with the participants, had no view on how I wanted to be seen and had no desire to strike a pose in front of everyone else. By taking over the activity, the most outwardly confident participant performed a service for everyone and changed the activity

from something active that people were trying to avoid to something more passive and manageable.

The introductory activities can in themselves be seen as progressive, in that they aimed to enable the young person to put forward their perspective and not be marginalised. However, when understood within the context of the project and the organisation, the constraints and obligations that they imposed upon participants become apparent. Rather than simply offering their perspective, participants were required to do so (a) shortly after they have arrived in a new organisation in which they might not feel particularly comfortable, (b) with other participants whom they did not know, (c) in response to adults they did not know, (d) within tasks they might not have wanted to do. This shows how particular activities that are in themselves intended to be progressive, and are progressive in form, can in practice serve to control (Bragg, 2007a). In the introductory activities, participants were obliged to express constructive ideas about museums and galleries, about how they saw themselves, about what they wanted from the project, and about how they experienced the organisation. They were not only obliged to reveal a lot about themselves at an early stage, but to do so in response to specific questions determined by the organisation. Also, they were obliged to take part in the activities, whether they wanted to or not, as there was no obvious mechanism for participants to simply opt out of activities.

In my interpretation as a participant-observer, there was a strong difference between activities which required a participant to share their point of view, or act in front of the whole group, and activities where the person was less on display. For instance, there was much more engagement in the next stage of the self-portrait

activity, where the participants were copying out their photographs on to the wall, outlining the image that had been projected onto the wall, first using pencil and then pen. In this exercise, everyone was working at the same time on their own image, occasionally helping others. As everyone's self-portrait was emerging on the wall at once, there was a communal sense without anyone feeling on show. The task was sufficiently simple to enable almost everyone to undertake it confidently, and it was also rewarding. By comparison with the first part of the activity, the atmosphere that this generated was far more vibrant and confident.

The same is true of the discussions. When something was discussed in pairs, people talked a lot more and felt much more liberating. Group conversations, however, were far more stilted, with many people not volunteering anything, and certainly not disagreeing with anything. While in the activities and discussions the co-ordinator's strategy was to enable everyone to engage with the project on their own terms – allowing people to express themselves – there was at times an equally strong defensive strategy of the participants of not revealing too much of themselves, of being part of the group without being too implicated. This meant that there were no suggestions about a name for the group and the mind-maps generated were quite bare.

7.3.2 The Planning Stage

In the planning stage, decisions had to be taken that would lead to usable resources and workshops for the organisations. As far as possible, the decisions were to be taken by the participants; although the intention was to promote dialogue and openness in the discussions, in order to make the project work for the

organisation it was necessary to chair the discussions. While from a meaningful point of view, it would be preferable to make the meetings as democratic as possible, the project plans prescribed how, in a short time, the participants and the co-ordinators would work together to deliver specified outcomes. The co-ordinators had the ultimate responsibility for supervising the participants to achieve this, which necessitated a structure of meetings in which the co-ordinators could ensure that relevant decisions were made. Below, I outline how various aspects of the role of co-ordinator as chair appeared to constrain and impose obligations on the participants.

First, the co-ordinator would set the agenda for the meeting. At the beginning of the session, the co-ordinator would state what was to be agreed in that meeting, and describe the structure of the session. Commonly, the planning would have an arts element to them. However, it is significant that the participants had little power to shape what they would discuss and how they would discuss it.

Next, the co-ordinator would ask a series of questions of the participants. On each point, questions would be put to the group and the group, or more specifically some people in the group, would respond. One of the resources to be created was a 'pop-up shop' for the gallery. The idea for the shop came from the co-ordinator, who had heard about free spaces. Here is the list of questions that the co-ordinator asked the group about the possibility of creating the shop:

Question type a) is the group interested?

- What do you think about the idea of a pop up shop?

Question type b) what exactly will the form be?

- What about increasing it day by day?

- So do you think we should have reproductions in the show?
- So we should have your work, but with strong visual reference to their work?
- There are two possible spaces – one in a shopping centre, one close to the gallery, which do you think would be better?
- But do you think if it's a marketing space, do you think having it close is good?

Question type c) who will be responsible?

- Who's free for the shop?
- Maybe open it less days?
- Who is interested in doing what?

Generally, this would be the pattern for each resource. The co-ordinator would put to the group the possibility of creating something, which had often been drawn from the funding application. Clearly, asking participants a set of questions relevant to the organisation was an effective way of connecting the will of the young people with what was to happen in the project. However, this was achieved through limiting the scope that they had for expressing their agency to that which was relevant for the project. Again, the impetus for the project in this instance came from the co-ordinator, and the participants were reduced to merely responding to questions asked. In this situation, the participants had an obligation to respond, and they might not feel comfortable responding negatively. It would not be unusual to see participants quiet, and barely participative, for long periods when decisions were made in this manner. Throughout the projects, people tended to respond positively or simply acquiesce in any suggestion made in the group. Responding to a suggestion by a co-ordinator is not, of course, the same as coming up with one's own suggestion (Thornberg, 2010). In a situation where the member of staff is

making a suggestion to participants, they are at best indicating their view in response to the question, which may or may not connect to their own perspective more broadly (Percy-Smith, 2006).

Another of the co-ordinator's roles was to interpret what the group had decided. There were several strategies for understanding the will of the group, including a show of hands and a list of options handed round to be ticked. Generally, however, the co-ordinator asked a question and the group responded; the co-ordinator would then confirm with the group what they were saying, and then note it down. The co-ordinators would have with them a notebook in which they would be noting down decisions taken in the group: this meant that, if a participant wanted to make a contribution count, it had to be entered into the notebook. Only one participant ever challenged the co-ordinator on the ground that they could not see the agenda for the meeting or what was being agreed.

The co-ordinators' power to interpret the will of the group was particularly significant because it was often ambiguous, at least to me, what the group wanted to do. The co-ordinators were obliged to interpret the will of the group, and this was generally without having had full and active contributions from all the participants. In the case of the pop-up shop, the participants seemed fairly lukewarm about it. However, the co-ordinator needed to book the room fairly quickly, so there was a need to take a decision, and so she concluded, from the fairly noncommittal noises that people were making, that they did want a pop-up shop.

While a co-constructivist position would emphasise the importance of open dialogue (Pringle, 2006), the idea of distributed participation seems more relevant

to understanding the planning meetings (Hatcher, 2005) This regards the organisation as defining how the participants can be active in accordance with organisational priorities rather than the lifeworld of the participants. The example set out below illustrates how the ways in which the co-ordinator attempted to enable the participants to make their own meaning were demarcated by the requirements of the project. It took place at the end of a meeting, when the co-ordinator was asking people to come up with ideas for the audio guide to the exhibition. The guide could include direct thoughts by the participants or sound and music that they associated with the artworks:

So, ideas [for creating audio content], have a look at this [copies of the artworks], have a look online, but all you need to do is pick one piece that you're inspired by, and if it makes you think about a place, a piece of music, an emotion, another piece of work, something you've read, anything at all, just use your book, and if you can get some ideas down and if you can record something and bring it along to the next session, that would be fantastic.

It was difficult to discern any enthusiasm amongst participants for creating an audio guide, and only one engaged in the task. The tension between the meaningful and the controlling project is exemplified here: while the participants were able to engage in the activity in their own way, the only choice that they were offered was whether or not to participate in the activity. In distributed participation, there is an assumed alignment between the organisation and participant, which leads to participants being asked to 'be themselves'; however, they are asked to 'be themselves' in ways that are useful to the organisation, and in ways that they may not much want to be (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009). I will explore this further when looking at how the participants in Bolworth ran the workshops.

7.3.3 The Doing Stage

Bolworth

Since the project goal of running workshops for children (and for young people, as originally intended) was a priority for the organisation rather than the participants, it appears that the Bolworth project could be understood as controlling or instrumental; certainly it appeared that the participants were incorporated in and constrained by this organisational activity. While the specific activities had been thoroughly planned out and the participants knew what they had to do, there was more to running a workshop for pupils than putting an activity into action; it was also necessary to manage the pupils (Jones, 1996). Managing pupils means keeping them engaged with the activities while at the same time ensuring that a particular standard of behaviour is maintained (for example, not swearing). This was especially difficult for new teachers (*ibid.*) and even more so for participants in a project outside of school who had had no experience or training in managing pupils.

Furthermore, the ultimate responsibility for the success of the workshops and the management of the pupils lay with the organisation and the co-ordinator. As the co-ordinator commented to me, her reputation was at stake, and she therefore had to ensure that the workshops went well. This meant that there was not necessarily space in the projects to leave the participants to run the projects as they saw fit, and to manage the pupils in their own way and on their own terms. The management of the workshops was overseen by the co-ordinator and by the teaching staff who accompanied the group. As well as taking the lead in introducing the session and outlining the activities, the co-ordinator, along with the

teachers, would sometimes intervene in the activities. At other times, when the pupils were not engaging with the task or were struggling with the task, often the teachers or the co-ordinators would notice what was happening, and would conclude that none of the young people were sorting out the problem in a satisfactory way. They then felt obliged to intervene in the workshop sessions, even if they officially wanted the young people to have ownership of them. As one of the teachers put it, sometimes the participants 'needed a little push' to help the pupils and to be more 'hands-on' with them. While the participants ran the workshops, the co-ordinator and the teachers occasionally made suggestions about how the activities should be run as they were happening. For example, there might be a suggestion to move the task along, or to give a specific instruction to the children. The freedom of the participants to run the workshops on their own terms was therefore subject to the approval of the adults in the room, who would otherwise have run the workshops and who seemed ultimately to retain responsibility for them.

Moreover, the participants did not have the freedom to define themselves. In the introductory sessions, they were introduced as participants who were excited about the workshops, even though this might not have been true. In fact, it is clear from the interviews conducted that many of them wanted, at that stage, to distance themselves from the project. In other words, they had to perform the role of being an excited participant, which fitted in with the project's view of them (Bragg, 2007a), even if they did not feel this way. During the workshops there was no possibility for them to leave, or to say that they do not want to be there, or to express themselves. They not only had to play the role of the committed

participant, but they were also aware that their efforts might well not be sufficient in the eyes of the adults watching.

The workshops further exemplify the tension between the meaningful and the controlling project. With a view to making the project meaningful for participants, it is important to emphasise that, in managing the workshops, the co-ordinator made every effort to ensure that the participants had ownership of the workshop. Although she asked for a volunteer to take the lead in welcoming the groups into the organisation, no participant volunteered. However, throughout the planning sessions, the co-ordinator's anxiety about whether enough schools would sign up for the workshops, and whether the activities would work for pupils, was apparent to the participants. They had had to perform the activities for the co-ordinator already, and they were aware that the success of the workshops was important to the organisation and the co-ordinator (this is explored in Chapter 10). This 'distributed' freedom in running the workshops put the young people in something of a bind. They were asked to undertake the challenging task of creating and running a workshop for pupils on their own terms, but they were not authorised to make mistakes on their own terms, as it were, because all the time they were being observed by adults who would intervene and interfere with what they were doing.

Riverton

As compared with Bolworth, Riverton displayed far fewer features of a project that was controlling, for example, at the 'doing' stage. However, it is worth drawing attention to the constraints that the young people were under when they created the resources for the organisation. It was the organisation, rather than the participants, that ultimately decided what was acceptable and what was not. When

the material that the participants created was deemed acceptable, as was the case of the flyers and the stickers, it appeared that they could create whatever they wanted to. However, in the case of the pop-up shop and the exhibition guide, what they created was not considered acceptable by the organisation.

In each case there were 'good' reasons for this, and the parameters of what was possible had been explained to the participants. However, the participants had equally 'good' reasons for wanting to create a guide and artwork of their own choice. As will be discussed in later chapters, they were being self-interested and career-minded, not thinking about the aims of the project so much as their career aims. In not agreeing to an exhibition guide that seemed unlikely to engage young people and sanctioning inappropriate artwork in the pop-up shop, the co-ordinator and the organisation were upholding the goals of the project in terms of engaging young people to the exhibition. By so doing, however, they imposed their purposes over the purposes of the participants in the project. In this respect, the participants were expected to be the 'right' kind of participants, who put forward their own perspective in ways that were aligned with the organisation's perspective (Freeman et al., 2003).

7.4 The Negotiated Projects

Up to now, I have described how the co-ordinators, despite their efforts, were unable to resolve the tensions of the projects identified in Chapter 6 and were obliged to put into practice projects that had 'controlling' elements as well as 'meaningful' ones. The co-ordinators were not themselves blind to this tension within the project, or to the problematic experiences of the participants to be explored in the next three chapters. The co-ordinators were in an invidious position

because they were the ones delivering the projects and facing the practical difficulties, without any authority to change the scope of the project in order to make it more on the terms of the participants. They were obliged to negotiate the tensions of the project as best they could. One of the co-ordinators expressed this dilemma in the following terms:

It's kind of trying to find a fine line between running a really good workshop like for the schools, getting the young people to have a good art experience, and um, and then giving them a project to run them themselves when they don't have any experience.

In this section I will explore some of the ways in which the co-ordinators tried to find this 'fine line' and discuss some of the difficulties which they encountered.

I will interpret how the co-ordinators negotiated the project from the perspective of the identities of the participants. From an identity perspective, there is not a direct connection between the nature of the project and the experience of the participants (Craib, 1994). Rather, what matters is the meanings which the participants attach to the project (Archer, 2003). While the co-ordinators were unable to make the project meaningful rather than controlling, they were able to influence the manner in which the project was run and influence how the participants thought about the project and their role in it. I will outline some of the key ways in which the co-ordinators attempted to ensure that the participants could make sense of the project on their own terms and that the flaws in the project did not lead to destructive feelings within the participants.

One important way in which the co-ordinators created a space for the participants to be disappointed in a constructive way was to be critical of the design of the

project and even of themselves, while emphasising how impressive they found the participants to be. They addressed the many factors that tended to limit the experience of the young people. These included the challenges involved in running the workshops, the tight timescales involved, the lack of resources available, the format and timing of the meetings and the difficulties encountered in getting to the venue. As neither co-ordinator had planned the project, each was able to distance herself at times from it, stating explicitly that it was not a project she would have chosen to do. Also, as neither co-ordinator was a regular member of staff at the organisation, they were both able to criticise the organisational constraints on the project implicitly, by making comments beginning 'if it was my project...'. As well as criticising the project, the co-ordinators emphasised how ambitious it was and urged the participants just to enjoy it and see how far they got. Again and again, they found ways of establishing a story about the projects in which the participants themselves were the best thing about it, and everything else was in some way at fault.

The co-ordinators would also apologise for how they had to behave in the project. In the following passage, the co-ordinator has been asking a series of demanding questions of one participant, Izzy, about one of Izzy's ideas for what the pupils might do in the workshops. This took place in a discussion between the co-ordinator, Izzy and Jenna, in a planning meeting. It immediately followed the discussion as set out in Chapter 10. The co-ordinator then apologises to the participants:

Ok, yeah, keep going, draw your partner, and what would you draw your partner with, is it black and white, like these images? Is there one exercise where you start off black and white, then start talking

about expressions and things, let them use colour, stop me if I'm rambling too much. Sorry, honestly, I spent sixteen hours last night writing CPDs, I'm just [high-pitched] popopopopo, what will this achieve, what will that outcome be. Bleurgh.

The questions fired at a participant in this passage can be regarded as arising out of the co-ordinator's professional anxieties about the workshops and her own reputation. If, however, it is accepted that the co-ordinator is in an impossible position, in attempting to tread the 'fine line' between the organisational demands of the project and ensuring the participants have ownership of it, this apology can be seen in a different light. The co-ordinator can be regarded as acknowledging that she was being controlling and overbearing, and thereby enabling the participants to view the situation from that perspective. She might also be serving the interests of the project by taking on her own shoulders the inherent tension at the heart of the project. Fearing that the task was too difficult for the participants, she took on the role of being demanding of, and overriding, the young people for the sake of the project. She thereby addressed the central tension inherent in the project, which was that it is about the participants asserting their perspective but they were required to fit in with the organisation. This might help the participants not to simply feel irritation towards her or anxious that their own suggestions had not been good enough. Instead, it might open up a space for them to make light of the project and feel a sense of disappointment on their own terms (Craib, 1994).

The co-ordinators were compelled to perform a difficult balancing act, working around the contradictions inherent in the project. Immediately before the passage cited here, the co-ordinator attempted to be open to the ideas of the participants (to ensure the participants had ownership), before making suggestions of her own (to

ensure the workshops would function well), before making the apology. Rather than simply accepting the contradictions of the project, the co-ordinator here understood that she was embodying them herself, while trying to resolve them. This meant that the relationships between the co-ordinator and the participants could become strained. As the co-ordinator once commented: 'Sometimes, I see them looking at me thinking "whose project is this?"' It is clear from this that, as the person responsible for delivering the project, the co-ordinator was necessarily implicated in its tensions and was therefore not always in an ideal position to resolve its difficulties. In this section I have only scratched the surface around how the co-ordinators negotiated the difference between the two projects, but clearly the shortcomings in the project were something which they were aware of and attended to.

7.5 Discussion

In this chapter, I have focused on how the co-ordinators put the project into practice. I have suggested that they were obliged to play three roles in the projects. Based on their own values and the stated values of the project, they attempted to create and implement a participative project. Both co-ordinators demonstrated that they were able to run the project perfectly well, as has been described above. However, in practice there were problems that arose in the implementation of the projects. First, because the project took place in an alien organisational space, the young people did not seem inclined to participate. Secondly, the outcomes intended by the organisation obliged the co-ordinators to place constraints on the participants. Had they not done so, it seems improbable that the projects would have produced usable resources and workshops for the organisation. The final

role for the co-ordinators was to manage the disparity between the two modes of the project, in part by accepting responsibility for the shortcomings of the project.

If these findings are related back to frameworks for how participation workers should be, such as Hear By Right (Badham & Wade, 2010) or the Quality Principles (Lord et al., 2012), then it appears that the demands made of participation workers by them are somewhat simplistic. Participation workers can have the requisite values, and aim to involve and engage participants and generally strive for excellence. However, the organisational context within which they work means that they are obliged to make compromises. So far as I am aware, there is no official guidance and little academic research exploring how a participation worker can compromise in the most productive way. Whilst acknowledging that there are a number of strategies that can be adopted, in this chapter I have looked at three possible strategies: to place the responsibility on the organisation; to distribute freedom to the participants, to place the responsibility on the organisation, to take responsibility one's self. It is likely that there are a number more strategies, and I would suggest that given the known limitations of participation projects, a productive avenue for further research would be to better understand the complex role of the participation co-ordinator working under difficult conditions.

It is also relevant that a participation worker operates in a performative environment where they must be seen to have delivered an ideal project. In this chapter, I have suggested that the real work of the co-ordinator lies in making the compromise between the participative and controlling project in the right way. In a performative environment, these necessary and difficult compromises risk being

seen as the failure of the co-ordinator, whereas I have suggested that they are their primary success. When participation is tightly managed, then there is limited capacity for the co-ordinators to make the necessary changes to make the project work. This chapter has shown how the relatively little autonomy enjoyed by the co-ordinators meant that they could not adapt the project - when it appeared that the young people did not really want to create a guide or workshops, for instance - but had to pursue the project despite the limited engagement of the participants.

