FROM ACCESS TO PARTICIPATION

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Acknowledgements

Foreword

This book explores the contribution that cultural participation makes, and could make, to our communal or civic life.

A number of important strands of modern thought have questioned whether we need community at all – and they have a point: communities can be unjust and oppressive. But over the past few decades, we have seen a growing appreciation of the importance of communal or associational life and associated habits of trust and co-operation to societies such as ours, coupled with a growing concern about the condition of this life.

This increased appreciation for the value of an active civic life comes from several sources. At an academic or theoretical level, there has been a revival of interest in 'civic republican' thought and practice, which has always prized active civic participation (see, for example, Pettit 1997 and Skinner 1997) and a new interest in the theory and sociology of citizenship more generally – in the importance of civic virtues and the conditions in which they thrive (for an overview, see Kymlicka 2002, chapter 7). At a more practical level, we have seen growing recognition by politicians, policymakers and the public at large that public institutions and services work best where the public gets involved in them.

As has often been pointed out, the top-down, state-run public services of the post-war decades created almost as many problems as they solved. At their best, they still did a poor job of understanding or answering to people's needs, while at their worst they actively broke up communities (Marquand 2003). This has been particularly true where poor communities are concerned. What these communities lack – as much as money – is networks of reciprocity or mutual aid. Interventions that fail to recognise this, and do nothing to promote associational ties or civil life or engage people in planning and running public services, appear bound to fail.

This increased appreciation of the importance of communal ties and active citizens is not a peculiarly British development – nor a party political one. Criticism of the post-war welfare state developed in parallel, from both left and right. Significantly, Alexis de Tocqueville – the greatest of all modern champions of civic participation, and a thinker whose stock has risen enormously in recent decades – has been claimed by all parts of the political spectrum (see Kramnick 2003).

In the British context, the Liberal Party has long championed the importance of active communities, as against the faith of the left in the state and of the right in the market, and it is often forgotten that the first high-profile minister to advocate 'active citizenship' was not Tony Blair or Gordon

Brown, but the Conservative Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd.

Nevertheless, themes of community and citizenship have been prominent in recent Labour thinking and policy. So, 'third way' thinkers such as Anthony Giddens and community-minded ministers such as David Blunkett and Hazel Blears have made much of the need to revive old habits of self-help and mutualism, and do more to promote participation in the political system and in public services – what the Government now calls 'civil renewal' (Giddens 2000, Blunkett 2003a, Blears 2003). And the New Labour government has sought to strengthen community ties and encourage political and civic participation through myriad reforms, programmes and initiatives – especially those directed towards worse off communities.

Inevitably, perhaps, reforms aimed at devolving decision making, promoting greater participation and strengthening associational life, have often had to contend with policies heading in very different directions. New Labour has been known to devolve with one hand while centralising with the other. In ministerial speeches, issues such as 'new localism', citizen empowerment and civil renewal tend to jostle for space with talk of more audits, targets and regulation.

But there is no sign of a lessening of government enthusiasm for this agenda – indeed, if anything it is becoming a more, rather than less, prominent feature of government thinking and policy (see, for instance Miliband 2006, or the Government's 'Together We Can' programme[1]). Blair signalled his own support for increased citizenship in a memorable passage in his 2005 conference speech:

> 'One day, when I am asked by someone whose neighbourhood is plagued with anti-social behaviour, or whose local school is failing or hospital is poor, "What are you going to do about it?", I want to be able to reply: "We have given you the resources. We have given you the powers. Now tell me what you are going to do about it."' (Blair 2005)

Yet this new appreciation of the importance of citizenship developed as the same time as – and, in great part, as a result of – growing concerns about trends in our civil and political life. Putnam's now classic study of the decline of US habits of association and mutual self-help – *Bowling Alone* – became a bestseller (Putnam 2000). Of course, all societies are full of people – especially old people – who believe that civic values are in decline, and we need to treat their sermons of doom with caution. But while Putnam's fellow academics quarrel with aspects of his analysis of developments in the US, most agree that a decline of some sort has taken place (Skocpol 2003, Fukuyama 1999). Putnam's work has helped fuel research into social capital and civil life around the world – not least in the UK.