I have argued in this chapter that the co-ordinator was obliged to run not one but two projects: a participative project and a controlling project. This is attributable to the policy of participation, or to participation being put into practice in the constraining managerial context of NPM and project management, in which the participants have a sharply limited sphere of influence within an organisation and they are required to create specific outcomes for the organisation. The findings of this chapter would suggest that these contradictions around participation can make it harder for the participation worker to make the project work well in practice. If it was generally accepted that participation projects are never perfect and that compromises are necessary, because of the context in which they operate, then the co-ordinator could, perhaps, have factored in the 'fine line' between individual and organisation at the beginning of the project, rather than making impromptu compromises towards the end, of which they were not necessarily conscious. One way of facilitating the co-ordinators' work would therefore be not to hold them to participative principles, but instead to give them the space to make the necessary compromises in the best possible way.

In the light of the existing research on the organisational constraints on participation explored in Chapter 3, it seems reasonable to conclude that this complex and conflicted role of the co-ordinator is more prevalent than simply in the two projects presented here. The notion of navigating tensions in organisations is a useful way of thinking about the role of the participation worker. While criticisms could be levelled at the co-ordinators' running of the projects, in this chapter I have emphasised that shortcomings in the project should be principally seen as the result of the project's design and the various organisational constraints on the project, rather than as being the responsibility of the participation worker.

Chapter 8: 'Cynical Distance'

In Chapter 6, I outlined how the project could be seen, in Alvesson's phrase' as a 'jungle of contradictions and messiness' (2010, p.8), in the sense that it emphasised that young people were free to engage on their own terms while simultaneously imposing, intentionally and unintentionally, a variety of constraints on them. As with other participation projects, the projects selected as case studies were not perfect examples of the promise of participation put into practice. Their main shortcoming was how young people were expected to participate on terms imposed by the organisations: to follow the organisational agenda, through organisational processes, and in an organisational space. They more closely corresponded to the description of participation as being a mechanism that is convenient for the organisation (Hill et al., 2004) than Chawla's (2001) description of participation as progressive and meaningful. In the next three chapters, I will explore the experience of the participants within the projects.

As stated in Chapter 5, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between people's identities and the 'objective' context of participation projects, with a view to understanding how different 'types' of participants might navigate the groups (Archer, 2003). It is therefore necessary to focus on individuals, but to focus on them within their social context of the groups (Fine, 2003). The advantage of using a more in-depth approach is that it offers understanding of how people's experience is affected by context (Watson, 2008). This is not to claim that I have fully understood the experience of the participants that I present here; I aim to present some relevant *aspects* of people's experience which can be grouped

together into types (Archer, 2003) and which can be elaborated on and substantiated by further research.

If it is accepted that such projects are a fixture of contemporary government in the UK and are unlikely to radically change, it will be important to investigate how participants are able to cope with or 'navigate' the projects (Eliasoph, 2009). From this standpoint, the flaws and compromises of a participation project do not determine the experience of the participants, who are seen as actively engaging with the project, selectively and strategically, so that the project works for them despite its limitations. Over the course of the next three chapters, I will identify three ways in which the projects were navigated. These are clearly only examples of ways in which participants respond to the challenge of participation; they do not constitute an exhaustive list of types of potential response. First, in this chapter, I will look at the strategy of remaining detached, participating on the surface without actually identifying as a 'participant'. In the next chapter, I will look at the strategy of those whose sense of themselves is threatened within the processes of the project. Finally, I will look at those who identify more fully with the project. I will argue that, for each type of participant, the possibilities and constraints of the project are different. The experience of the project is dependent partly on how it is planned and organised, as already described, and partly on the participant's orientation to the world. It is important to recall that the interviews were seen as a joint construction, in which I suggested ways of interpreting their experience, while leaving them the space to describe their experience in their own way (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997).

8.1 'Cynical Distance'

In this chapter, I propose to examine how some 'detached' participants establish a distance between themselves and the project, or those aspects of it that they find difficult. Instead of engaging in the projects through wholeheartedly engaging in the activities in the expected way, they engage selectively. This is a strategy that can be described as maintaining a 'cynical distance', where participants do not find the processes of participation meaningful but nevertheless 'go through the motions' of taking part in the project anyway (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). Any project in which there is a strong expectation that the participants will engage in certain activities, within the organisational context and according to its purposes and processes, while at the same time fully expressing themselves, can be challenging to the participants. Do they want to 'be themselves' in an organisational context such as this, where they are also being observed and monitored, or do they find a way to take part without being themselves (Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Fleming & Sturdy, 2009)? Faced with the contradictions of the project, which engages with participants' agency but only on the organisation's terms, participants may opt for a strategy of adopting a detached attitude towards the project and acting as if one's self is not involved.

This chapter will build on previous research into children and young people's participation that has emphasised that how participants engage is quite different from how the organisation imagined that they would (Freeman et al., 2003). Organisations and participants may have their own quite separate reasons for organising and taking part in the project, and it is a mistake to think that participation automatically aligns the organisation with the individual (Thumim,

2010). More specifically, I will explore what happens when the organisation, through participation, attempts to provide young people with a particular identity as a 'participant', and when this might be meaningless or problematic for the young people (Bragg, 2007a; Czerniawski, 2012). By addressing the relationship between project and participant through the idea of cynical distance, I wish to explore the experience of participants in a way that is new to the field of participation. Moving beyond the idea of cynicism arising out of the failure of participation to listen to participants (Thomas, 2007) or out of the belief that organisations will not listen (Percy-Smith & Malone, 2001), I will examine how far cynicism can be regarded as a potentially flawed means by which young people manage to maintain a sense of themselves within a potentially difficult environment (Fleming & Spicer, 2003).

For this purpose, I will investigate the experience, or aspects of the experience, of three participants, one from Bolworth and two from Riverton: John, Nathalie and Rob. In each case, I will endeavour to link their experience to the organisational context (Watson, 2008). In the case of Nathalie, I will present two transcripts of meetings, while in the other two cases I will present interviews and description. In the discussion, I will look at their experience with a view to understanding what it means to them to maintain a cynical distance from the project.

8.1.1 John

John, a participant at Bolworth, attended almost every session, in spite of being busy at college studying art and having a job. At 18, he was slightly older than most of the other participants in the project, and while he heard about the project through college, unlike other participants he was not encouraged to attend by a teacher. Like almost every other participant, he took part in the project partly to

gain work experience, for a possible future career in arts or design. From talking to him and attending the sessions with him, it was clear that he had a stronger interest in the artist and the artworks than some of the other participants. At one point in the project, he brought in some relevant artwork that he had made outside of the sessions. Being a slightly older, more engaged participant may well have been important in his eventual attitude to the project, outlined below.

In the previous chapter, I suggested that some elements of the project were potentially meaningful for the participants, while some were potentially controlling and alienating. John apparently decided during the planning stage that there was not space for him actually to engage, because of the way it was organised:

Researcher: Was it fun for you at the table doing the planning?

John: No, it's boring, and I get bored really easily. I like to get in, do the planning, have it all done quickly and get out, rather than have lists of things to do, days we're going to do stuff, and what we're going to do. It's just a brainstorming session, and because none of us knew what we were brainstorming about with no outcome at the end of the day so the [co-ordinator] would always come in and say, right, we're going to think about this over the course of the week and then we'll brainstorm our ideas, but as soon as I'm out of here I'm done, and then I come back next week... I won't sit and brainstorm – I do my homework.

It seems from this that, for John, because the nature of the task seemed too difficult for the group to engage with, the planning sessions were not productive or interesting. When there were discussions about the workshops, he thought that they were shaped chiefly by the participants' ignorance and the co-ordinator's preoccupation that there had to be usable activities for the children:

That's another thing as well. As soon as there's an idea, [the co-ordinator's] like let's go for it, let's start planning it, and we're not even going to discuss, you know, if it's going to be any good... And it's

good, the kids love it, but what the fuck has it got to do with [the artist]?

Here, John expresses the view that the wider remit of the project - for the young people to engage with the exhibition and reflect their interests in it - was lost amongst the need to create usable outcomes. When the participants were attempting to engage with the project, according to John, they were in fact simply redundant, since they did not know about how to run workshops whereas the co-ordinator was an expert. His position was that, in terms of the workshops, the co-ordinator 'works with schools, and she's done what she usually does'. It seems that he did not regard his presence in the projects as important to the organisation, or to himself, as can be seen from the following extract:

John: The co-ordinator would say, we're having a planning session, and we'd come in and just sit – it was such a waste of time.

Researcher: Would you get almost annoyed?

John: I wouldn't get annoyed by it, I like doing it, but sometimes, like for instance when we had those six kids and the adults knew we had six kids, each kid had adults fighting over them... I thought I could go home now.

It therefore seems that, for John, engagement in the project was not in practice a possibility, because of its aims, the lack of participants' expertise in the relevant area, and how it was organised. He enjoyed parts of the project, chatting to people and doing some artwork, but apart from that the attitude that he adopted was to put little in and take little out:

Nah, I don't really want to have ownership of a workshop. I mean, I help Izzy with hers, I mean the kids come in, Izzy gives them a talk, I take them upstairs, tell them, right, we're going to paint your face, you're going to paint your own face if you want to, tell them a bit about the artist and they get on with it. And then tell them what they're going to do next, tell them when they've got a break, so it's not really like a classroom where you're head of a class, so I don't think anybody, even the ones who have thought of the workshops... I don't think anybody's really the person that's doing it.

His attitude to the project was to go through the motions, even though he did not really believe in it (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). Despite not believing in the project, however, he was always the 'right' kind of participant, proving effective at running the workshops, and attending all the meetings. He was skilled at being a participant in response to the organisation's agenda (Percy-Smith, 2010) even though he found it not altogether meaningful:

John: I feel like it's been a good day, but I don't feel like I've accomplished anything.

Researcher: You don't?

John: No, not really. I feel like it's been a good day, and we've accomplished the workshops at the end of the day, but I don't feel like, I don't know...

Researcher: Accomplished a big thing?

John: (Smiling) No, it's not really a big thing is it, taking a photo of a face?

Researcher: Right, right.

John: At the end of the day, it's either a good day, and they like it, or I'll get stressed and I need a drink. I've not really accomplished anything.

The view of the project described here is far removed from an idealistic vision of the project. John does not appear to position the project, or his role in the project, as being anything out of the ordinary. By treating the accomplishments and positive aspects of the project lightly, he could live comfortably with the disappointments of the project without adopting an overly negative view of it. In discussions with him throughout the project, he always had complaints, and yet there were always parts of it that he enjoyed, and he was always understanding about the people in charge of the project. His way of experiencing the world, which was to have a cheerfully downbeat take on it, meant that he could experience the project on his own terms, however it went; in particular, he could experience the gap between how the project promised to be and how it was in reality without very much of a struggle (Alvesson, 2010).

John's enjoyment of the project emerges from the way he talked, as for example when he said, with a wry smile, 'it's not really a big thing, is it, taking a photo of a face'. It might be argued that he almost took pleasure in the project's failings, such as aspects of it that were negative, instrumental and controlling. Insofar as this is a legitimate conclusion to draw, it can be regarded as illustrating the complexity of human psychology (Archer, 2003; Craib, 1994), which can result in a 'meaningful' project emerging from a failed project through a participant's subjective experience of it.

It is equally important to acknowledge, however, that remaining detached from the group may be a way to protect one's self from the possible humiliating experience in which one's agency is engaged with only for it to be used or discarded, according to the needs of the project; this does not necessarily mean, however,

that a detached approach brings freedom from the controls of the project (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). John, for example, was obliged to take part in discussions and run workshops that he did not particularly believe in. There was one week when I had to run the dance workshop with him, getting the children to paint their faces and then do performance dance. This required us to impose ourselves on the group, in order to explain what they were doing and why, to get them enthused. Neither of us was confident or eager to do this, and it felt like a real challenge, for which we were possibly not equipped. The school headteacher (who was present because the teacher was away) and a teaching assistant were in the background, first looking on and then helping out. There was a sense of anxiety, for various reasons. We were clearly not very adept at the job; also, as young people, we were very enthusiastic and committed to the activities, and the workshops were really representative of us as people. Because we felt that we were representing the gallery to the schools, there was a feeling that, if we did not acquit ourselves well, we would be letting down the organisation. My sense was that we both felt these pressures quite keenly, and we struggled through the workshop (and afterwards talked about having a drink).

8.1.2 Nathalie

Unlike some other participants from Riverton, Nathalie arrived in the project not knowing any other participants. At 16, she the same age as most other participants, and like most of them, was studying art and wanted to pursue a career in art and design. By contrast to John, she appeared – superficially, at least - to be the ‘ideal’ participant, always fully taking part in discussion and activities. Fully participating on a behavioural level does not necessarily mean, however, that she

fully identified as a participant (Kunda, 1992). It might imply that she was able to navigate the project, cynically representing her perspective strategically in order to further her aims and get what she wanted out of the project (ibid.). In this section, I will present transcripts from two different meetings in which she can be regarded as acting strategically by putting forward two very different perspectives.

The first meeting was a discussion about exhibition guides. In the planning session, the participants looked round an exhibition at a nearby venue and then looked at the exhibition guide. They discussed the guide and how a guide could be made to be more engaging for young people. The co-ordinator was scrupulously open to the young people's perspective, and this activity had apparently been designed to be engaging. However, it was an activity initiated by the organisation, and the discussion took place within the educational space. Also, there is no reason to think that young people would necessarily be interested in creating a guide for other young people. Consequently, insofar as Nathalie can be regarded as offering a particular representation of her perspective rather than her 'authentic' perspective, it can be explained as a result of her being required to engage in an activity on the organisation's terms rather than her own.

The following transcript is an excerpt from the discussion about gallery guides and young people. There were three participants present, all of whom contribute to the discussion:

Co-ordinator: But do you think a guide has to be, um, what's the word I'm looking for?

Glen: Informative.

Co-ordinator: Informative.

Glen: I suppose you could split it, and you could have the first bit which is maybe in a larger text type which everyone could read, like when you walk around the gallery, those short pieces on the wall, and then in case you're more interested there could be a kind of, smaller type but large amount of words underneath, so if you chose to take an interest and you did wanna know what it's about you could read it, but it could be a larger briefer exclamation at the top.

Co-ordinator: Yeah.

Nathalie: I would map it out, I would put in a way that it looks like a map.

Rob: Yeah.

Co-ordinator: You would?

Nathalie: Like, I would.

Co-ordinator: Yeah, OK.

Nathalie: Like, like, create not a normal type of map but in more of a creative way, a simple map telling you where you could find certain pieces and possibly why that might be interesting, kind of like a trail.

Co-ordinator: OK.

Nathalie: Yeah. Through the gallery, so it makes it a bit more fun, like, you can look round trying to find different pieces and then make up your own mind about it.

Co-ordinator: Yeah.

Nathalie: That would definitely work with the [description of some of the artworks].

Co-ordinator: Yeah.

Nathalie: And so the words could be part of the exhibition.

- Co-ordinator:* Yeah.
- Glen:* Could integrate different ways of writing information, I suppose.
- Nathalie:* I wouldn't look at it that way, it's kinda hard to explain.
- Co-ordinator:* No, no, I know exactly what you're saying, and I really like this idea that this guide is part of the exhibition and it almost like it becomes an artwork itself, that you actually want to take away because it just looks great.
- Nathalie:* Yeah, that's the idea.

Later in the discussion, Nathalie talked more about the limitations of the conventional guide:

Well, I was thinking, the fact that it's a booklet and there's loads of writing, and you have to read the whole content to understand exactly what the artist was thinking about - no one bothers. Everyone just sits down, watches the films, gets bored of the films, walk around and then chuck the guide away, at the end. I think if we did do a guide it would have to fit on one page.

She then talked about what would make an interesting guide for young people:

I think, the more interesting it looks, the more people will actually bother to pick it up, and look at it so. Rather than just doing the conventional thing, what's expected.

At the conclusion of the meeting (and at the conclusion of the next meeting, where the guide was again touched on), Nathalie, along with any other participant who was interested, was asked to create a guide broadly along the lines of her idea. On a Sunday, Nathalie met two other participants, neither of whom were present at the above discussion, in a café to create the guide. Nathalie and one of the other

participants worked for over three hours, while the other participant arrived for the last hour. Nathalie brought her own laptop on which to design the guide, and also the information about the artist provided by Tate and NGS. When it came to actually creating the guide, Nathalie's views concerning guides and young people had transformed:

Nathalie: [handling a booklet] But I think this one would be quite a good idea of how to do it

Sara: A little booklet?

Nathalie: Yeah.

Sara: I'm not sure it would appeal to young people. It's simple though.

Nathalie: I think it would, we're not trying to attract like toddlers, we're trying to attract people our age and stuff and I think especially people who are into like art and things, graphic design, 'cos all the stuff is quite graphic design based, graphic designers like things that are simple and clean.

Sara: So shall we use Publisher or Photoshop?

A short time later in the meeting, Nathalie say this:

Yeah, I think actually the information's fine, so, we can find the image, I think we're just supposed to design a modern guide, so, and all the information is provided. Then there's a lot of stuff that we need to put in [from the information provided].

In the session, the two participants prepared the content for the guide by copying down information about the artist from the information pack given by AR to the curator of the show. The content was very formal and technical. They copied down exactly what the information pack said, even if they did not understand what the

word meant. They spent their time making sure that the design of the flyer – the layout, font size, colour scheme – was all exactly as they (especially Nathalie) wanted them. By the end, they had created a ‘simple and clean’ guide just as Nathalie had suggested. However, from the perspective of the project, the guide that they created was completely different from the one that Nathalie and the others had originally discussed and agreed upon.

Because Nathalie stopped attending the project soon after this episode, I did not interview her, and so I am not in a position to understand whether or not she *consciously* shifted her ideas about the guide. The meeting in the cafe was a week and a half after the meeting extract where the in-depth conversation about the guide took place. It is possible that she had forgotten that it was supposed to be aimed at engaging young people. Whether or not her change of heart was conscious, the different positions that she adopted in different contexts can be seen as her way of navigating the project.

In the first discussion, at the planning meeting, the group discussed ideas for guides for young people. Since the co-ordinator expressed surprise and rejected the guide that was then created by Nathalie and the other two participants, it is reasonable to assume that the co-ordinator imagined that Nathalie was talking about the kind of guide that she intended, in due course, to create. In other words, the co-ordinator imagined that Nathalie, as a participant, would follow through on the suggestions that she had made in the planning meeting. This was a reasonable assumption, from the perspective of the project progressing through stages in which the participants planned and then implemented what had been planned. The co-ordinator was operating in full participative, rather than controlling, mode; she

was mostly concerned with eliciting more information, particularly from Nathalie. In the discussion, within the extract and following it, the co-ordinator did not press Nathalie as to exactly what she intended to create, but simply tried to ensure that she had understood her idea.