As we will see, the across-the-board decline that Putnam described does not appear to be replicated in the UK – or, indeed, in most other Western

countries (Putnam 2002). However, there has been widespread and worrying decline in some forms of participation, notably, voting, and evidence of across-the-board decline among deprived groups.

So much for civic life. But what about the other focus of this report – cultural participation? While research and debate about social capital and civil renewal have flourished over the past decade, there has been little systematic investigation of how art and heritage might contribute to it. This is perhaps partly because government attempts to strengthen social bonds are generally focused on deprived communities with poor social services, so policy debate tends to be about how to engage people in improving the core services. However, this approach takes a very narrow view of what comprises a 'thriving community'. Historically, places with a strong participatory culture, such as Athens or Renaissance Florence, have been distinguished by high levels of participation – not just in politics or military affairs, but in the arts as well.

At a less elevated level, it is notable that when academics and commentators talk about the decline of social capital, they often point to a decline in cultural activity as evidence for their thesis. Putnam's book charting the decline of associational activity may have been entitled *Bowling Alone*, but Putnam draws as many of his examples from cultural activity as he does from sporting activity. He suggests that just as, at its height, social capital was manifest in membership of choirs, town bands, amateur acting groups or simply 'gathering round the piano', so its decline is manifest in the increasing tendency for people to consume culture either in their own homes (watching television or listening to recorded music) or as members of a large and fairly anonymous audience (going to the cinema or concerts) (Putnam 2000).

Britain, too, has a long history of 'amateur' or civic participation in culture – including among those who are less well off. Mount (2004) points to the proliferation towards the end of the 19th century not only of the chapels and their Sunday schools, but also of organisations such as the mechanics' institutes, the miners' institutes, and the working-men's schools and reading rooms – all of which provided their members with access to the works of writers such as Locke, Milton, Shelley and Burns, and were greeted eagerly as sources of educational and cultural enrichment.

Despite the development of new consumerist technologies and pastimes, these traditions have continued up to the modern day. Indeed, the post-war years saw the emergence of a range of new opportunities for collective cultural endeavour, with people joining camera and film clubs, drawing, needlework and pottery classes, rambling and bird-watching groups and conservation societies, to take just a few examples. For anyone with musical ability, playing in a band became almost a rite of passage.

Today, this sort of activity remains widespread – though new technolo-

gies and new trends give it an ever-changing face. (Just think of the growth in family history groups, book clubs, salsa classes, creative writing courses, holidays catering to amateur archaeologists and painters, or web groups devoted to discussing new films or bands.) Indeed, it has recently been argued that we are now living in the heyday of the amateur or the professional amateur, or 'pro-am', and that the lay expert is taking on some of the authority and the importance they had in the 18th and 19th centuries. If so, then the phenomenon is not limited to the world of sports, science or internet technology – it is, arguably, central to the worlds of art and heritage as well (Leadbeater and Miller 2005).

At the same time, during the post-war years, the development of modern electronic technologies, the rise of mass-entertainment industries and the decline in participatory values clearly put pressure on this sort of cultural participation. As the NHS took charge of people's health and town planners re-engineered cities, the Arts Council, BBC and other national cultural organisations came to see their job as to support professional artists and mediate between them and the public. Cultural bodies were – and, to some extent, have remained – slow to support new forms of popular cultural participation, such as pop music and filmmaking (Mulgan 1997).

Insofar as cultural policy has tried to increase and broaden popular engagement, it has made little distinction between increasing more passive forms of cultural engagement – that is, increasing the size and representativeness of 'audiences' – and promoting more active involvement. The tendency has been to homogenise both, in a drive to increase 'access'.

In this book, Emily Keaney sets out to explore patterns of cultural participation in the UK, looking at the contribution that participation in arts and heritage activity makes to our civic life, and suggests ways in which this contribution could be increased. She focuses particularly on the worst-off communities, because they generally participate least and yet could gain most from participation.