The reader may, of course have their own ideas, but my sense of what happened was that Nathalie skillfully navigated the project, without buying into its underlying premise that it would facilitate young people expressing their authentic perspective. First, it appears that in the discussion meeting Nathalie was discussing an *idea* about an exhibition guide that may not have been an intention. Within an organisational context, there are 'codes' for what can be spoken of and what will be heard, and how topics should be spoken (Arnot & Reay, 2007; Batsleer, 2011). The discussion was about innovative guides for young people, and Nathalie spoke about her idea on the subject. This did not, apparently, mean that she was actually interested in the subject or that the ideas that she communicated were held particularly deeply. She appeared to be a participant who was skilled at responding to the agenda of the organisation without having the opportunity to communicate her perspective on what mattered to her (Percy-Smith, 2010). Even though she was not particularly interested in creating an innovative guide for young people, she was able to talk about it creatively.

While there are codes for what can be said, and while the agenda may not have been interesting for Nathalie, it appears from a close reading of the transcript that she may have managed to achieve her aims from the meeting while working within its confines. I would point out that she managed to have her idea accepted, instead of Glen's alternative idea. She and Glen seemed to be talking about two slightly

different ideas, Glen around the theme of 'text', and Nathalie around the theme of a 'map'. Nathalie followed Glen's idea with her own, rather than engaging with his. In her summary, the co-ordinator pulled the two ideas together as being about the guide 'as an artwork in itself'. The next stage, where Nathalie said 'Yeah, that's the idea', is crucial because at that point she established that it was her idea that had been accepted. In the discussion following the extract, the idea of the map was discussed and the co-ordinator talked to her about how and when she would create it. Also, when Glen tried to reintroduce his idea, Nathalie said 'I wouldn't look at it that way', re-establishing that it was her idea that was being discussed. In this way, the text-based idea was rejected, and I would suggest that this happened without the co-ordinator being conscious that it had been rejected. Where there were more obvious attempts to push forward one idea ahead of another's, then the co-ordinator would intervene. In a group discussion, it was impossible to guarantee that everyone would have an equal say, and so in this case one voice came to be heard louder than others. Even when the co-ordinator was making a particular effort to be open to all the ideas in a group, some ideas came to the fore more than others. Nathalie was able to establish her own proposal for the guide, at the expense of Glen's, and it seemed that she thereby got what she wanted from the meeting, by being asked to design the guide.

Nathalie was studying graphic design and wanted to be a graphic designer, so for her the most interesting aspect of the task was not the discussion of ideas for the guide but the opportunity of making the design as sophisticated as possible, rather than experimenting with form or content. The gallery intended that the young people would find personal meaning through being free to engage actively with the

idea of a guide in any way that they wanted, and yet creating a guide might have other meanings attached to it, that had nothing to do with how much freedom the young people had in creating it. For instance, in terms of work experience, as Nathalie may well have been aware, the degree of freedom attached to creating the guide was far less important than having the finished product within her portfolio. It seems as if Nathalie's investment in the project may have been primarily in terms of her future career, and this was not what was envisaged by the organisation. This implies that, in the context of the project, it is mistaken to expect that young people will live in the moment and not consider their experience more widely. It appears that they are more 'solid', capable of relating their experience in the projects to wider life concerns, such as career, that may not be immediately gratifying but are necessary for gaining long-term security (Bauman, 1996). Like John, Nathalie was apparently able to engage with the project selectively, using the project to further her own personal aims. She was able to participate fully in discussions, saying the 'right' kind of things, even if she did not necessarily believe in it. In this way, it could be argued that she engaged with the project superficially, wearing the identity of participant in the discussion, but only so that she could subvert the project and make it work for herself on her own terms (Kunda, 1992).

As it happened, Nathalie's navigation of the project, expressing different perspectives at different moments in the project, was not altogether successful. Although the co-ordinator was in participative mode within the discussion of the guide, there were controls in place within the project that she did not explain to participants. These controls related to the need for the young people to create something that would be judged by the organisation as usable for its purposes of

engaging other young people. Whilst Nathalie might have believed that whatever the young people created would be fine, because they were participants, the participants did not in fact have the final say over what creations would be acceptable. There was therefore an implicit requirement that Nathalie would, when it came to creating the guide, reflect her perspective as a young person, creating something that was meaningful to her, based on what was discussed. Eventually, near the end of the project, another group of young people created a guide with quotes about what they thought about the artworks and a scruffier, more ‘youth’ design. This version of the guide was eventually chosen. It is, of course, open to debate whether they were expressing themselves more fully than Nathalie, or whether they were more sophisticated in managing to deliver a usable – and therefore, ultimately, better – design for the organisation.

8.1.3 Rob

The distinction between the agenda of the project and the agenda of participants is most clearly exemplified by Rob, also at Riverton. 16-year-old Rob was studying art, and wanted to work as a graphic designer. While other participants saw this as a future objective, Rob’s approach was different. He was keen on finding ways to make money in the present as a graphic designer, working for contacts he had made and trying to make new ones. Of all the participants, he was the most keen to be interviewed, because, he said, he preferred to be out and about in the evenings and weekends rather than at home. He was always very talkative, in and out of the sessions, and he seemed to relish being a larger than life character who would commonly be outspoken and joke around. Rob came to the project on a whim, since a friend he was in a café with after college was going to attend an

early meeting, and he did not feel like going home. So he came along without really knowing much about the project being it involving art.

Despite not knowing much about the project before he joined, it emerged that Rob had a clear sense of why he was involved in the project, which he regarded as an opportunity to forward his ideas and obtain work experience. He did not see himself not as a member of a group amongst other members within a collaborative environment. Instead, Rob understood the project on individual terms:

Rob: I'm the guy with ideas, I'm just coming with ideas, loads of stuff,

Researcher: Ideas, what like?

Rob: No, for everything, for absolutely everything, I'm going for ideas, like, you saw me like saying shit, all different things which we can do and stuff, I'm going, like OK I have an idea, let's do that, it's pretty cool.

In the meetings, he would either dominate the discussions or switch off, do some drawing on paper, or speak to others alongside the main conversation. The co-ordinator would sometimes ask him to be quiet. He was quite comfortable with the way that his contributions to the group were not always understood by the co-ordinator as being constructive:

Rob: I was just laughing. I was actually pretty bored, but when I go I just try and make fun, just make me...

Researcher: [the co-ordinator] told you to be quiet once.

Rob: Like three times. Yeah, that was good.

Researcher: But that's normal, right?

Rob: Yeah that's normal for me. Everybody's telling me that but I don't give a shit. OK, you don't like me don't speak with me, and everyone's speaking with me, so yeah.

Researcher: Yeah.

Rob: But I like when she said to him, We won't let you forget you bring Rob here, so I was like hahaha.

This is a particularly 'active' example in which Rob was coping with not feeling that the project offered meaningful engagement in a manner that went beyond cynical distance to something more like resistance (Collinson, 2003). Like John, Rob was often bored in the planning meetings, and was not interested in the aim of engaging other young people so much as in using the project as a platform for his artwork to be shown and to gain work experience. In the project, it was agreed with the young people in a meeting that they would run a pop-up shop showing artwork by young people in the city that was relevant to the exhibition. As mentioned in Chapter 6, I noticed far less enthusiasm for the project than the co-ordinator was aware of; it was clear that, in the weeks between the date on which it was agreed and the date on which it opened, the young people did not do very much work in terms of finding or creating relevant artwork or in promoting it. Rob, however, had assumed that his artwork would be shown in the shop and had not considered the idea that his artwork would not be considered relevant by the co-ordinator. It happened that, closer to the opening, however, friends of a young person who had only been able to attend the first two meetings and had recently graduated from university, came forward with enough artwork that was relevant to the show.

When it came to the day when the shop was being prepared, Rob arrived with his artwork, expecting that it would be put up. The co-ordinator expressed the view

that the group had agreed that relevant artwork would be shown, and that if Rob could demonstrate that his relevant, then he would be able to show it. In the end, when the co-ordinator looked at his artwork, she said that it was not relevant, and stated that the 'group had agreed' that only relevant artwork would be shown. There were, however, other ways of 'animating the space' within the shop; Rob and the other young people were given the opportunity to create interactive activities for visitors, and Rob was given a space to create a relevant artwork over the course of the week.

The manner with which the co-ordinator negotiated with Rob was important. While she was adamant that the work which he had brought could not be displayed, and she invoked the authority of the group to do this, she also took a great deal of care with him. She took as long as necessary in discussing it with Rob, in order to ensure that he understood that she was not taking the decision because of any personal animus, and she showed respect for his work and some concern for his feelings. She could not spend much time at the shop during the week that it was open, and the discussion with Rob made her late for another appointment. However, by the time she left, Rob was aggrieved because he wanted to display his work (as he had already mentioned a few times previously), yet gave expression to his grievance by being productive rather than despondent.

It seemed to me that Rob's ability to express his sense of grievance productively resulted from a mixture of serendipity and good practice on the co-ordinator's part. Throughout the lengthy negotiation with Rob, the co-ordinator took a great deal of interest in what else he and the others could do in the space, and which of his qualities would be suited to the work. His painting ability was mentioned. She even

gave out some of the budget, so that he could buy the materials that he needed. This meant that Rob received a morale boost from the co-ordinator. It is significant here that the graduates who came that day (but not the rest of the week) to install their work were strikingly confident and self-possessed. It was apparent to me, in spending the week with him there in the absence of the co-ordinator and the artists, that he took a great deal of pleasure in criticising the work displayed, and this was possible because of the absence of both practitioner and artists.

As there were rather few volunteers able to attend the shop that week, for most of the time Rob was there with two other participants who were his close friends from college. This meant that he had the opportunity and resources to work and display his work in a public space, supported by his friends (who were less interested in having their work shown). He felt both a sense of injustice because his work was not considered suitable and a sense of competitiveness with older, more 'established' artists. At the same time, he was a particularly gregarious person, who seemed to enjoy spending time with anyone.

Consequently, when Rob and his friends were in the shop there was a great deal of energy in the room, far more than in the rest of the project. While Rob worked on his part of the shop, the other young people prepared a large section of a wall for people to provide their feedback. Throughout the day, I was in and out of the shop doing interviews and taking notes in a coffee shop round the corner. There was such a lively, anarchic atmosphere that, as the 'adult' present, I was even slightly worried about what was happening. It became apparent that Rob and his friends were engaging with the public extensively, bringing them in from the street and discussing the project, their work and the artworks. There were flyers in the shop

which the young people had designed and which they were showing to the public. From what they told me and what was written on the feedback wall, it was apparent that they were encouraging the public to write uncomplimentary things, and they were all very clear that most of the public were far more complimentary about their work on the flyer than about the artworks officially displayed.

Although the young people were engaging on their own terms, from an organisational perspective this was not an altogether ideal situation. It was problematic, potentially, for the institution, as the young people were in a sense representing it, and it was problematic for the young artists whose work was being displayed. I asked one of the artists, when he popped in the second day, if he wanted the feedback taken down. After some deliberation he said yes, and so I said this to the group. Two out the four agreed that this was right, and so we took it down. However, I was not around over the last two days, and I discovered from Rob later that as soon as I left it was put back up. This, of course, made me look bad because I had told the artist that it would be taken down. From the perspective of the project, the energy that was present that week, it seemed to me, was a somewhat destructive; in particular, the young people seemed to be reveling in being rude and disrespectful towards the older artists.

From the perspective of the participants, and Rob in particular, however, the episode was a great success. At the end of the project, when we were discussing our favourite parts, everyone involved said that the shop was their favourite, even though they hated the artwork. At the event looking back at the project, it was evident that, despite the best efforts of the co-ordinator, she was on a completely different page to the young people involved in the way she approached the shop

and their experiences of it. The co-ordinator tried to process what had happened with the shop, why the work by the graduate artists was chosen and why the young people were disappointed with it. These points were covered in a discussion about the shop, but throughout the conversation Rob still wanted to make his point that the artwork was not interesting, as is shown here:

[The public] liked the idea, I think they liked it very much, the idea of a pop-up shop with artwork inside, but next time I think it needs to be more colourful and weeee and not just boring writing on the wall

Finally, it was apparent that the co-ordinator and Rob had different perspectives. The co-ordinator was trying to reflect on what happened following a fairly long discussion, while Rob wanted to reiterate the problem:

Co-ordinator: It was difficult as well cos, it became these three artists work together... so they were already a kind of collective, and in a way it became like their group show, and they didn't have to do any of the invigilating, and you were having to speak on behalf of their work, and thought they left some information, it wasn't your work,

Rob: And trust me there were people coming and asking us what is with this. Um, yeah, sorry,

Co-ordinator: And what about the launch event?

It seems to me that it was no coincidence that the young people were most engaged with the project when they had the opportunity to express themselves in opposition to the project, rather than when exercising the freedom of expression offered to them formally in the context of the project. When they were told that they could find or make relevant artwork, they were not particularly engaged: they did relatively little, or even nothing. However, once they were provided with space for a

week's work with older artists, largely without any supervision, they came alive and expressed themselves thoroughly. This implies that one way of struggling to maintain a sense of one's self in the project is to set one's self up in resistance to the project, using opposition to the project as a way of defining one's self (Collinson, 2003).

As already stated, this is in a sense a more active approach than merely cynical distance. Rob was actively working against the aims of the project as much as going along with them. However, there is not necessarily a distinction between resistance and cynical distance, since cynical distance can include the kind of resistance that can be easily incorporated into the status quo and does not seriously rock the boat (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). For all the 'trouble' that Rob may have caused the project, by setting up his own conversations in meetings and criticising the artworks in the shop, he was always involved in the project through attending and engaging with the public in the shop. In a sense he, like John, was engaging with the project through maintaining a distance from it. In terms of struggle, Rob appeared to take pleasure from clashing, not too seriously, with the authority of the project without seriously transgressing its rules (ibid.). The contradictions of the project, how the relevance of the artwork was decided chiefly by the co-ordinator, even though it was the young person's project, appeared to provide grist to Rob's mill, legitimising the pleasure that he took in being 'difficult'. Consequently, it can be concluded that Rob, like John, appeared to find meaning in the project's limitations.

8.2 Discussion

John, Nathalie and Rob exemplify different ways in which participants engage with a project without identifying with the project's construction of what a participant is. In response to the problem of how to engage with the project when it does not seem to offer a space where meaningful engagement would be possible, they simply engaged on their own terms. For John, this meant going through the motions of the project without believing in it, for Nathalie it meant changing her perspective at different stages of the project, while for Rob it meant contributing on his own terms throughout the project. Detaching one's self from the project in these different ways does not mean that they were free from the controlling aspects of the project: John still had to be involved in the discussions and run the workshops, even if he did not believe in them; Nathalie's guide was not used; Rob was not able to show his picture.

What, then, is gained by taking a detached perspective to the project? One way of looking at it is that if the project is potentially a 'jungle of messiness and contradictions' in which, for instance, the project requires you to be yourself but judges your contributions in terms of how useful they are to the organisation, then by not getting too close to the project one can take the possible threats to the self *lightly*. Each participant, by not trying to engage with the project in the expected way, was perhaps in a better position to cope with the disappointments of the project compared with participants who were more invested in it. Anything that happened to John in the project he was able to brush off as not particularly important, while Rob was set up to relish the clash between himself and the project rather than suffer it. Having not interviewed Nathalie I would not be sure about her

experience of having the guide rejected, but since she approached it as a professional rather than as revealing herself, I would suggest that it is unlikely that the disappointment would have cut too deep. In the next chapter, when the experience of participants who identified more with the project is explored, it will become much clearer what John, Nathalie and Rob managed to achieve through detaching themselves from the group,.

In terms of understanding participation projects, this chapter would suggest that participants are able to engage fully in a project without necessarily believing in it. It would be possible to go beyond this, and suggest that in a sense the project shapes the participants to be detached from the project through requiring them to be themselves but at the same time judging their contributions against their usefulness to the organisation. If the projects cynically engage with the participants in this way, then it is understandable why the participants would be equally cynical, engaging in a partial and self-interested way. The projects expect young people to be fully themselves, wholeheartedly engaging with the activities, but at the same time they do not allow it if people being themselves is at odds with the organisation.

Should a detached approach to the projects, then, be valued as a good thing? To the extent that this dynamic is likely to be continued in organisations into adulthood (Fleming & Spicer, 2003), then we could think that the participants being detached in this way is a lesson well learned (Eliasoph, 2009). However, what is more debatable is the cost to the individual of taking such a detached attitude, where people engage in a potentially difficult situation by stripping it of meaning (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). The detached approach to the projects can be viewed as being as

problematic as a situation in which the identity of the participants are obliged to adopt for themselves identities that share the perspective of the project (Bragg, 2007a). One argument is that while independence of mind is maintained, participants can become alienated from themselves as they communicate thoughts and feelings that they do not feel; it is a particular type of self-alienation in which their opinion of themselves goes down as they see themselves going through the motions of that which they do not believe in (Kunda, 1992). Although I saw no sign of any of the detached participants opinions of themselves being lowered, it is possible that another participant might in a similar situation. While John and many other participants commonly did not contribute in planning meetings, because he did not think the discussions worthwhile, it may not be a huge jump from not wanting to contribute to feeling one does not have anything worth contributing.

Also, the chapter has suggested that participation projects can work through cynicism, as children and young people are skilled at answering organisational agendas even if they are not interested in them (Percy-Smith, 2010). While cynical participants does not believe in the identity that the organisation is pushing onto them, they are well aware of what is expected of them. Thus, paradoxically, cynical participants conform to the identity of being participants in the very way in which the organisation wants, while simultaneously believing that they are maintaining their distance (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). This means that it is important when evaluating a participation project to explore the experience of participants in depth.

This chapter has placed particular emphasis on the participant as an important driver in making participation non-meaningful. This is important because there is still sometimes a bias towards the idea that participation can be made meaningful

once it is put into practice correctly (Lewis, 2010; cf. Hill et al., 2004; cf. Percy-Smith, 2006). The idea that children and young people have a fundamental desire to participate has been questioned (Lewis, 2010), and the central importance of the tension between organisation and participant to meaningful participation has been raised (Cockburn, 2005), I would not argue that the case study projects represent the best possible participation project. It appears, however, that the participants studied came with their own orientations and while they were participating in the project their horizons were always beyond the project, so that they placed more importance on their careers than on the project. To put it in Craib's terms (1994), the idea that the young people would find it meaningful to create workshops or a guide for others is somewhat simplistic, and it is understandable that the participants engaged only superficially; while it is possible that a more sophisticated model, shaped in part by the young people, would be more engaging, it seems likely that the children and young people's lifeworld, their orientation to the world, is always more complex than can be captured within a project and so they will engage on their own terms. This is of course no more than a supposition, but it seems to me that the disposition not to engage may have been central to the identity of John and Rob (Willis, 1977), and I suspect that this would have been the case of any given project.

Chapter 9: 'Passive Agents'

In Chapter 6, I outlined the inherent contradiction of the projects, which is that young people are expected to be themselves as participants within an organisational context in which the organisation ultimately passes judgment on their contributions. In the previous chapter, I described one way in which participants navigate projects by detaching themselves while at the same time participating in the project. This is clearly only possible if participants have a certain degree of self-confidence and ability to experience the project on their own terms. In this chapter, I will therefore look at young people who navigated the project in a less confident way, whose participation was apparently strongly shaped by their self-consciousness and awareness of their presence and contribution in the group. Like the 'cynical' participants, already presented, these participants engaged with the project in their own way, but they displayed less confidence, and tended to look for niches within the project in which they would be less in the spotlight.