It is important to register, early on, a couple of reservations and provisos. First, this report is not saying 'cultural participation: good, passive enjoyment: bad'. Nor does it argue that all cultural policy should be directed at promoting active engagement in artistic and heritage activity. On the contrary, we acknowledge that the enjoyment of say, listening to classical music, watching a film, visiting a historic landmark or attending a lecture on architecture can be just as valuable in itself, and just as beneficial in other respects – as more active forms of engagement. Indeed, the two tend to feed off each other. Hearing great performances can inspire people to make music themselves, a visit to a stately home can stimulate interest in one's own family history or the history of one's own locality, and so on.

Nor is the report arguing that culture produced together is always better than culture produced alone. Reading a book alone is a no less worthwhile

way of spending time than playing in a band or taking part in an archaeological dig. What we are saying is that cultural policy – and public policy, more generally – needs to become more sensitive to these different forms of cultural activity. It needs to think more clearly about the possible benefits and costs, and to have a better understanding of when to use the right tools for the right job – and how to use them.

Ben Rogers, Associate Director, ippr

1 Introduction: Social capital and civil renewal

If this book is to examine the role that cultural participation makes, and could make, to our communal or civic life, we need first to explore the factors that mark out successful communities. This first chapter investigates two concepts – social capital and civil renewal – that many argue hold the key to promoting community life and civic culture. It will explain what is meant by these two terms, how these concepts have emerged as a focus of government policy, and why we should care about them. It will look in particular at the contribution that social capital and civil renewal could make to deprived communities. Finally, it goes on to outline some practical steps that policymakers and practitioners can take to encourage stronger, more active communities.

What are social capital and civil renewal?

Social capital is defined as 'the networks of trust, solidarity and reciprocity that exist in a well functioning community' (Putnam 2000). It is generated by positive social interactions with others – many of which are facilitated and created by participation in social and community activity. It is characterised by a climate in which people are willing to help out others in the expectation that at some point, if they happen to need it, they will be helped in their turn. This generalised, non-specific mutuality means that the returned favour does not have to be negotiated every time an act of good will is performed.

Civil renewal refers to the development of strong, active, and empowered communities, in which people are able to do things for themselves, define the problems they face, and tackle them in partnership with public bodies. It is part of a wider government programme to encourage active citizenship – particularly through volunteering. It aims to build on and, in some cases, reinvigorate the strong working–class traditions of self–help, friendly societies, co-operatives and voluntary organisations, as vehicles for engaging citizens both in their communities and in wider civic life.

Neither social capital nor civil renewal are new concepts. The term social capital was first used in a study by Lyda Judson Hanifan in 1916 to describe 'those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people' (Judson Hanifan 1916). However, it has only recently become at all well known, thanks mainly to the work of Robert Putnam.

Meanwhile, the intellectual and theoretical roots of civil renewal are drawn from two sources. The first is the range of civic republican traditions

that emphasise the importance of citizen participation in governance. The second is citizenship theory – in particular, its shift from a passive conception of citizenship focused on the possession of rights to a theory that emphasised the active exercise of citizenship responsibilities and virtues, including economic self-reliance, political participation, and civility.[2] It also draws heavily on the thinking around social capital – and the cultivation of social capital is an important element in any attempt to create civil renewal.

Why are social capital and civil renewal important now?

The current focus among policymakers and researchers on social capital and civil renewal emerged in response to a growing recognition of the importance of engaged and active citizens, and of safe and vibrant communities.

Active and engaged citizens are important for a functioning and stable democracy. We need citizens to participate in the political process to ensure its legitimacy and representativeness. There is also increasing recognition that public services and institutions work best where people are engaged in them – through helping to deliver them, getting involved in governance and providing feedback about how effective they are at delivery and meeting people's needs. Informal volunteering is also crucial, and acts as a safety net for those situations in which the state either cannot or should not intervene – from, for instance, babysitting our neighbours' children to helping out when someone we know is sick or incapacitated. Participation also brings benefits for the participants. People who are socially and politically active are not only healthier and happier, but may also be more prosperous (Putnam 2000).