I will look in particular at the experience of Jenna and Will, both of whom described themselves as shy. Observation revealed that, informally, Jenna was confident and sociable, even within a group: this was particularly apparent during lunchtimes and in the times before and after the sessions took place. However, within an institutional setting, she was not as confident in putting forward her perspective. Will appeared to be more softly spoken at all times, although like Jenna it would not have been immediately obvious that he lacked confidence particularly from chatting to him one-to-one.

Jenna and Will participated in the Bolworth project, in which they were expected to lead workshops. It is proposed to present their experiences together, and since at meetings they said very little, the material presented here will consist almost exclusively of interviews with them which took place towards the end of the project. I will also include excerpts from interviews with a further participant.

There are two sections to the chapter. In the first, I outline how Jenna and Will were both self-conscious within the projects, aware of themselves as 'passive agents', to use in Archer's phrase (2003, p.299). In the second, I look at how, although their experience was to a large extent shaped by their self-consciousness, their reflexiveness meant that they were able to come to occupy a secure place within the project (Archer, *ibid.*).

9.1 'Passive Agents'

"'Passive agents' are people whose subjectivity makes no difference to the play of objective circumstances upon them' (Archer, *ibid.*, p.299). In this section, I will suggest that, in the context of the project, Will and Jenna can be regarded as 'passive agents' who, throughout the project appeared not to aim to directly influence what was happening in the projects. They would be wary of responding to questions about their point of view about what should happen and would tend to drift towards the fringes of the activities. . This does not, of course, imply that they arrived at the project as inherently passive people, or that the project imposed passivity onto them. Their passivity cannot be reduced simply to the projects being controlling, because other participants were more active, nor can it be reduced to their make-up, since around the fringes of the project they could be quite outgoing. Clearly, it is attributable to the interaction of their way of being and the social order

established by the project, which meant that they adopted a generally passive stance.

By way of illustrating what I mean by 'passivity', I would refer to my observation of them as they participated in the project. It seemed to me that, while they contributed to the project in certain ways, such as drawing self-portraits or helping with the workshops, they tended not to contribute by putting forward a particular idea of their own for what the workshops would be or stating in positive terms what they wanted to do in the workshop. Instead, they found a space within the project to fit into – a workshop activity to help with or affirm a suggestion of others. So, while they contributed to the project, they were not among the committed members who changed the course of the project, nor were they detached (like the more cynical members): they attended meetings and took part in activities but remained on the periphery, present but largely submissive. As will become clear, in fact 'passiveness' is a very poor way of understanding Will and Jenna's relationship to the project once their experience is studied in more depth; it is used here as a starting point because it captures the way that they did not extensively and directly engage with the project activities.

In this section, I want to explore this question further, to understand better how they understood their 'passiveness' in their own terms. Both 16 years old, Will and Jenna wanted to go to university in a different part of the country, and did not plan to return. There was a sense, then, in which they were invested in the future, in creating a life apart from their present surroundings. They both were achieving high grades at school and were ambitious in their choice of universities and future careers. Each of them described how they were rarely in trouble at school, and

demonstrated a respectful attitude towards adults and in the interviews were initially reluctant to talk about themselves at length and were apologetic about any criticisms they made about the project, and would immediately qualify them. At the same time, they would be diligent in answering the questions put to them, and appeared to be in the habit of being amenable towards adults.

Like many of the young people, Will and Jenna were advised to get involved in the project by their tutor at college, who thought that it would be a good opportunity for them. Indeed, from Jenna's perspective there appeared to be a degree of continuity between the project and college:

My art teacher went up to me and went, how would you like to do an art thing with [the organisation], and I went like, what would I need to do, and he was, like, I've got no idea, and I was, like, good I'll do that, and he said, I've signed you up, oh, ok, so that's how I started doing it.

This implies that Jenna did not engage with the project on her own terms even before it had begun; she herself would connect the way she was in the project to how she was in school:

Jenna: 'Cos I'm, like, the youngest, and I'm trying to not step on anyone's toes and just get on with it. I'm the same at work, I just keep my mouth shut and do what I do.

Researcher: Right.

Jenna: It's the same when you're at school, it's the same in my old art class. There were people who were a lot louder than me, and they'd get the teacher's attention first, and they got all the help, and then it's those of us who are

quieter, we kind of just move along until the teacher finally comes to us, you know what I mean.

Perhaps, getting into the project through college, and the presence of peers from college, may have acted as a kind of constraint on Jenna. People's experience in the present moment is in part influenced by ways of being in the world that have developed over time, and the implication here is that, while the project was designed so that she would contribute, her established way of being in institutions was to not contribute in many situations, as far as possible (Archer, 2003). Although there might have been particular reasons for Jenna to be quiet within the project, it appeared that her quietness within institutions was habitual:

Jenna: Uhuh, but that's the good thing about [the co-ordinator], when it was you, me and her, when we were coming up with ideas and, like, Izzy, she is quiet but she was getting her ideas across, but [the co-ordinator] would turn to me and go, you know, give your input, so she did give me the opportunity to give my input which was good

Researcher: Yeah. You didn't feel that was putting you on the spot?

Jenna: I did a wee bit, just 'cos I don't like the attention being on me, I like to just kind of sit quiet, but I've felt like that since I can remember. Even at school in first year, a couple of the kids would be really loud, annoying the teacher, and I'd just sit there and get on with my work

Researcher: Yeah.

Jenna: I've always been like that, I think it's 'cos of my wee brother, he's quite loud, and he's always the focus with

my mum and my dad. I stay in my bedroom...It would help if you talked a bit [directed at me].

Jenna demonstrates here some self-knowledge of her way of being in organisations, and perhaps even a certain comfort with it. Her attitude towards other kids, and especially her brother who received more attention than her, was not entirely clear, and it is difficult to tell whether it annoyed her or not. Nevertheless, it was something she was aware of and could make sense of in her own terms (Archer, 2003). Perhaps for her, as for Will, the fact that there was little space for her in the project was not all that problematic because adopting a passive or self-effacing position within organisations felt comfortable for her.

Jenna's personal history has been shown to be relevant to the stance she took in the project. That the other participant presented here, Will, did not reveal anything about his personal history, is interesting because of how the context of the project appeared to make him passive. He described how he did not fully take to the task of delivering the workshops:

I mean it's out of my comfort zone but I'd never say it was something I'd choose not to do, I mean, comfortably, I'd always tell myself I just wouldn't do it because then I could just do something else and not worry about it, but it's been a great experience regardless, and you always have to leave your comfort zone. I mean I wasn't entirely comfortable helping kids out and stuff like that, but it was a confidence thing as well, worrying how I looked to the teachers watching, thinking, that like, I was really bad at helping, or really out there, why I was there, questioning why I was an important part of the workshop, I think, despite being worried about it, I'm still happy I did it, and given the chance I'd do it again, but I mean at the time I

couldn't have said whether I would regret it or not, and I'm glad I did it.

This can be regarded as exemplifying how the project's logic and design of enabling the young people to have a say could be experienced as a threat to the self (Alvesson, 2010). From this perspective, the project had the effect of stripping away Will's defenses, exposing him to the judgment of others as people or, in my words endorsed by Jenna, of being 'put on the spot'. In the two projects, there were further occasions when it felt as if participants were unable to measure up to the demands that they perceived as being made of them. To give a few examples from each project: when the group was asked to come up with a name and no one offered one; in meetings where many people would not contribute at all; where we took portraits that expressed ourselves, and some people had no confidence in articulating how they wanted to be seen; in the meetings suggesting and defending a possible workshop activity. from my own experience, where I felt shy about talking through my pictures and captions in the first week; The problem was all the worse because it was difficult to acknowledge that it was awkward, and there was an implicit expectation that participants should want to contribute, as Will reflected here in relation to delivering the workshops:

You know, it was more difficult than this one 'cos there were a lot more kids, 17 kids, so it was quite stressful at times, it wasn't stressful at all really, but I was quite stressed, I knew I would be 'cos it was the first time, um, yeah the teachers guided that and I felt almost embarrassed 'cos I felt that we should have had that structure set, we should have known kinda, what to do...

The phrase in which I was especially interested here was 'it wasn't stressful at all really, but I was quite stressed'. Together with his statement that 'I was worrying

how I looked', in the previous passage reported, it implies that Will experienced the project negatively and reacted by being critical of himself. This can be seen as exemplifying the danger that the project may construct particular participants (Freeman et al., 2003; Newman & Clarke, 2009), 'powerful selves' who have mastery over the world, and against whom the real participants judge themselves (Craib, 1994). It is perhaps similar to Jenna saying 'that's the good thing about' the co-ordinator when in fact she felt 'put on the spot'.

In Chapter 7, I suggested that although the co-ordinators tried to make the project meaningful for the participants, the various organisational constraints meant that they were obliged to put a controlling project into practice alongside the meaningful one. As a result, what young people were required to do and what they wanted to do became separated. They were asked for their ideas and contributions at specific moments and in situations in which they did not want to make themselves visible. The projects seemed to impose themselves on the young people, in such a way that what was intended to be an opportunity for them was experienced by them as a burden. Here, Will describes his attitude to running the workshops:

I mean, it's not like I hate it [running the workshops], but it's not something I would choose to do over something else, I mean I have enjoyed doing it, I haven't dreaded it or wanted every second for it to end, but it's not something I would openly choose to do, there are a lot of things I would choose to do otherwise.

This demonstrates how the structure of the project obliged Jenna and Will to go through the motions of taking part in discussion, activities and running workshops, none of which they particularly wanted to do. Their lack of participation was their way of showing this. Unlike John, described in the previous chapter, Will in

particular seemed to have less capacity to circumvent or take lightly the difficulties that arose for him in participating in the project, so that he tended instead to worry about how he looked and wish that he was elsewhere.

9.2 Finding a Space

In this section, I will consider how, despite their basic passivity and inability to make their mark on the project, Jenna and Jenna were able to establish a position for themselves at the edge of the group and came to a reflexive understanding of their position within the group (Archer, 2003). Their enjoyment of the project did not emerge from engaging in a carefree way with the activities intended to enable them to express themselves freely. Rather, their enjoyment was the result of carefully stepping round the aspects of the project that required them to publicly express themselves. From a constructivist view of agency, being active is about engaging with activities on one's own terms (Hein, 1995), while from a reflexive perspective it is about engaging with the world in a way that is not only meaningful to the individual but is also self-protective (Craib, 1994). The reflexive activeness of Will and Jenna could be said to be concerned with avoiding engaging actively in the activities within the project. In terms of what they chose to do they sometimes chose the equivalent of opting out of the projects and having a non-experience over a self-implicating one. Here Will describes what he did in the first workshop for pupils, in which the participants were expected to lead the activities under the watch of the co-ordinator and the teaching staff:

For the first one I spent the whole time fixing the printer, it wasn't as though, and that was my decision, I could have stopped trying with the printer, but I really got focused on that instead of helping out because they were overstaffed, but if I was confident and interested,

really interested, in taking part and helping them to do something then I would have gotten involved regardless of how many people there were, so I suppose you know it has been a different experience for me as opposed to the more confident people running the workshop

Here is Jenna talking about one of the planning sessions where the group was getting ready for the workshops:

Researcher: When we went up to the dress up box, do you remember, and you were, like, no - this is Rachel's job?

Jenna: Yeah.

Researcher: I don't think she was even there that week.

Jenna: No she wasn't, but I just thought she'd be better at that 'cos she's more into life, into the drama kind of stuff, dressing-up, I used to be into that dressing up, I used to be into that, when I was five, me and my dad watched the Bruce Lee movies, you know the kung-fu movies, and I wanted to be an actress, my dad, I even went to karate for a few years...

In these two passages, Will and Jenna explain how they positioned themselves at the margins of the group: Will undertook tasks that were peripheral to the group rather than within the group, while Jenna delegated tasks to others. They did not want roles which involved putting forward ideas, criticising others' ideas, taking the lead in the workshops, preferring to contribute in a way in which they were less involved.

Throughout the project, Will and Jenna adopted the same reactive approach finding a space away from the spotlight in which they could engage. As more passive participants, they could find a way of avoiding prominent roles in the

workshops by electing to help out with particular tasks and letting the children take centre stage. They could also find a way to enjoy the experience of helping in the workshops, as Jenna describes:

I think everyone kind of gets something out of it, 'cos even Beth's coming out of her shell, talking to the kids, and she's normally really quiet, and eh, Jess was loving it with wee Alex, having a great time, so I think everyone gets something out of it, I mean I love working with the kids and helping them out, like helping out Dan, helping him in the skirt, that was fun, great choice of fashion for a boy.

Although some participants chose not to do some of the tasks, they did not necessarily feel that they were missing out, compared with more outgoing participants, and this emerges from Will's comments here:

I think if you're more confident, to go upstairs and help with the face-painting and even let them paint your face and dance with them, that's not something I would do, but it's something maybe someone more confident would do, I think it's a completely different experience in the way you interact with them, maybe even in the activity that you choose to help them with, and I wouldn't say either was better than the other. I mean I would say I've learned a lot about how to, I mean I'm more confident now to help than I was.

This shows that there was flexibility within the projects for each person to find something with which they were comfortable. Here, another participant in the project, Jess, talks about finding a position within the workshops:

Dancing is a little bit difficult for me to get out of, to be free, you know I'm normally more.... I can't dance like that you know, so for example, the dancing, no, I like the dancing if we have a special choreography, I like it pretty much, but just to say, 'now here's music, now dance, do whatever you want to', it gets difficult for me, so, yeah, with

photography it gets easier for me, I get behind the camera and say, could you please dance, and I take the picture, so that's easier for me.

9.2.1 Reflexiveness

As reflexive agents, Will and Jenna both had long-term plans to go to university and hoped to have a career in the arts. They had, in their everyday lives, established a happy and secure way of being in the world. They enjoyed college, family life and friends, and on a day-to-day level, they were not particularly anxious. They were clearly secure in the world and able to understand their experience in the groups from a secure base. Their active reflexiveness in the project extended beyond finding comfortable niches for themselves to developing a particular way of thinking about themselves in relation to the project. Both were able to think about the project, from their perspective as social subjects as well as objects. They could be regarded as engaging in an internal conversation as a means of understanding how the project was for them and, by extension, whether they would want to take part in similar future projects and on what terms (Archer, 2003).

From my interview with Jenna, it appeared that her understanding of her experience of the project centred on the idea that she, as the youngest, had been marginalised by other participants. In the following passage, she describes how, in the planning meetings, the co-ordinator and participants had treated her as if she were a 'consultant', who could represent the perspective of the primary school pupils with regard to the planned workshop activities:

Basically they asked me a lot 'cos out of [names of participants] I'm pretty much the youngest, so I basically wanted to do stuff where the kids aren't just sitting bored writing stuff out...

This standpoint is interesting, since the majority of participants were only a few months older than her. Whilst there were, admittedly, two participants who were as much as six years older, it was difficult to discern any objective basis on which she could be seen as closer to the perspectives of the primary school children in any meaningful way. Having said this, it is true that within the group she was often asked about whether she thought pupils would enjoy particular activities such as collage or mask-making. However, from my observation, this was more due to the fact that she would make few suggestions of her own, and asking her about the suggestions of others was a way of including her in the group. That she felt this specific practice was in a sense marginalising indicates to me that her overall experience of the project was perhaps one of marginalisation.

She described her experience of the group in positive terms and she was more likely to attribute her negative experiences in the group to how others were with her, rather than her shyness in groups. There were occasional problems in the workshops, mentioned by John, because there were their too many participants for pupils, so that some participants were left with nothing to do. Jenna found that there was not space for her:

It's definitely worse today, cause you try and look after one kid and somebody barges and takes over and you're just like ooh, ok.

However, Jenna did not react in the same way as Will, who tended to see himself as having a problem. The project did not seem to be 'destructive' for her, because she did not seem to take her quietness or passivity personally. For her, the

difficulties of the project stemmed from aspects of the project itself, especially the other participants. This idea that others were problematic was consistent with her experience of people at school and in her family. It is important to be conscious of the limitations of the interview, and there are several possible reasons why she might not have said everything that was on her mind. The interview took place in a café nearby the organisation, with someone she associated with the project. In addition to the inherent limitations of interviewing as a means of understanding someone's experience, the interview was one of the first that I did in the research and clearly this may well have been an influence on her not necessarily saying everything she felt. At one point she said, above, 'it would help if you talked a bit', after I left a pause after one of her answers towards the beginning of the interview. Despite these limitations, it is possible to trace a narrative around the project in which other participants limited the project somewhat but that the project was positive anyway. She, no less than the cynically detached participants, was able to understand and engage with the project on her own terms.

Like Jenna, Will was able to come to an understanding of the project that was not based on his shyness or passivity. Will, in part, was able to shape how he understood the group and how he understood the workshop on his own terms. Here, he seems to have come to his own understanding of working with the pupils that is based, in a positive way, on his own shyness:

I think there would definitely be differences between [his experience and that of others], um, I stuck with something, I'm not great at keeping them on track, so it's good to have something that can keep them occupied and know how to work, without needing too much help 'cos I don't know how well I would fare at keeping them on track and

just keeping them focused, I'm kind of shy even around people like kids, I don't really like speaking out and being pushy 'cos I'd want them to do kind of whatever they wanted to do, 'cos I mean that, taking pictures, I mean they shouldn't really be told how to take pictures, I mean they have the materials and they should do it any way they want.

It can be seen how his shyness in the projects and his philosophy about how the children should learn combine to form an account of a full experience of the project. A perceived weakness (I'm not great at keeping them on track') is turned into a strength (not 'being pushy').

In the following passage, describing his experience of the group, Will expresses how he was able to shape what the project was for him and also how he perceived the project:

I didn't know what to expect, it was really laid-back, which I liked, I suppose there wasn't a lot of stress involved in putting the workshop together anyway, it was just basically a load of people interested in running a workshop coming up with ideas, and it was fun putting all those ideas together and trying all the stuff that other people would eventually try out as well, and see if that was something that would inspire creativity and all sorts of stuff like that, and it was good, I enjoyed it, I always enjoy turning up to those meetings, 'cos it wasn't ever any stress or anything, it was just doing artwork really, I like that.

Here Will describes how, as part of the process of understanding the group on his own terms, he experienced the planning stage of the project as a positive opportunity. As will become clear from the account of a more 'committed' participant in the next chapter, Will's description of the project was not shared by

other participants, who experienced the planning sessions as quite stressful, rather than 'laid-back'.

There is a sense in which Will's image of the group can be seen as a shared achievement, negotiated by the whole group; his reflexiveness happened within a supportive context. As has been seen, Will managed to turn a potentially anxiety-provoking project into a positive one. He was able to do this because the more committed members of the group implicated themselves, through making many suggestions for what to do, which then in a sense had to stand up to questioning as to how exactly they would work in practice. It was also an achievement on the part of the co-ordinator, who did not push Will into 'doing' the project exactly as it was planned, by insisting that he make suggestions and engage with the children in a particular way. It can also be seen as partly fortuitous: it so happened that there were enough participants for some to be able to do something else (such as 'fixing the printer') when the children arrived. In the planning sessions, there was a great deal of freedom for people to get on with whatever they wanted, and while this was occasionally experienced by some participants as directionless, Will's comments suggest that the space enabled the project to be experienced as stress-free.

Throughout the process, it helped that the co-ordinator herself identified with people who did not want to put themselves in the spotlight, so that she was sensitive to them in various ways. For example, where possible, she would leave space within the project for people to follow their own interests. One more overtly committed participant noted that, during the course of the planning meetings, the co-ordinator was not particularly demanding of the less confident participants.

Instead of attempting to elicit suggestions from them, she would allow them to be more reactive to the suggestions made by others. In this short-term project, this worked very well, because it allowed less confident people the space to operate within the project without being constantly driven by anxiety. Consequently, all the less confident young people appear to have 'absolutely loved' the project, as one of them put it. In the next chapter, however, it will be shown that the lack of engagement of less confident participants was experienced as difficult by some of the more committed members.

In Chapter 6, I outlined how the co-ordinator tried to create a participative project, in which everyone could contribute on their own terms. However, there was a sense in which the context of the project obliged her to create another, more controlling version of the project. Throughout the project, the co-ordinator was conscious of the experience that each participant was having and tried to ensure that each participant had a good experience. The atmosphere that she created within the group was informal, friendly and warm, although some young people, like John, were probably aware of some of the co-ordinator's worries about the project, and in particular how many schools would attend and how successful the workshops would be. Both Jenna and Will already knew a few of the participants from college, and also the co-ordinator was sensitive and understanding to them and their experience. This meant that they could accomplish the struggle to maintain an identity was on friendly terms, going 'downhill', as it were, to paraphrase Alvesson (2010, p.8). Just as their difficulties of the project can be put down to a combination of structure and agency, so should their capacity to cope with and think through the difficulties. Their relationship with the project can be

regarded as both problematic and as their way of resolving the problems that it represented for them.

9.3 Discussion

First, it should be noted that because of the limitations of this project, and in particular, the difficult activity of running the workshops being observed by adults, it cannot be regarded as representative of participation projects in general. It does, however, throw light on the figure of the self-effacing 'passive' participant, in a way which in my view can apply more generally (Batsleer, 2011; Lewis, 2010). The case has been made that there is no guarantee that any organised activity can be meaningful, and that there is always likely to be a distance between such an activity and the lifeworld of the individual (Craib, 1994). This raises the following question: How should the relationship between a participation project and a person who is self-effacing and passive in the face of participation be understood? This question will be considered both from the perspective of participation and then from the perspective of participants.

First, insofar as participation projects can be regarded as controlling, they can engender self-consciousness in participants in the same way as they engender detachment. This self-consciousness can result in participants aligning themselves the needs of the organisation. Rather than expecting the organisation to change, they worry about whether they are good enough participants, and they may therefore be prepared to undertake activities that serve the organisation without overt complaints, even if they do not particularly want to do so. This can be regarded as useful, if participation is intended to 'responsibilise' young people,

helping them understand their position within society and expecting that they will contribute modestly (cf. Levin, 2000).

This raises problems, however, when participation is regarded as needing to be an ethical activity. It might be difficult for any project, however carefully planned, to reach the lifeworld of self-effacing figures such as Jenna and Will (Percy-Smith, 2006), who seemed very self-conscious and careful about how they looked and attracted attention as participants. Because of the public nature inherent in all participation, some participants will modify their behaviour and minimise their participation, as a way of managing their reluctance to be in the public gaze. Since self-consciousness is a common, and understandable feature of growing up, there will always be those who, like Will, would prefer to fix the printer rather than participate more directly.

How do self-conscious participants experience the project? In the previous chapter I suggested that in a sense detached participants had the measure of the project: as the project was not entirely interested in their perspective, it was appropriate that they should not be entirely invested in the project. Self-conscious participants, I would argue, are different. They suffer from the contradictions of the project, feeling that they are implicated in the activities while being observed and judged by adults. If having a self-identity is about being a subject who is aware that they are an object in the world, the reflexive attitude of Will and Jenna seems to have been chiefly concerned with how they appear as an object. In their own minds, their 'take' on the project - how the workshops should be run, how they wanted to represent themselves on the wall - were less important than saying and doing the organisationally-appropriate thing and not drawing undue attention to themselves.

It has been emphasised that Will and Jenna found the projects difficult. It is important to recognise, however, that they were able to draw positives from their difficulties. While for them there were disappointments attached to the project, there was not gloom. Although their way of engaging with the world was in some ways at odds with the project, both came through with their way of engaging with the world intact and even affirmed. Whilst the navigation path of the self-conscious participant may therefore be regarded as more difficult than that of the detached participant, both seem to be able to navigate the project, learning lessons from it without damaging their sense of themselves. There is, however an important caveat to be made here. In this project, Will and Jenna managed to retain a sense of themselves, partly because the co-ordinator ensured that everyone felt valued. Nevertheless, in any participation project there is an inherent danger that people who are not so open to connecting with the world, who do not want to shape it directly, will feel themselves to be failures. Because participation projects are somewhat deficient narratives of how a person should be (Craib, 1994), there is always the risk that they cast a critical eye on non-participation.

Chapter 10: Committed Participants

10.1 Committed Participants

The last two chapters looked at participants whose way of being in the group was different from the way imagined and constructed in the project plans. They engaged with the project on their own terms, either remaining detached from it or being 'strategically' compliant. In this chapter, participants will be presented who corresponded more closely to the 'ideal' kind of participant, engaging fully in all the activities and discussions, and in the creation of the resources. These participants were prepared to commit themselves to the project and to work constructively with the co-ordinator and the other participants, without maintaining a distance or being self-conscious.

The two main participants to be presented here, one from each project, were called Izzy and Shaun. Although they participated in the project because they believed in it, they could both be regarded as having an 'ulterior motive': they felt it was a 'privilege' to participate. They did not 'navigate' the project, but always made an effort to engage with the principles underlying it. However, there is an argument to be made that committed participants such as Izzy and Shaun were not central to the success of the project; as outlined in Chapter 7, the project was organised in such a way that the co-ordinator was able to ensure that the project worked even as the participants were not fully present. With the co-ordinator setting activities, leading and chairing discussions, and supervising the creation and running of the resources, the role of the participants was in a sense secondary. As long as they contributed in some way, then the project could work, and I would even suggest

that the projects worked through the cynicism and self-consciousness of the participants.

In this chapter, I will make the case that, ironically, it may be that the 'ideal' participant, who engages with the project as it has been conceived, has the most challenging experience. In previous chapters, I set out how cynical and self-conscious participants managed to reshape the projects, so that they worked for them: Rob made the pop-up shop about his dislike of the art, while Will made the planning sessions about doing art rather than planning. By contrast, the participants presented here, who were interested in the activities for their own sake, engaged with the project as planned and as the co-ordinator intended. They contributed throughout the project, wholeheartedly carrying out the activities proposed by the co-ordinator. They made always suggestions, listened attentively to the other participants in the planning discussions and played a full part in creating resources and taking the lead in the workshops. However, their very closeness to the project, coupled with the inherent split in it between the ethical and the instrumental, gave rise to problems, which will be described. How these participants managed to struggle through (Alvesson, 2010), like the participants in previous chapters, will also be explored.

10.2 Izzy

In this section, I will introduce Izzy, using a transcript from one of the planning meetings, and material gathered in interviews with her. The following section will describe the experience of Shaun, and touch on how other participants who began by feeling committed negotiated the project.

Izzy worked six days a week and arranged to have her day off when the group was meeting. In her early twenties, she was slightly older than the other participants, and had completed a Masters course that was in part related to the artist. She already had extensive work experience in the arts, and her particular interest in the artist meant that she was drawn to the project even though she had to commute to it from over an hour and a half away. She found out about the project through reading about the exhibition, and was excited about collaborating with the organisation to engage a young audience in a way that set her apart from other participants. Unlike some other participants, Izzy regarded the purpose of the project as entirely congruent with her own:

Izzy: [The group's work is] getting done, hopefully we'll get it done and if we don't that's down to us, really, isn't it?

Researcher: Right.

Izzy: 'Cos it's down to the young people in the group to get all of this done, because nobody else will do it for us. The workshops can go however they want to go, but that's the one thing we should have got across to the kids, that they're using all these workshops based on this artist, but maybe that's just because I've got a sort of ulterior motive, that I want all the kids to really love this artist, so...

Throughout the project, Izzy contributed more than everyone else. Already knowledgeable about the artist, she gave a talk about the artist to the group in the first two sessions. She participated fully in all the activities and, in the extract below, provided suggestions for the workshops, and volunteered to lead her activity. She also volunteered to introduce the exhibition to the school groups after

they arrived. She attended almost every session, and certainly every session she was able to.

However, Izzy found that participating in the project was more complicated than simply exchanging ideas with other participants and the co-ordinator, and then putting them into practice. This was because the co-ordinator was obliged to act as a gatekeeper between the participants and the workshops, ensuring that the workshops would function well from the perspective of the organisation. Consequently, she questioned and tested the participants about any contribution that they were to make. To illustrate how this unfolded and impacted Izzy, I will offer two examples: first, a rehearsal of an introduction that Izzy was to do for the pupils when they arrived, and secondly a planning meeting about activities for the workshop.

Although it was the co-ordinator's intention to allow Izzy to work as independently as possible, she also wanted everything to be practised before the workshops. When Izzy volunteered to introduce the exhibition to the pupils, the co-ordinator therefore suggested a practice run, where the participants and co-ordinator were to stand in for the pupils. This was why, in one of the planning sessions, Izzy took us round the exhibition, introducing it all to us. It was noticeable that her manner was quite stiff and halting, and she did not seem particularly comfortable. A couple of times, the co-ordinator interrupted her, saying, 'so at this point, the kids would be sitting here just looking around', and then, at the end, 'so right now the kids would just be sat here'. The purpose of the co-ordinator's comments was to encourage Izzy to consider how the introduction could be interesting for the children. Izzy, however, who was presumably already feeling that she was being tested, took it as

a criticism. She later described herself as having 'snapped back a bit' at the co-ordinator, although I did not pick that up at the time, as a participant-observer.

Because of the co-ordinator's need to ensure that everything would go well, the exercise in which Izzy was to introduce the exhibition for which she had such enthusiasm to her peers (since originally, the visiting pupils were to be secondary school pupils) became more of a monitored exercise, in which she was compelled to prove that she was up to the task. While I would imagine that other participation projects do not very often require participants to be put on the spot in this way, this episode demonstrates that by getting involved, participants are potentially putting their identity on the line, as a 'social object' (Archer, 2003), to be scrutinised by the organisation. Of course, there were lighter moments, and the co-ordinator tried her best to be supportive throughout. Nevertheless, this demonstrates requires courage on the participants' part, as they will risk getting entangled in other people's organisational and professional anxieties.

The second episode is a planning discussion between Izzy, Jenna and the co-ordinator. The previous week, the co-ordinator had said that, in this session, the group would be thinking about how the workshops would run, and asked participants to bring any ideas they might have about the workshops. At the beginning of the session, only Izzy and Jenna were present, with three other participants arriving later. Izzy had made some notes, and before the co-ordinator arrived, which is where the excerpt starts, she had been telling Jenna about them for about twenty minutes, as well as just generally chatting about TV. In the session, the co-ordinator was trying to find out what ideas for the workshops Izzy and Jenna had, and also trying quite actively to work out how their ideas could be

put into practice. As in the previous example, it is clear that the co-ordinator was trying to walk the 'fine line' between ensuring that the participants had a positive experience and ensuring that the workshops were well organised. A short passage of general chat has been edited out, at the beginning, on the ground that nothing substantive in terms of planning was said.

Co-ordinator: Let's get started then. So, what ideas, what have you got?

Jenna: The activities we had were paint your own backdrop...the idea was to use the frame

Izzy: Yeah.

Co-ordinator: Oh right, eh, use frames for composition.

Jenna: Yeah,

Izzy: Framing the body in different ways.

Co-ordinator: OK

Jenna: Like, was it you who had the idea for the dance movements?

Izzy: Yeah, em, just kinda using expressive dance to kinda, em, create a pose thing.

Jenna: You had to run about and then shout out, what was it, like, surprise or something and you've got to do a pose.

Izzy: Yeah.

Co-ordinator: Sorry, say that last bit again.

Jenna: Like, just moving about and you could shout out like, be surprised, and they've got to use their body to show they're surprised or something.

Co-ordinator: Oh right, OK. It's just that word expressive dance woah, I just hate anything to do with performance.

Jenna: Haha.

Izzy: I know.

Co-ordinator: I was like, you guys take it away, nice idea.

Izzy: I know, I was just thinking of something that would be, cos this you know it struck me, and I was just thinking, right, [inaudible], that would be a good one to dance, because it looks like she's caught in a dance.

Co-ordinator: Mhm.

Izzy: That's what it was for, it was for a, it was for, she was doing a performance, expressive dance and then capturing different emotions, going through poses.

Co-ordinator: So, hold on, one person would stand with the camera. One child, or how would this work.

Izzy: I was thinking we could take the pictures and they could be involved.

Co-ordinator: Mhm.

Izzy: Or they could take it in turns, we could do it in groups, they could, em, they could direct the dance or they could you know, it could be, yeah it could work either way, we could take pictures or they could take pictures.

Co-ordinator: OK then, eh, capturing different poses, expressions emotions and photographing, so it's the whole body then we're talking about, OK then. photographing, so that's body movements as well as the expressions then ... excellent, so again we've got a lot of photography.

Izzy: Yeah, I know.

Co-ordinator: We need to get some more hands on.

Izzy: The background one's quite good for, um, just using collage, we could run with that, a few weeks, couldn't we.

Co-ordinator: Well, I'm wondering if you're talking about, 'cos I like the idea of using all these nice messy techniques. I'm wondering instead of a backdrop, maybe looking at, well, as well as a backdrop, maybe looking at the idea, I think we need to get something about portraiture.

It should be noted that Jenna, who was introduced in the previous chapter, was the 'scribe' in the meeting, and in this passage she was responding to Izzy's ideas, rather than suggesting her own. As the meeting progressed, within this extract and beyond it, she said less and less, as the co-ordinator asked more and more questions as the ideas developed. This is the discussion in which Jenna agreed that she was 'put on the spot'.

Before analysing what Izzy's experience might have been in the extract, it is important to situate it within the context of the structure of the project. As I suggested in Chapter 6, there was a potential contradiction in the project between a focus on the agency of the participants and a focus on creating the workshops, in which the co-ordinator might have to take a leading role because the process might be difficult for the participants. In Chapter 7, I then discussed how the co-ordinator attempted to create an ethical, meaningful project, while also being obliged to put into practice the more instrumental project. From this perspective, it is clear that the co-ordinator had to keep in mind the objective requirements of the workshops with schools, just as much as the participants' desire to be involved.

While, at the outset, the co-ordinator was open to the participants' ideas, she ended up taking over the participants' role by making suggestions herself; this was mentioned by John, as set out in the account of his experience in Chapter 8. Throughout the excerpt, the co-ordinator displayed a professional sense of what made a good workshop for children; she remained open to participants' ideas, but her responses revealed to the participants, and to Izzy in particular, that she was weighing up their contributions against her expert knowledge of workshops. Her contributions were either intended to encourage participants to elaborate further, as in 'Hold on...how would this work?', or to weigh up the participants' against needs of the workshop, as in 'So again we've got a lot of photography.. we need to get some more hands on'.

At one point, the co-ordinator effectively communicated her distaste for the idea of performance dance. Her comment could be understood as a roundabout form of accepting the idea, as if to say that she herself did not necessarily like it but would agree if Izzy wanted to go with it. Looking over the transcript though, it appears to me that, following her comment, Izzy was slightly on the back foot, and was unable to explain what would happen clearly. This again highlights the potential difficulty for a participant wanting to offer suggestions to a stressed co-ordinator, whose anxiety about the workshop conflicts with her desire to encourage participation.

The excerpt, from the opening question about the ideas of the participants, through the interrogation of their ideas, to the co-ordinator providing ideas, contains the contradiction of the project in microcosm. The detachment and self-consciousness of other participants is understandable in the light of the excerpt. It is perhaps not surprising that Izzy did not necessarily enjoy the format of planning discussions

such as these, that involved a suggestion followed by questioning about how exactly it would work:

Izzy: Yeah, she's really desperate to eke out, you know, Beth and Jenna, and she's trying to bring them out of their shells and she's trying really desperately to get everyone on board.

Researcher: Do you think that's worked?

Izzy: To an extent, slightly, but no, because even me, I feel, hold on a minute we haven't done anything like this before, so it's all a new experience for me, and we can try things and if they don't work they don't work, you know, but don't put us on the spot and expect us to come up with ideas like that, 'cos you know it might not happen, you know, and I've already said that to you once, about putting me on the spot [referring to the practice introduction] and I just reacted really badly to it...But no, I don't think it's really worked, I think she's yeah, I think she should be saying, you know, maybe I don't know what she should be, but we haven't done anything like this before, so it is difficult, but then it's great, it's great fun, as well sometimes, so it's a bit of a double-edged sword.

It is certainly not intended to frame this as a problem between the co-ordinator and Izzy. They got on well, and Izzy mentioned a number of times about how much she liked the co-ordinator. Izzy knew that she was stressed about the workshops, and she also felt sometimes that the stress was therefore directed at her, as the main participant involved in planning the workshops. As discussed in Chapter 7, the co-ordinator acknowledged this and her apology for taking over from the participants

set out in Chapter 7 was in the course of the above discussion. While the apology does not negate the difficult position Izzy was in, she certainly appreciated the difficult position of the co-ordinator and did not reduce her frustration towards the project towards the co-ordinator.

In fact, although other suggestions sometimes arose in discussions, none of the other participants themselves offered original suggestions and then defended them. In this sense, Izzy's complaint was as much with the other participants as it was with the co-ordinator:

Izzy: Yeah, but I've had a lot of fun, a lot more positive experiences out of this than negative anyway. Maybe one thing I wish, I think one thing that annoyed me, it's a really strong word, but maybe I do wish that certain members could have had slightly more input with ideas.

Researcher: Why do you think they didn't contribute?

Izzy: I think maybe they thought it wasn't expected of them, I think they thought with [the co-ordinator] recruiting them, I think they maybe thought they'd just help out, and I think they thought they'd just come along and chaperone and just like help out, you know that kind of sense.

Because of the absence of contributions from the other participants, Izzy was more liable to suffer from the contradictory aims of the project, as already described. between being participative and controlling. If the group as a whole had been more confident and made more suggestions and entered into more discussion, Izzy's desire to participate might have been met with less intense concern on the part of the co-ordinator, motivated by her need to control the project.

Although I was not present when Izzy ran the dance workshops, she said that the teachers from the school were quite interfering and even overruled her instructions to the pupils. She believed that the teachers were worried that it was too unstructured, she did not think that it had gone that well, and she discussed it with the co-ordinator afterwards. Her own feeling was, if she were free to run it in her own way, she could make it work with the children. She was not concerned about the relative lack of structure, and thought that it might be good for the children to have greater freedom than they would ordinarily have. Her own verdict on her role in the project was that she did not need or want such close adult observation, or supervision, of what she was doing. She felt that she was not being afforded the freedom that would enable her to engage fully with the task and make it work.