The quality of our communities is important too. There has been a growing consensus that focusing on traditional 'hard' outcomes, such as a country's gross domestic product, is no longer sufficient – particularly as people's happiness has not increased in line with their wealth. This has prompted a shift in focus to improving quality of life rather than generating wealth, and communities play an important part in this. Good communities not only require decent and affordable housing, good transport links and services and a well-maintained and safe environment. Other factors that are extremely important include whether we know, get on with and trust our neighbours, and whether we have a sense of belonging and ownership in the place that we live. These too make a huge difference to our quality of life and well-being.

Finally, the connections between active, engaged citizens and thriving communities are beginning to be understood. It is now generally accepted that communities composed of active and empowered citizens are a desirable outcome in themselves, and that social engagement and participation

are as important as participation in civic life. Donovan and Halpern (2002) have demonstrated that in Britain, those who are very active in the community are more satisfied with life than those who never attend local groups. Similarly, Johnston and Jowell (2001) argue that organisational membership reinforces a sense of 'connectedness' to society at large. Meanwhile, Putnam (2000) asserts that people who trust others are generally 'good citizens', and that those who are more engaged in community life are more trusting and trustworthy.

However, the recognition of the importance of active citizens and healthy communities has been accompanied by a growing concern that social capital and civic participation are not all that they once were. Voting – an obvious and, arguably, core form of participation – has fallen dramatically over the last decade. In the UK, the 2001 and 2005 general elections had the second- and third-worst turnouts since the 57.2 per cent turnout in 1918, falling from 71 per cent in 1997 to 59.4 per cent in 2001, and only improving slightly to 61.5 per cent in 2005. Putnam's analysis suggested that – in the United States as least – participation in social and community-level activity has also fallen, and that many traditional social and community groups have simply ceased to exist.

The problems of low levels of participation and failing communities particularly affect our most deprived citizens. As we shall see in the next chapter, the UK has not suffered the same level of overall decline in social capital as the US. However, the poorest and most deprived communities generally have the lowest levels of social capital (Grenier and Wright 2003, Halpern 2005), and the poorest and least-educated citizens are the least likely to volunteer or participate in social or community groups. It is also these citizens who tend to be the least civically engaged.

Similarly, those with low incomes and low levels of education are the least likely to vote (Keaney 2006) and are least likely to be interested in politics. Only 35 per cent of residents in the most deprived 10 per cent of areas in the country say that they are interested in politics, compared with 69 per cent in the most affluent 10 per cent of areas (Electoral Commission 2005).

What is more, far from supporting and enabling people, too many communities today set the people who live in them at a disadvantage. The problems of poor educational attainment and health, and higher levels of unemployment, worklessness and crime, all disproportionately affect those from the most deprived backgrounds. These problems tend to be focused geographically, in communities of deprivation, rather than distributed more evenly among the population.

There are worrying signs that these problems are not only persistent, but are also increasing in severity. Concentrations of poverty in deprived areas have increased slightly since 1995, and male and female life expectancy is not only lower in the most deprived areas, but the gap between them and

the general population is actually widening (Strategy Unit 2005).

Traditional regeneration projects, which have focused just on attracting business into an area and improving the built environment, have often either failed to 'turn the area around', or have resulted in gentrification rather than regeneration. The areas themselves have improved, but the people who lived there and their problems have simply been relocated.

Social capital and civil renewal have emerged as new responses to these problems. They are important to all sections of society. Civil renewal can take place anywhere – from the most deprived communities to the most affluent – and social capital is a vital element in all communities. However, these two factors are particularly valuable for the most deprived communities.

The Government has been active in tackling deprivation and promoting neighbourhood renewal (ODPM 2001 and 2003), bringing down unemployment and reducing poverty. However, the UK still suffers from pockets of deprivation in which people's life chances are significantly diminished, and in which they are disengaged with, and uninterested in, wider society. Promoting social capital will help to improve these communities, making them places in which people are more likely to trust each other and to work together. Promoting civil renewal will enable communities to build on this social capital, becoming active citizens who are engaged both in improving their own communities, and in participating in civic life more generally.