Despite the various challenges of the project, however, Izzy did in a sense enjoy the project. She had become involved in the project in order to obtain experience of working with children, and to engage young people with the artist:

Izzy: I suppose for me, well I've got loads of friends who do this job, so I've got an idea of what they're doing, so I kind of knew what was expected, so maybe , so maybe, that's my fault, not my fault, I'm glad I've done it and I'm glad I've had the experience but, can I say that, put too much effort into it, um,

Researcher: You think you've given too much for what you've got back, is that a fair..?

Izzy: No, I wouldn't say that at all, no, just, no definitely not for the kids' reactions, I'm so glad I've done everything, 'cos the kids' reactions were amazing, I've had so much fun working with them , I don't know I guess it's just [the

co-ordinator], what I think she's expected from some people, maybe she's expected more from me... you know, maybe that's just my personality, always wanting to please people.

It seems as if Izzy's far greater input into the project did not result in her experience of it being much more positive than that of the other participants, who were less involved. John, for example, who always positioned himself at a distance from the project, did not have as difficult an experience as Izzy. Izzy's account implies that participating more fully and wholeheartedly may even adversely affect a participant's experience. While Izzy took pleasure in working with the children, throughout the project she did not manage her engagement so that she was engaging on her own terms. She directed her energy towards being active in the organisation, submitting her ideas and contributions to the scrutiny of the project and staff connected to it. As an ideal participant, is it possible to see in Izzy's experience the limitations of the participation project? Through understanding her experience (Alvesson et al., 2009), it appears that taking part in the way the projects designs entails having one's contributions audited in the way that organisations are audited; the engaged participant as auditee. So, participating on one's own terms becomes possible only if one does not engage on the terms of the project.

10.3 Shaun

Shaun, from Riverton, was another participant whose commitment to and investment in the project led to a mixed experience, in which problems were set alongside satisfactions. Shaun was a 16 year old who, like most participants,

wanted to continue to study, and then work in, graphic design in the future. He was high-achieving in school and ambitious for his future, searching for further work experience and opportunities during his time in the project, dropping off his CV around the city. Although he was never particularly talkative in meetings, he was clearly confident, always ready to clearly state his point of view. In the following passage, Shaun outlined quite emphatically how for him the project was meaningful and important, a point of view similar to advocates of progressive participation such as Chawla (2001), and on the other end of the spectrum in this regard compared with more detached participants such as John and Rob:

Researcher: 'Cos this thing is set up as young people being able to express themselves. As someone between young people and the organisation, how do you feel about being...?

Shaun: Like a volunteer.

Researcher: Right, is that how you see it, as a volunteer?

Shaun: I feel it's more than that, 'cos I feel it's a bigger responsibility in this particular group, I think. I sometimes think of it as a volunteer but it's not a volunteer 'cos I actually receive a lot from, I feel, I'm kind of lost in my words here, when I think of a volunteer I sort of see it as I'm doing something for the good, but with a creative group like this there's more aspects of, you know, you're not just helping somebody, but you're also receiving a lot of experience of something I want to do when I'm older, there's friends, you know, it's quite a social environment, people express themselves, you get to learn more about other people, you know, I think already I've had like deep

talks with some people I hadn't met before the group, and I think it's hard to get a volunteer feel from [the project], I don't know, it's like the freedom to express yourself, you don't feel like a volunteer when you can do that, I think .

In this passage, Shaun set out his perception of the project in terms very close to how the group was envisaged by the organisation: as an opportunity for young people to 'express' themselves and collaborate meaningfully with other participants. Throughout the project, Shaun acted as the 'right' kind of participant in this way (Freeman et al., 2003), contributing openly, engaging with others, without feeling overly self-conscious, always open, articulate, easy-going and committed. If the projects were designed with a certain kind of participant in mind, it would be Shaun, who was constructive and selfless, and set out to be fully present in the project

Like Izzy, Shaun did not find that being the 'right' kind of participant led to positive experiences. Unlike Bolworth, where participants were somewhat reticent about being too involved, at Riverton the participants were keen to do the design tasks. This meant that Shaun's experience, as a committed participant, was different from Izzy's. It is therefore worth describing the context in some detail, for the sake of attaining a fuller understanding of how his experience unfolded.

As many of the Riverton group wanted to study and pursue a career in graphic design, several participants wanted to design the flyer to attract young people to the exhibition. They valued the opportunity of designing something for a well-known organisation, which they could then include in their portfolio. Unlike the participants designing the exhibition guide, which as discussed already was more

problematic, these participants did not have to provide their own perspective and ideas about the exhibition and about art; they simply had to design the flyer, including content provided by the organisation, such as the dates for the exhibition. The challenge was that there would be only one flyer, and there were four participants who were interested in creating the design. So, the important question concerned how the young people would co-operate.

Organising the participants to collaborate on creating the flyer turned out, however, to be no simple matter. It proved more difficult for the group to discuss what the flyer would look like, than to decide on ideas for what a workshop should be or what the exhibition guide would be like. It seemed to be a more individual task, in which everyone had their own vision and it was harder to come to a consensus decision. Instead of being planned in detail by the group, chaired by the co-ordinator, the design of the flyer emerged during the process of creating it. It was therefore much more difficult to reach a consensus over what the group would be doing. As the co-ordinator aimed to be as hands-off as possible in the creation of the resources, this meant that the decisions for the flyer were made between the participants.

The four participants involved in creating the flyer were Glen, Shaun, Rob and Emma. A further complicating factor was that they did not all attend every session, so that decisions about the flyer were made over time, without all four participants being together. In the first instance, Glen (who rarely attended) suggested in a meeting that he would be interested, and that Shaun (a friend, who had already attended) would be too. Following this each participant attended some meetings where they worked on the flyer with others. Following the meetings, various

versions of the flyer, and suggestions about each, were discussed between the participants online.

At some point in the process, a disagreement emerged over what the flyer would look like, mainly between Rob and Emma, which made constructive discussion over what the flyer would look like much more difficult. As was shown in Chapter 8, Rob claimed to be quite comfortable with being in conflict with others. Also, he was not as invested in the success of the project, particularly if it clashed with what he wanted from it. While Emma professed herself to be more invested in the success of the project, she understandably did not want her perspective to be discounted. While in planning discussions it was easier for the co-ordinator to establish a consensus around one idea while discounting others (by selecting Nathalie's idea over Glen's, for example), it was far more difficult for participants to create a 'false' consensus amongst themselves, because none of them had the same authority as the co-ordinator.

As the episode developed, it became clear to Shaun that Rob and Emma were more interested in promoting their own version of the flyer like than in collaborating with each other to create a joint effort. Since Shaun was committed to the success of the project, this meant that he had to take on a difficult role as a mediator. I do not want to over-dramatise the disagreement or anyone's role in it. Speaking to each participant, everyone's point of view seemed reasonable, the co-ordinators approach seemed reasonable, and there were as far as I could tell no lasting effects. I focus on Shaun's experience of the episode because it demonstrates how his engagement in the ideals of the project, stated above, can turn into something

far more ambivalent and interesting as the real-life project develops. In the following extract, he expresses the discomfort that was engendered in him:

Researcher: And you weren't, I can't remember the word you used, I think it was agitated, right?

Shaun: Yeah.

Researcher: Why were you agitated?

Shaun: 'Cos it almost gave me the position of like an outsider, to sort of decide from both people's contributions what's good and what's not. It almost gave me like, it made feel like I had more responsibility, but really I just had as much responsibility as everyone else.

Here Shaun described himself as caught between the collaborative approach of the project and his fellow participants, who were less than collaborative. He found himself working hard to try and bridge the gap between the competing interests of the participants, who wanted their own designs printed, and of the project, which required the participants to decide on one design. In other words, the project was constructed on the basis that participants would work together to create a design; this vision of the project was then subverted, when some participants did not act in the selfless and collaborative way on which the project as planned depended. As a participant, Shaun could be regarded as sharing the collaborative values of the project, and consequently it was up to him to defend the interests of the project against some of the other participants.

This could never be an easy position, and it apparently evoked in Shaun the feelings of agitation which he described in the passage cited above., Looking at his behaviour as his way of 'navigating', however, he can be regarded as creating

a role for himself that was potentially more productive than that of the other participants:

Researcher: Is it fair to say there was no space for your ideas within that dynamic, do you know what I mean?

Shaun: Yeah, I guess my ideas were based on out of everyone else's ideas what would look right, um, it's almost not everyone's ideas, it's what would look good, 'cos if I made something it wouldn't look good, cos that's only how I'd see something as good as to be, but when you're looking for a professional poster, there are certain sort of guidelines that you have to sort of stick to, to make it look professional, and I think it was my idea to sort of say whether it was going to be professional or not, out of everyone's contributions.

In this way, Shaun positioned himself 'above' the other participants, as it were; their sense of how to create the right kind of flyer was quite limited, compared with his more 'professional' stance. By continuing to collaborate with the participants in the face of his own agitation and their intransigence, he contrived to pass judgment on their work. By the end of the process, he had created a 'professional' design with his friend Glen, while the co-ordinator had also agreed that Emma's version should be printed off as well. In this way, Shaun can be seen to represent how the 'ideal' participant could succeed in the project. Because he tried to collaborate but ended up taking a 'leadership role', Shaun had a complex and ambivalent experience of the project. While he did not benefit from the sense of ownership and engagement that was expected to be generated by participating in the project, he instead learned about people in groups and how to navigate them:

Researcher: OK, and was that a role you wanted?

Shaun: Um, I think my character quite likes a leadership role but realistically at that point in time I didn't really like being given that without question, I guess, like a, it was almost nice to have that so I could sort of monitor what was going on but at the end when we didn't find a resolution I think I felt bad cos I didn't, it almost felt like it was my fault cos I was organising Rob and Emma, and at the end nothing was happening so at the end I had to take it home and say I'd do it at home, and, sorry if this is difficult to quantify, I get my words mixed up.

Researcher: And you say you felt bad, did you feel anything else?

Shaun: Kind of good that I could settle the air of friction.

Researcher: And you weren't annoyed at any level, there was no irritation?

Shaun: I think there was irritation, I didn't suppress it, but I knew how to solve it, it almost, being someone from outside, you don't take sides, so you might say that there's nothing being found, but when you say Rob's idea's good, so's yours Emma, you know we could do this, sort of..

Researcher: Yeah, so you were taking on this leadership role?

Shaun: Yeah, not intentionally

Researcher: Not intentionally, and really without official authority

Shaun: Almost people didn't hate what I was doing cos I wasn't on the opposing side, I was just mutual, neutral role, it almost gives you the power of respect in the group.

Researcher: So in the end how did you feel that the project turned out?

Shaun: Haha, I learned a lot how people were agitated, I would say in situations, which was quite interesting, it's almost like, when you become friends with someone, when you first meet them, you look at when they become agitated, it reveals more of their character, it completes them, so you can tell that they're not good on the face, but who they are inside, and I think it was nice to see how they reacted when they said they were personally insulted that their idea wasn't good, just to see how they reacted,

Researcher: To each other.

Shaun: Yeah, being neutral it meant I could observe how people felt and who people were, and how I could sort of intervene and understand, and how people could not be hurt, try to reach a solution at the end that didn't happen which I think was why I was quite irritated, it ended up just me taking over the project to me and finishing it with Glen.

It seems clear that Shaun's complex experience arose out of the complexity of the group. While he did not consciously position himself into a 'leadership role' within the group, he appreciated the 'respect' that it brought him and the sense of being able to 'settle the air of friction'. However, this leadership role came with a cost. It created a distance between him and the actual design work, because he was obliged to 'monitor' rather than actually do. Ultimately, his experience of the group was bound up with the ways in which Rob and Emma were engaging with the project, which resulted in a lack of a 'resolution', and the frustration that that engendered. This lack of a resolution, though frustrating in itself, was accompanied by some satisfaction, and Shaun also learned some potentially useful lessons

about people. It is clear from the interview that Shaun had the capacity to reflect on his experience extensively, and the project offered him new experiences on which to reflect, especially as regards the problems, limitations and frustrations of working with other people.

Shaun's experience would seem to suggest that, within the contradictions of the project, each participant was able to find a way, however idiosyncratic and partial, of affirming their identity through being part of it (Alvesson, 2010). Both Shaun and Rob, based on their own way of being in the world, adopted positions within the project that had a complex relationship with each other. On one level, they were at odds with each other, as Rob's single-mindedness conflicted with Shaun's collaborative approach. On another level, however, his served each of them quite well: Shaun could validate his position through criticising Rob's, while Rob could regard Shaun as another kind of authority figure against whom he could define himself.

So, Shaun's comment that he understood people far more as a result of the project seems realistic, suggesting that there was a depth to his experience that resulted from living through his and other people's disappointment in the projects (Craib, 1994). This implies that the value of the compromised, difficult project has a value of its own, as compared with the meaningful, ethical project. The lessons which Shaun learned were not the intended ones (Eliasoph, 2009), and yet they are no less significant. Shaun's position – needing to collaborate in difficult circumstances – can be viewed, albeit from a slightly pessimistic angle, as central to work and family life (Craib, 1994). The project did not necessarily enable him to 'have his

say'. Through engaging with the difficulties that emerged, however, he was able to discern 'who they are inside', which may be far more worthwhile.

By way of a postscript to this discussion, it is worth noting that Shaun's experience can be interpreted as demonstrating the potential value of detachment in participation projects, and especially detachment from the other participants. Shaun's primary experience of collaborating with the other participants was a difficult, frustrating one. This changed when he held himself apart from the project, adopting a neutral stance and observing how Emma and Rob were. The lesson that Shaun was learning and perhaps even the internal conversation that he was having (Archer, 2003), is important: he was beginning to understand that, instead of aiming at achieving meaningful collaboration and the fruits that it might yield, it might be better to treat the project as a responsibility. In this light, the project is regarded as more of a struggle, that can be navigated only through engaging selectively. I would suggest that Shaun struggled successfully: he worked through his 'agitation', directing his frustration mainly at the other participants, and this was an appropriate response to the situation that presented itself within the context of the project.

The movement from commitment to greater detachment was also exemplified by Emma and Sara, from Riverton. Both had had previous experiences of more well-established youth projects. They arrived at the project keen to be involved, and found that the other participants in the project were not always forthcoming or dynamic. They reflected on their experience in the following terms, starting with Emma:

But working with people isn't too hard, the rest of the people are quiet, which is kind of disappointing...It's not the free flow of ideas, it just seemed a bit held back, and it doesn't work like that, well as far as I've ever experienced it that's not how groups work.

And Sara:

Sara: Yeah, I think you have to be more committed. Even today [in the pop-up shop], right, I mean there are loads of posters in there, and if people were more.....actually I did put up posters and stuff, but you know, if the team was more committed we would have put them all up.

Researcher: People are only so committed, right.

Sara: Yeah, not as much yeah, and to be honest, I want to be committed, but if the team's not committed, then it has a knock-on effect, like if everyone was enthusiastic, like let's get all these posters out, let's get all these stickers up, blah blah blah.

Over time, both participants shaped the project for themselves, in a similar way to the less committed participants. In addition to working with other participants, Sara created a YouTube video on her own, actively tried to find art for the pop-up shop, and handed out lots of flyers. Emma focused on creating the wristbands as well as on creating her own design for a flyer. She was also the only participant who asked in a meeting whether it should be the co-ordinator who chaired the meetings and took notes. Sara and Emma were able to navigate the project, chiefly by finding areas where they could engage without being affected by the lack of enthusiasm and commitment of the other participants. They also learned to be more detached from the project, as a way of protecting their own interests and getting as much as they could out of participating. The 'knock on effect' of the lack of commitment of

the others was that they invested less in the project and invest in a more individualised way (Archer, 2003).

10.4 Discussion

This chapter has been dedicated to participants for whom the concerns of the project, for whatever biographical reason, coincided with their own personal projects (Archer, 2003). For Izzy, this was a desire to share her enthusiasm for the artist, while Shaun regarded the opportunity offered by the project of working for the organisation as a privilege. Each of them had additional motives for being part of the project, such as to obtain work experience, and each of them appeared, in different ways, to engage fully in the here and now, to effect change in their immediate surroundings (ibid.). On the face of it, participants as committed as Izzy and Shaun might be expected to enjoy and benefit from the project a great deal more than more self-conscious participants who might find the here-and-now of participation challenging. Having carried out this research, however, I am not so sure this was the case: it seems to me that the committed participants whose experience has been presented here faced difficulties with which the other participants did not have to contend.

The committed participant was faced with the contradiction inherent in the projects, which are both participative and controlling. This meant that Izzy, who wanted to participate fully, was faced with the realisation that she was obliged in many ways to adhere to the needs of the organisation. Some of her contributions were more acceptable to the organisation than others, and she was obliged to demonstrate that she was capable of putting her suggestions into practice. For other participants, in particular those who were self-conscious, the lack of full

participation in the project provides as much relief as anything else. The controlling presence of the co-ordinator meant that they did not have to carry the burden of the success of the projects, and they were able to find comfortable niches, in which the co-ordinator had arranged a particular activity. The participant who truly wants to participate troubles this unspoken contract between the project and the participants in which the participants carry out the activities set by the co-ordinator without challenging the project or the organisation with too much of their own perspectives being voiced.

Having explored the experience of a wide spectrum of types of participants, I want to emphasise the importance of taking into account the psychological complexity behind participants' experience (Archer, 2003). There is sometimes an implicit assumption that the quality of the project and the quality of the experience, that participation can be made meaningful if put into practice the right way (Fielding, 2006; Percy-Smith, 2006). In other words, a 'good' project will result in a 'good' experience for the participants. It cannot be denied that a more imaginative approach to children and young people's participation would be welcome, and there is room for improving projects in the light of accounts of participants' experience. However, it is important not to collapse the personal into the political here (Craib, 1994, 1998), and this involves remaining open to the insight, personal validation, enjoyment and lessons that participants are able to draw from projects that might be regarded as 'flawed'. While none of the participants had an easy experience, the participation projects did afford them a space that was capable of being experienced as both supportive and challenging. The interaction of the contradictions between the project, the values of the co-ordinator, and the different

personalities of the participants resulted in participants' experience being more complex than could be predicted. Since these are factors which cannot be controlled for, it is important to view the purported 'potential' of participation projects - and, by extension, how they should be improved – from this perspective (Craib, 1994).

Chapter 11: Conclusion

In the thesis I aimed to reconstruct the understanding of the participation and *experiences* of participation, on the basis that participation is a fundamentally problematic undertaking. To recap the problem of participation, there was theoretical and practical hope of changing the position of children and young people in society through being able to shape on their own terms their own environments. However, when put into practice participation projects have tended to reaffirm the existing position of children and young people rather than transform it (Percy-Smith, 2010). This has led to a call to radically rethink participation in theory and practice including through concepts beyond the field (Tisdall, 2008).

At the outset of the thesis, I set out a reflexive position on understanding the problem of participation that entails being open to re-conceptualising the reasons for and effects of the gap between the promise and reality of participation. A reflexive approach is based on the idea that our existing knowledge of participation and the knowledge derived from case studies are each constructed and provisional. Rather than using them to building knowledge gradually, case studies are used to think about a problem in a possibly radically new way (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2009; Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). In this concluding chapter, I intend to use the findings of the two case studies described here to re-situate participation and the experience of participants, understanding by reference to concepts of an ambitious re-positioning of participation while being aware of the limitations of the research.

I carried out the reflexive task through investigating two case studies of young people's participation in museums and galleries organised through AR. The following research questions were asked:

- 1. How were the participation projects framed by the relevant organisations?*
- 2. How were the participation projects put into practice by the project co-ordinator?*
- 3. How did the young people experience the participation projects?*

In this chapter, I will initially provide a summary of the research. Secondly, I will set out the findings of the research and put forward a reconstructed 'polarisation' perspective on the problem of participation based on existing theories and the findings from the case studies. Finally, from a reflexive perspective, I will then acknowledge the limitations of the research and the position I have adopted in coming to the findings.

11.1 Thesis Summary

The literature review set out the various conflicting intellectual and substantive contradictions and tensions inherent to the possibility of realising the promise of participation in reality. In Chapter 2, I looked at the policy level, in which there are contradictory rationales for children and young people's participation. From an ethical perspective, the purpose of participation is to counter the traditional marginalisation of children and young people. From the perspective of the 'active citizenship' agenda, introduced under New Labour, the rationale is to shape participants to be more aligned with values of self-reliance and commitment to the public service organisations. I suggested that it is important to be sensitised to the different modes of participation in practice, which may be 'meaningful' or

'controlling'. I also suggested that it might be necessary to temper expectations for realising the promise of participation since the legitimacy of participation appeared to more firmly based in a controlling rationale of 'active citizenship' than the ethical, liberating rationale of the new sociology of childhood.

In Chapter 3, I examined participation at an organisational level. I described how participation in the UK is largely organised in a top-down way, in which government sets out 'principles' that public service organisations must demonstrate that they are putting into practice. While this 'ensures' participation, it also means that children and young people are subjected to the various irrationalities of organisational life, under the current managerial system of 'New Public Management'. I identified four main areas of tension:

- Management frameworks which 'ensure' participation but at the same time incorporate young people within the organisation;
- The need for museums and galleries to demonstrate their social role through participation, which risks creating tokenistic forms of participation;
- Management pressure on professionals to make participation work within a system where professionals' capacity in this regard is limited;
- The hierarchical nature of the organisations in which participation takes place.

I described the position of participation under management through the concept of 'organisational stupidity': the way that the processes through which participation takes place preclude the reflexivity needed to enable the lifeworld of the participants to be present in the projects. I pointed out that it was particularly

important to attend to how authority issues affect the experience of participation of both participants and co-ordinators.

In Chapter 4, I explored the inherent contradictions of participation as they were experienced by the people involved. Participation can be seen as constructing both an image of the person and as a mechanism through which people can 'have a say'. Within museums and galleries (where the case studies are located), there is an emphasis on the importance of people being free to make meaning on their own terms and in dialogue, rather than having meaning imposed on them by the institution. An alternative perspective was to position this participative model of experience, co-constructivism, as being an inadequate means of understanding people's experience of participation. I emphasised the political expedience, from the perspective of putting the ethical promise of participation into practice, involved in constructing the person as ready and willing to make meaning and re-create the world on their own terms. I argued that participants themselves constitute a 'problematic' aspect of participation. They are self-conscious of themselves, and while they have a real ability to reflect on themselves, this is always limited. This means that a further tension in participation is that, in a real life setting, being invited to participate may be experienced as a problem to be coped with, as much as an opportunity to be exploited. The summary of the literature review was that the meaningful participation is caught up in knots, with policy, organisations, and human nature both enabling and inhibiting it.

In the methods section, I set out an approach to the problem that would be aware of the limitations of itself, but would attempt to focus on two case studies of participation in practice from a number of different angles: to use discourse

analysis to study how the projects were framed; to carry out participant-observation to understand how the projects were put into practice, and to build on the participant-observation through conducting interviews to study the experience of the participants.

The results were set out in five chapters, exploring the case studies from different angles. Chapter 6 looked at how the projects are constructed in the AR planning process. The focus was on how the management process both ensured participation and also made it potentially problematic through incorporating the participants within management processes. In practice, two potential modes of participation emerged from the planning process: an intended meaningful mode and an unintended or emergent controlling mode. My interpretation of the application forms was that the project management process of forming a consensus around the participation projects concretised the conflicting modes of participation set out in Chapter 2. Through attempting to make participation meaningful in a top-down way, the documents contained a strong theory about what people would do in the projects and how they would experience them, which could in an unintended way lead to control of participants.

Chapter 7 considered how the professional (known as a 'co-ordinator' in the projects) put the problematic project into practice. The co-ordinator set out to make participation meaningful, by attempting to ensure that the participants could engage with the project on their own terms, according to principles that seemed to be related to co-constructivism. However, the realities of the project meant various controls had to be imposed. This required the co-ordinator to take chair meetings and take a leading role in the planning of the groups' activities. The co-ordinator

was then faced with trying to bridge the gap between the two modes of participation, using strategies such as apologising for themselves, as they aimed to ensure that the participants had positive experiences of imperfect projects.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 examined the experience of the participants in detail, through organising them into different 'types'. These types represented the different ways in which participants experienced and navigated the projects; they depended on participants' orientation to the world (identity) as well as the realities of the project in practice, with each participant having different possibilities and constraints. A separate chapter was devoted to each of the three types. Chapter 8 considered participants who handled the disappointments of the project through maintaining a 'cynical distance', going through the motions of the project without fully engaging. The cynical approach was regarded as 'good' for participants, since it helped them to avoid some of the difficulties connected to the contradictions of the projects. However, in distancing themselves in this way, the danger was that they were reduced to a kind of 'non-experience', which could not be considered positive.

Chapter 9 looked at participants who found the participative process difficult, equating it with being 'put on the spot', and handled their experience by adopting a compliant attitude and engaging with the project selectively. I argued that while these more 'passive' participants were unable to distance themselves from the project or actively take part in it. Like the more detached participants, the 'passive' participants were able to shape the project for themselves, focusing on the aspects of the project they enjoyed, and making sense of their experience in such a way that they did not experience destructively negative feelings in relation to the being in the spotlight in sometimes uncomfortable ways.

Chapter 10 looked at the committed participants who engaged with the projects and lived *through* some of the contradictions of the project rather than side-stepping them. Engaging fully with the project led to conflict with the co-ordinator for one participant and with fellow participants for the other, as the committed participants aimed to put the ideals of participation into practice, attempting to engage authentically and collaboratively. While there were difficulties associated with this, the participants also secured a positive experience for themselves out of the 'struggle' within the project.

Overall, no particular 'type', or way of being in the project was considered preferable. The different types were conceptualised simply as ways in which participants found a way through the real-life projects. The implications of the different styles of navigating the project were described in each case. It appeared that the experience of the participants was connected to the contradictory modes in the project. Their experience was it was not determined by this, however. The participants were able to struggle through the projects, helped by the warm style of the co-ordinators, with a sense of themselves and of having experienced the projects on their own terms.

11.2 Findings and Reconstruction

In terms of the findings of the research, the following points have clearly emerged in relation to each research question:

How were the participation projects framed by the relevant organisations? In the case studies processes of management, and in particular project management, have an important impact on the experience of the co-ordinator and participants. Processes of 'ensuring' a meaningful mode of participation in a top-down way

appeared to be counter-productive. This is consistent with existing scepticism about organisations and participation (Tisdall et al., 2008; Eliasoph, 2009; Percy-Smith, 2006, 2010), and is contrary to the idea that the 'hard elements' of management are in place for meaningful participation. The contribution of this research is to add in a significant way to the depth of understanding about the effect of management on children and young people's participation through the discourse analysis of projects in practice. More generally, the thesis has demonstrated that concepts from the field of critical management studies such as 'organisational stupidity' can be useful in understanding participation in practice (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012).

How were the participation projects put into practice by the project co-ordinator?

The case studies also document the complex role of the co-ordinator within top-down participation projects. The practice of the co-ordinator is situated within the complex organisational context in which contradictory demands are made of them with regard to ensuring that participation is meaningful for the participants and functions within the existing processes of the organisation. The case studies outlined the accomplishment of the co-ordinators, in working with these demands and enabling the participants to have a positive experience. This finding contrasts with the idea that is sometimes implied, that the practitioner simply has to work in the 'correct' way in order to make participation work (cf. Lord et al., 2012; Fleming, 2013). It also argues for a change in focus from the co-ordinator as a potential problem (cf. Cockburn, 2005; Skelton, 2007) in the projects towards one that recognises how they work within constraints.

How did the young people experience the participation projects? While the experience of participants is connected to the projects as they were put into practice, it is important to be open to the range of experiences of participation projects (meaningful and controlling) that participants will have. There is a growing literature on experiencing the complex experiences of participation (cf. Eliasoph, 2009; Batsleer, 2011), and the contribution of this thesis has been to provide cases in which the experience of the participants through an understanding of identity based on the work of Archer (2003) and Craib (1994; 1998), in particular. The thesis has suggested that the experience of the participant is in part connected to the distance that they are able to maintain from the contradictions of participation and the manner in which they achieve this. The finding that problematic projects can be experienced in positive, albeit ambivalent, ways emphasises the importance of being open-minded and curious when understanding the experiences of participants.

11.2.1 Rethinking Participation

The broader aim of the research was to consider how the problem of the gap between the ethical promise and the reality of participation should be understood as a 'breakdown', that can 'create spaces where imagination can be put to work' (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007 p.1266). In adopting this approach, I have collected empirical findings about participation in order to create new theory about understanding participation. The starting point for this re-formulation is that the problem of participation is not that the ethical promise has not yet been realised but that participation is a fundamentally *polarising* concept. It is this *polarisation*, I will

argue, rather than the inability of the system of participation to realise the ethical promise, that should be understood as constituting the basic 'problem'.

In the literature review, I first described an intellectual polarisation between the social constructionist perspective on meaningful participation as countering the marginalisation of children and young people, and the responsabilisation perspective on participation as control. I then set out how this intellectual polarisation is concretised, through academics being interested in the social constructionist perspective, and politicians adopting a responsabilising approach. Within the policy underpinning participation, these fundamentally incompatible rationales were both present. The polarisation is again reinforced through attempting to establish the meaningful involvement of participants within organisations whose way of operating is inherently to place systems and structures above people. The polarisation of participation is then reinforced by the exercise of imagining a person in such a way that they are essentially 'participative' and discounting the existence of any aspect of the person that might find participation problematic.

The findings of the case studies can be understood in terms of the co-ordinators and participants *living out* this polarisation. It is present within the project planning process, in which a meaningful or ethical mode of participation is emphasised, while its accompanying shadow, the controlling aspect of the project, is present but unacknowledged. It is experienced by the co-ordinator, who tries to put into practice a meaningful mode of participation and finds it necessary to adopt a controlling mode, before possibly negotiating a middle way. It has a substantial impact on the participants, whose difficulties with the projects can be seen as

concerned with it. This is evident from the whole series of ways, set out in Chapter 7, in which participants were asked to 'be themselves', and yet found themselves in an organisational context and doing activities in which they felt they could not 'be themselves'. From an identity perspective of the person, I argued that people are able to negotiate the polarisation as they live it out, whether it is through adopting a certain position in the project so that they can struggle through or avoid the difficulties of the project. In a participation project, it is finally the participants who must, and are able to, live through the polarisations. In short, *if the problem of participation is not resolved at a theoretical and practical level, then it must be resolved in the heads of participants.*

From this perspective, the problem here is not that the project was 'controlling' rather than 'meaningful'; it is that the project is *simultaneously controlling and meaningful*. In other words, the blame for the difficulties that were identified in the project is directed at both the ethical promise of participation, whereby young people can shape the world on their own terms, and on the controlling reality, whereby organisations are not orientated towards enabling young people to shape their environment on their own terms.

Once the problem of participation, set out in the introduction, is reconceptualised in this way, it is no longer about the failure to realise the ethical promise of participation in practice. It results from the attempt to put into practice the ideal of the ethical promise of participation within an imperfect environment (that is, the policy, organisational, and personal contexts). This thesis argues that any attempt to put an ideal, ethical model of meaningful participation into practice in such an environment results in the de facto creation of a parallel controlling project. Further,

it is the simultaneously meaningful and controlling project that is at the heart of the participants' difficulties within the project, and not the controlling project on its own.

In terms of 'solving' the problem of participation, the polarisation perspective locates the problem specifically within the utopian and simplified view of the world held by academics who hold that young people's position in society can be transformed through enabling them to be active. The solution must be found through the rejection of participation, in the movement towards new concepts that can be put into practice in the real world, without it necessarily being contradictory and meaningful-controlling. An important principle here would be that the theory of participation should be more attuned to the realities of the policy, organisational and personal contexts. It might be that a more limited, modest model of participation needs to be adopted, focusing on adults *not disregarding* young people, rather than young people being placed centre-stage within adult-run organisations. Alternatively, the concept of participation could be dropped altogether, in favour of less polarising concepts such as spaciousness, set out below as a contribution of the thesis.

11.2.2 Spaciousness

As a concept participation only has the capacity to understand one side of the coin, the positive side of the young person being active and existing on their own terms. While this is an important part of life, and an element of the participants' experience in the project, there is also a more negative side. This side can be termed disappointment, involving a degree of defensiveness, frustration, cynicism

and passiveness. Participation as a concept therefore needs to be replaced by a concept that has space for both the positive *and* the negative, the activeness *and* the passiveness, the potential of organisations and adults to be useful *and* difficult, life as a source of enjoyment *and* struggle.

Based on the discussion of existing theory and on the research findings, a possible alternative concept for transforming young people's existence in society would be the concept of *spaciousness*.

Spaciousness does not challenge an important principle underpinning participation, borrowed from the new sociology of childhood: historically children and young people have been marginalised and that they should be treated as 'beings' who have an equal right to adults to participate in society, rather than 'becomings' who are in need of adults in order to shape them into full, mature people (Moran-Ellis, 2010). However, the next step of participation, of creating spaces for young people to shape the world and their experience for themselves (Percy-Smith, 2006), is problematic. In practice, it overestimates the desirability and possibility of young people 'being themselves' in organisations.

Spaciousness can be differentiated from participation in terms of how it models the relationship between the individual and the organisation and society. Participation holds that young people should active in shaping their own experience and environment, in dialogue with others, rather than having their experience and environment shaped for them (Percy-Smith, 2006). Spaciousness, on the other hand, holds that young people cannot meaningfully shape their own experience and environment, but they are active in how they come to terms with their

experiences. Consequently, participation is concerned with providing young people with an environment within which they are able to make sense of their experience in their own way so that they may feel more secure and confident in engaging with the world and its challenges.

This thesis has moved towards spaciousness in both the literature review and the findings from the results. In the literature review, I argued that:

- The policy of participation is concerned in part with shaping young people's understanding of themselves and their position in society so that they are more committed to the organisation and to society.
- The structures and processes of public service organisations are hierarchical and constraining.
- What defines a person as a 'being' is that they have their own way of being in the world and relating to things and people in the world (Archer, 2000). In any organised activity, each person will relate to it in their own way, and it is impossible to fully predict how each person will experience it. Existence entails anxiety and ambivalence, and there is a need to keep one's private self separate, in a sense, from the world (Craib, 1994). In this view, participation and the equation of being activeness with finding meaning, is tied to a flawed postmodernist idea of the self.

The analysis of the literature review of the different contexts of participation concludes that the move towards closer collaboration between organisations and young people should be regarded as deeply problematic, since the closeness

involves constraining young people's understanding of themselves and their environment rather than liberation.

The research findings indicated that the young people managed to 'struggle' through the projects to come to an ambivalent experience that was on their own terms. While the manner of the co-ordinators made the struggle for participants easier than it might otherwise have been, there were aspects of the participation projects that made the struggle unnecessarily hard. The main aspect was that there were strong expectations that participants would positively experience the projects through being active in discussions and activities. When the participants experienced these activities in a different way to the one expected, more passively and ambivalently, the result was a degree of suppression and confusion. Since the projects would not make sense unless the participants enjoyed being active, it was necessary for the participants and co-ordinators to continue as though the participants were enjoying the activities and discussions. In this environment where there is a pressure to act and feel differently from how one wants to act and is feeling, it is harder to make sense of one's experience. This suppression and confusion was, of course, not total. Both the participants and co-ordinators were able to adapt the projects and make some sense of their experience within the projects. Their task was simply harder than it would be where there was a less strong theory about young people finding meaning through being active.

The difference between spaciousness and participation can be further elaborated through outlining the differing importance attributed to two aspects of the relationship between young people and organisations, *distance* and *dependence*. In the findings, I argued that closeness to the project was difficult for the

participants. The discussions and activities variously bored, worried and alienated the participants, and those committed participants who did not create a distance from the projects through drifting to the fringes or adopting a detached approach were ultimately particularly frustrated by the projects. Since people make sense of their own experience, they are always able to create distance between themselves and their environment. What therefore is important is the quality of the distance that is available within an environment for young people (Craib, 1994). In the thesis, I found that the distance was present but not ideal – because of the expectation that young people would experience the projects in a particular way through fully engaging in various activities, there was not a culture of openness in which young people could experience the project in their own way. Instead, young people had to do it covertly, and this involved a degree of difficulty, whether people felt anxious about not doing what they should be, or alienation from the activities and discussions in the projects.

Within the concept of spaciousness, distance is bound up with dependence. In the project plans and in the design of the project activities and discussions, there was a clear picture of imagined *independent* participants. These independent participants would have a strong sense of their own perspectives, which they would be able to communicate on demand. Here, the projects reflect the version of the person within the concept of participation. As discussed in Chapter 4 in its ideas of participants shaping their environment and shaping their own experience, participation brings to mind an independent individual who is able to exert a certain mastery over the world and over themselves. However, the findings suggested that while needing distance from the organisation, the young people were nevertheless

dependent, to varying degrees, on the co-ordinator and on the organization (Craib, 1994).

In the findings I suggested that there were three stages of the dependence. In the first stage, the participants found the project difficult, for various reasons ranging from not having sufficient freedom to have a say on their own terms, to being required to have a say at all. In the next stage, the co-ordinators attempted to ensure that the participants could come to terms with the disappointments of the project on their own terms, without blaming themselves. Finally, the participants came to live with the disappointments of the project, often involving them coming to new understandings about their place in the world, and how they engage with it. By dependent, then, I mean that their experience was always of the project and of themselves in the project. Initially, the dependence was based on reacting to the demands of the project, then on forming a relationship with the co-ordinator, and finally on thinking about their experience of it. I do not mean that the participants were *fully* dependent, since each had their own approach to the project based on their own independent ways of being and thinking. Their experience was rather one of relative dependence and independence.

Spaciousness can be seen as the opposite of participation in terms of how it understand being one's self in an organisation. While participation centres around activeness and the potential of organisation to transform, I have outlined a position around the inevitability of disappointment and the stupidity of organisations. Participation entails an *independent closeness*, in which young people are thought to be able to independently shape their own environment and experience, while they are required to work closely with the organisation in order to make this

happen. Spaciousness on the other hand entails a *dependent distance*, in which young people require the organisation to provide an environment within which they can exist, but at the same time, they are free to make sense of the environment and their experience within it on their own terms. The difference is in terms of where the emphasis on the freedom of young people lies. Within participation, the freedom is understood as lying in young people's power to shape their own experience and environment. Within spaciousness, on the other hand, the nature of policy, people and organisations mean that this is not realistic, and the freedom is around enabling young people to make sense of their possibly disappointing experience in their own way (Craib, 1994).

Spaciousness can also be seen as a viable response to the problem of participation, which is that the reality of participation never lives up to its ethical transformative promise (Tisdall, 2008). Spaciousness does this by drawing on the limitations of people and organisations as well as having a vision of transforming the position of young people in society. The vision is that young people should be able to engage with the world on their own terms, while the realism is that organisations are difficult environments for young people to shape, and that people do not always want to directly shape their environment. Spaciousness in this way builds on the failure and impossibilities of participation, using a more nuanced and realistic picture of the nature of organisations and people. A contribution of this thesis then is to map out a quite different future for participation (as giving way to spaciousness) compared with recent calls to improve the practice of participation (Fleming, 2013) even those that are based on a radical critique of participation as it is put into practice (Malone & Hartung, 2010; Percy-Smith, 2006). The thesis

argues for greater distance instead of closeness, and an acknowledgement of young people's dependence on organisations, rather than an imagined relationship between independent equals.

11.3 Further Implications

11.3.1 Childhood Studies

A further contribution of this thesis to childhood studies has been developing understanding of young people's agency, with particular reference to their experience of participation. It has been suggested that within childhood studies there is a tendency to privilege agency, over-emphasising the extent to which children and young people have control over their experience without a sufficient appreciation of the influence of structure (Dar & Cox, 2011; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). As a corrective, there have been calls for a 'more problematized and nuanced understanding' of agency (Tisdall & Punch, 2012, p.260), and that 'child-centric research need not, and should not, be synonymous with agency-centric' (Dar & Cox, 2011, p.3). In Chapter 4, I suggested that the theory of participation in museums and galleries is based on an oversimplified view of agency, in which the individual is thought to be able to shape their own experience when they are able to be active within an environment. Drawing on Archer, Alvesson and Craib, I outlined an approach to agency that emphasises structure much more than dominant approaches within museology and childhood studies.

In applying this more structure-focused approach to the experience of young people in participation projects, I demonstrated that it could create novel insights. It enabled a nuanced understanding of young people's experience of participation,

which took into account the influence of both structure and agency, and the complex interplay between the two. The different 'types' of participant based on how participants lived differently with the disappointments of the projects were each a model for understanding experiencing that had the capacity to appreciate both agency (how each person ultimately struggled through the project) and structure (how the project constrained and enabled young people in struggling through). The concept of 'dependent distance' was then offered as a way of understanding the relationship between young people and organisations that is child-centric, in that it is based around what young people need from organisations, but not agency-centric, in that it takes into account the influence of the organisational context on young people's experience and their understanding of themselves.

The contribution of understanding young people's experience of organisations through types similar to the ones used in this study, and through dependent-distance, is shaped by the histories of childhood studies and critical management studies. The privileging of agency within childhood studies can be seen as the result of its beginnings as a rejection of the developmental view of children as becomings (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). As the discipline emerges, it is important that researchers consider why they are adopting a particular way of understanding young people and their experience of the world (Alvesson, 2010). In this study, I have adopted a view of the individual as 'struggling' to maintain a sense of themselves and a positive experience within a difficult environment (ibid). It has emerged out of a discipline, critical management studies, that had its beginnings as a rejection of the idea that organisations have a uniformly positive impact on

people and society (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012). The specific contribution of this study is for researchers who are interested in young people's experience within organisations where they feel that the organisational context is as important to consider as the young people's status as beings in their own right.

11.3.2 Critical Management Studies

Participation can be understood in terms of participation removing barriers between young people and organisations. While the resultant close collaboration may have a transformative potential, the results of this thesis build on previous studies (cf. Freeman et al. 2003, Percy-Smith, 2006) in showing that involving young people in this way serves to constrain what the young people can say and do through incorporating them into existing structures of decision-making. One implication of the theory and findings in this thesis is that since the managerialist forms of organising participation in public services are so important to the nature and experience of participation, then researchers should approach participation differently. The starting point for inquiring into participation should be to locate it within the hierarchical, managerialist climate of organisations, rather than as a possible antidote to it. In this light, 'participation' on its own is perhaps not a useful concept for insightful inquiry (Fielding, 2007), and it would be useful to use 'distributed participation' as a concept, within the field of critical management studies. As a concept distributed participation allows that young people are able to shape their own service, but like the critical management studies critique of participative forms of management, it insists that this happens in particular ways demarcated and monitored by the organisation, and for the primary purpose of

ensuring that people are more committed to organisational aims (Willmott, 1993; Fleming & Sturdy, 2009).

From the perspective of critical management studies, the transformation of the role of the young person within distributed participation can be understood in the following terms. The traditional role of the young person is as a user and recipient of the service. This is not an ideal situation, in that the young person can be positioned as the passive object to be improved and regulated. However, as a passive recipient of a service the young person is not required to play a role within the hierarchical management system. Distributed participation involves a shift in how the individual is controlled: from being a passive object subject to the organisation's rules towards being an active part of the organisation. In distributed participation, the importance of young people to the organisation is twofold: on the one hand they are still the recipients of the service, but they are also *human resources*, in a way that is analogous to the role of employees (Boxall et al., 2007).

As human resources, the organisation need to control young people because they are relying on them to deliver the organisation's service and meet the organisation's aims. This means that young people potentially become intimately caught up in the management processes of the organisation, and they serve the organisation in creating outcomes for them. Like employees, participants have space for autonomy in how and what they create, but also like employees this space is constrained by management processes and the authority of those further up the hierarchy (Willmott, 1993). Distributed participation can be seen as a form of human resource management (Boxall et al, 2007), a means of ensuring that young people play a productive and committed role for the organisation.

The inclusion of young people as participants as an object of study as human resources alongside employees opens up a whole new field of enquiry for critical management studies. Critical management studies could explore participation as a way in which management has colonised the relationship between society and young people (Hancock & Tyler, 2008). There are various questions that critical management studies should begin to address around the precise way in which young people are bound up in management processes through participation, and the political and ethical consequences of this. These questions are similar to the kind of 'critical reflection' that critical management studies directs toward the effects of management (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012, pp.22-24), particularly on the employee experience and identity (Alvesson et al., 2008). How do management processes effect young people, and are these effects different from those on adults? Does the way they young people understand themselves change through participation, and if so how? Equally, are there new forms of solidarity between staff and young people as both are affected by management?

In this thesis, I have adapted some ways of understanding young people's experience of participation from employees' experience of management. The main example of this would be the concept of 'cynical distance' (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). In this way, the task for critical management studies is a simple one, as a critical management studies study of distributed participation can apply existing concepts to a new group of people. However, the task is more complex than this, since the position of young people is in various ways distinct from being straight employees. For instance, there is the question of whether there is there more freedom from management in being a participant than in being an employee?

Creating a critical management studies of distributed participation involves the transdisciplinary approach (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002), allying concepts from childhood studies such as the position of children as a marginalised group within society (Mayall, 2000), with concepts from organisation studies such as organisational stupidity (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012), and drawing such concepts into dialogue with each other.

11.3.3 Professional Guidance

One of the important findings of the thesis is that there are significant shortcomings to existing professional guidance for running participation projects for young people. This finding refers to the Hear By Right framework that applies to any public service organisation (Badham & Wade, 2010), but more particularly the Quality Principles that apply to working with young people in arts organisations (Lord et al., 2012). The complementary principles set out below are not necessarily intended to answer any shortcomings in existing practice, but to recognise certain aspects of existing practice evident in the case studies that I believe should be valued and maintained. Since the impact that the professional has on the experience of the participants will always be somewhat ambiguous and hard to measure, we should be cautious about valuing the professional by reference to young people's experience. If it is accepted that the work of the professional in a project with young people will always be complex and difficult, the true value of the professional should be assessed by reference to their ability to work with this inherent complexity and difficulty. In other words, it is necessary to separate the *ambition* of the professional to be excellent from the *aspiration* of the arts to ensure meaningful and positive outcomes for young people. Alternative principles of

working with young people that have emerged from the thesis are set out below as a contribution.

1. Work with young people is complex.

Professionals know that projects are complex and that the experience of them may be fairly moderate and somewhat ambivalent. While aiming to be authentic, exciting and engaging, and for young people to be actively involved and feel valued, professionals also need to be prepared for a degree of disappointment, for not being seen as authentic and for young people not to feel involved. While it is important to be guided by the overall purpose of the project, there are no certainties in working with a group of people: over the course of the projects, there will be many different kinds of atmosphere in the group, and each participant will have many different feelings towards the project over its course. The professional's task is difficult and unglamorous: struggling through the mundane and complex realities of the projects, trying to ensure that everyone has a positive experience while knowing that ultimately this is beyond their control.

2. Engaging young people means respecting their experience.

Certainly, we can hope that young people are engaged in projects, and there are various ways of making this more likely to happen. However, it is wise to assume that, despite the best efforts to make the project exciting and engaging at all times for the participants, the experience of the participants will involve a degree of ambivalence and disappointment (Craib, 1994). Consequently, the task of the professional is not to ensure that everyone is immediately and fully engaged, but to work reflectively, actively adapting the delivery of the project, informed by a

consistent sensitivity to the experience of the individual participants. In myriad small ways, the professional may reshape the project for each participant and enable the participants to reshape the project for themselves. From this perspective, engagement is small – something that participants are able to achieve within the project from moment-to-moment. It may be stifled by any expectation that every participant will engage in the project in the ‘prescribed’ manner.

3. *The organisation must be navigated.*

The organisational context is different for each project, and of course in many ways the organisation is central to making the project possible. However, the organisation can also provide a challenge to the professional working with young people. In any organisation, there are likely to be various inevitable limitations of budget, staffing and resources within which the professional must operate. The organisation and the participants may be at cross-purposes, and the professional must act as an intermediary between participants and organisation. Working within an organisation can complicate the work of the professional, as something else that the professional must take into account and engage with, without having full control over it. As well as striving for excellence, the professional must make the project as good as possible in the circumstances.

11.4 Limitations and Future Research

From a reflexive perspective, it is particularly important to attend to the limitations of any research. In Chapter 5 on methods, I stated that I would address the following questions in order to attend to how the research was constructed:

Multi-perspective: What are the different ways in which a phenomenon can be understood? How do they produce different knowledge(s)?

Multi-voicing: Can we speak authentically of the experience of the Other? If so, how? What is the relationship between Self and Other?

Positioning: What is the network of practices and interests that produces particular interpretations of knowledge?

Destabilising: What are the conditions and consequences of the construction of a theory or a 'fact'?

Within the research there are more issues than I have the space to answer fully here. I will discuss a number of ways in which the research was shaped by factors other than the case studies, without claiming to have provided an exhaustive list. Equally, I will not answer each question outlined above like a checklist, but will consider them in the discussion below.

First, it is important to consider my relationship with the co-ordinators and the participants. As regards the co-ordinators, I was aware that, given the environment within which the associates operate, covered in Chapter 2, my presence as an observer – however willingly agreed to - had the potential to be experienced as difficult. Although I did not intend to represent Tate and NGS within the projects by scrutinising what was happening with the intention of reporting back, I believe that this would have been a reasonable way of understanding my role if I had not indicated otherwise (and maybe even if I did). Throughout the research, I wanted the co-ordinators to be aware that I was not evaluating the work, that I was aware of the difficulties under which they were operating, and that I was not an expert on work in museums and galleries and so I did not have a position from which to be critical of their work.

Although I cannot be sure, I do not think that my presence as a researcher in itself caused significant discomfort. However, the nature of working in museums and galleries involves compromise, and at the same time the projects are always presented publicly in ideal terms. This means that having an observer who is connected to Tate and NGS observing compromises being made is liable to cause discomfort, and during the research I certainly noticed that the co-ordinators and other staff members would justify what they were doing, in terms of the constraints under which they were operating. At these times, I would try to position myself as a disinterested ally rather than a critic, a message which hopefully was received.

In terms of understanding the impact that my position with regard to the co-ordinator had on the research, I am very aware that a key limitation of the research, in particular with reference to understand how the case study projects were put into practice, is the lack of in-depth interviews with the co-ordinators. There are a number of reasons why I did not gain in-depth interviews with the co-ordinators. One concerns the development of the PhD process. I was initially concerned exclusively with the experience of the participants, as this was the objective of my research as stated as an ESRC Case Studentship. As the focus of my research was initially more engaged with the experience of the young people, I was slow to realise that the people with whom I had the most intense experience were the co-ordinators. It must be admitted that, by the time I had arrived at the case studies, I was interested in the experience of the co-ordinators. The fact that initially my research focused on participants therefore only partially explains why I did not interview the co-ordinators in depth. There was also a practical reason, which was that I was travelling to and from the case study sites, rather than being

based permanently nearby, and the co-ordinators were always busy with the projects, which meant that it was difficult to organise an interview, certainly one with sufficient time. Again, however, this can only be a partial explanation.

Having reflected on this, it seems more likely that my not interviewing the co-ordinators has to do with power and authority. As stated above, I was aware that I might be experienced as being connected to the hierarchical relationship between the co-ordinator and the wider processes of project management. I was 'from' AT, the organisation that funds and, alongside the associate, manages the project. My awareness of this meant that I was wary of tying the co-ordinators to an interview (or, in the case of Bolworth, an in-depth interview). There was another way in which I believe that I was influenced by aspects of power and authority: I noticed that I was much more respectful towards the co-ordinator than the participants (discussed below) who were younger than me; I may even have been overly respectful. This 'respectfulness' towards the co-ordinator may well have been another factor in my not gaining an in-depth interview with them.

I do not think that the lack of the co-ordinators' voice in Chapter 7 negate the research findings. I had extensive informal discussions with the co-ordinators about the project, which shaped how I represented the three modes of the project and their efforts in ensuring that the participants had a positive experience. I also undertook extensive participant-observation on which the chapter was based. However, it is clear that the voice of the co-ordinators would have enhanced the chapter significantly, particularly in relation to how they approached the project and how they attempted to negotiate the difficulties of the project. One direction for future research that I would suggest on the basis of this research is in-depth

interviews with co-ordinators (whether artist-educators or other participation professionals), with a view to understanding their experience of trying to work according to their values while subject to organisational constraints.

In relation to the voice of the participants, I did not adopt a methodological approach based on enabling the voice of the participants to be more present in the research. Instead, I relied on the procedures of building up a rapport and adopting a semi-structured interview approach. It is impossible to ascertain precisely how the research process shaped the voice of the young people as it appeared in the research, but several points seem important. First of all, although I had spoken to all the participants and spent time with them before I interviewed them, I could not be fully aware how they saw me and how this affected how they represented their experience in the interviews. In the interviews, it struck me that occasionally it felt as though they saw me as an authority figure within the project and they were conscious of not saying anything too negative. At other times, the participants seemed to have a whole list of complaints about the project that they could express in response to my questioning, although they may simply have wanted to speak to an adult connected to the project.

While the voice of the participants is more present in the research than the voice of the co-ordinators, it is important to acknowledge my position as the researcher. In the interview process, I aimed to be as open as possible, and as long as it was in any way related to the project, to let them continue in whatever vein. However, the interviewer is always an important factor in shaping what is talked about, whether this is conscious or not, and my line of questioning was directed by my research interests as well as being aimed towards understanding their experience.

In addition to the voice of the co-ordinators and participants being absent, or only partially present in the research, there were further limitations. The literature review was intended to be used to understand different currents and contradictions, rather than being exhaustive of everything that has been written. While I tried to be even-handed in outlining the field of existing theory and research into children and young people's participation, it is almost certain that the review missed important aspects, overplayed others, and was in general a partial account.

While not necessarily a limitation, it is important to acknowledge that the cases themselves are not fully representative of children and young people's participation as a whole in the UK. This is partly because there were only two case studies, but this is not the only reason. The projects studied are not 'leading edge' case studies that demonstrate participation practice at its best. This is no criticism of them, but is merely indicative that they were new, short-term projects. In the case of Bolworth, the impossibility of finding secondary schools to engage meant that the project was not about participants engaging their peers but about engaging primary school children, which is different from other participation projects. The case studies were also managed through AR, and while many participation projects have to represent themselves in particular ways to funders (Eliasoph, 2009), the particular format of the AR funding applications may well have had an important bearing on the projects, that is not representative of projects more widely.

Where the research was on stronger ground was in the way that it looked at the problem of participation in the case studies from a number of different angles. From each perspective – looking at the documentation, the practice, the experience – using different methods, the same findings emerged. Admittedly, the

similar findings may have been as a result of how I approached the case studies having already formed extensive ideas about the problematic aspect of participation in practice. While I had not arrived at the conclusion that the gap between the promise and reality of participation itself is the main problematic aspect, I had already formed much of the thinking that would lead to this conclusion. So, the research was shaped as much by my theoretical position as by the case study itself.

Further, the methods I employed could only give a partial understanding of the projects and people's experience of them. It could well be that by focusing so closely through recording sessions, interviewing people during the sessions, and looking at the procedures of the projects, I was myopic and missed the bigger picture. Days, months or years after the projects, participants might well have talked about the projects quite differently. During the research, I focused closely on problematic aspects of the projects, but there were of course many enjoyable aspects of the projects, for example around creating art, that I did not pay particular attention to but they themselves could have taken up a whole PhD.

In terms of future research, I have outlined a different approach to participation, one that is based on the problems involved in trying to realise in practice the promise of participation being intractable rather than solvable. In this approach, a significant part of research into participation should be to view it primarily as involving young people being increasingly caught up in the hierarchical managerial structures and processes of public service organisations. This would involve treating young people as having a strong sense of agency, but one that is closely bound up with how the organization works, and how the organisation views the

young people as human resources. This may be considered a pessimistic approach, but it is more justifiable than an optimistic approach that sees participation as a possible way to transform young people's position in society despite the strong policy, organizational and personal reasons why this is an impossible project.

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Appendix

INFORMED CONSENT FORM **University of Exeter Business School** **Research on young people's experience in art galleries**

About the research

This research is looking at young people's experiences of the [x] exhibition and activities at Riverton, as part of the ARTIST ROOMS art tour. The research is being carried out by Stephen Vainker, University of Exeter Business School (srv202@ex.ac.uk).

Participation in the research

The research will take place during your visit to the gallery. The research will be made up of:

1. Short Interviews
2. The researcher observing and participating in the gallery activities
3. The researcher capturing audio, photographic and video recordings of the activities

This form is asking whether or not you agree to participate in the research project. Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary and your visit(s) to [the organisation] does not depend in any way on you agreeing to participate in the research.

If you do agree to take part in the research:

- You can withdraw your agreement at any point without needing to give a reason
- You remain free to choose which parts of the research to participate in, and which not to
- Audio, photographic and video material will be used for research and evaluation purposes only
- Recordings and information will be stored securely, available only to the researcher and supervisors
- You will not have to answer any question that you do not want to
- What is said in the interview and recordings of the group will be kept strictly confidential
- Any information that might identify you will be removed from the research documents

Participant's consent

I have read and understand the above and agree to take part in this study. My signature does not mean I give up any legal rights.

Participant's signature

Date

If you are willing for the research to be recorded with audio, please check the box.

Parent/guardian's consent

I have read and understand the above and agree to the above taking part in this study. My signature does not mean the above giving up any legal rights.

Parent/guardian's signature

Date

If you are willing for the research to be recorded for ease of transcription, please check the box.

Researcher's Signature

Date

References

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