Achieving civil renewal: a three-step process

To make a difference on the ground, it is necessary to translate theory into action. As shown above, the theory of civil renewal is that it is possible to tackle inequality and reinvigorate democracy by empowering communities to take charge of their own regeneration and renewal. Achieving this relies on getting people involved in making decisions about, and taking action in, their communities.

According to the Home Office, a community that has successfully achieved civil renewal will be characterised by:

- active citizens who contribute to the common good
- strengthened communities in which people work together to find solutions to problems
- effective partnerships for meeting public needs, with government and its agencies giving appropriate support and encouraging people to take part in democracy and influence decisions about their communities.[3]

However, many citizens need support and assistance if they are to take on more active roles in their communities. Active citizenship requires a variety of skills – not only basic literacy and numeracy, but also things like the confidence and ability to communicate, negotiate, organise and adminis-

trate. So government has recognised that structures and support need to be in place to help and support citizens in this process, whether these come in the form of small grants, community support workers, effective consultation processes or opportunities for citizens to get involved in governance.

Though not explicitly stated, government policy is aimed at helping communities get to a state of civil renewal through a three-step process:

Step 1: encouraging volunteering
Step 2: building capacity through creating skills, structures and support
Step 3: opening up government to provide opportunities for participation
 in decision making.

Step 1: Encouraging volunteering

There is no point offering to build capacity and provide support for people unless they are willing to volunteer to get involved in community life, and the Government clearly recognises that volunteering is important. In the discussion document *Next Steps on Volunteering and Giving in the UK* (Home Office/Treasury 2000), the Home Office and the Treasury stated that 'empowering individuals to volunteer within their communities, particularly the most disadvantaged communities, can help produce sustainable solutions to crime, drug misuse, anti-social behaviour, and poor health.'

More widely, the Government has recognised that the voluntary sector can also play a role in the delivery of public services – often providing more flexible methods of delivery than was traditionally the case, as well as being closer to, and more readily accessed by, vulnerable groups. In the light of this, new opportunities have been created for men and women to volunteer in schools, hospitals, and other public services. In its *Strategic Plan 2004-08*, the Home Office identifies two of its strategic objectives as achieving 'increased voluntary and community engagement, especially among those at risk of social exclusion, and the creation of a more active, vibrant not-for-profit sector' (Home Office 2004b).

Meanwhile, there has been investment in programmes such as *future*builders, the Adventure Capital Fund and the ChangeUp fund[4]. There have also been steps to encourage local projects and training schemes, such as Active Learning for Active Citizenship and mentoring programmes, and the Chancellor has pledged support for the Russell Commission's recommendations to encourage more young people to become involved in volunteering. Plans include a nationwide database of opportunities, an accreditation system and linkages to vocational qualifications, with young people themselves being involved in designing and implementing volunteering activity.

Step 2: Building capacity through skills, structures and support

At the same time as encouraging volunteering, the Government has recog-

nised the wider need to help people become involved. It does this through offering support for building civic skills and capacity, and by ensuring that people have the resources and ability to associate together. Helping citizens develop skills and confidence is particularly challenging in the most deprived areas where levels of formal education are likely to be low and day-to-day concerns and survival take precedence.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is promoting lifelong learning, and has introduced citizenship education in schools, in part with the aim of encouraging and enabling more people to participate in the activities of the wider community. However, there are also other ways in which confidence can be built and skills can be learnt. There are small funds to support community activity, such as the Community Champions Fund, and leadership training pilots have been undertaken to help develop community leaders.

What is more, becoming involved in community or social activities – either as a participant or a volunteer – can also have a huge impact on a person's confidence, and can in itself help develop their skills, from improved communication to administration, organisation and advocacy. Consequently, the Government's support for volunteering doubles up as a key strategy for developing new skills among citizens, and for creating the kind of community empowerment and culture of self-help and mutual support that is at the heart of civil renewal.

Step 3: Opening up government to provide opportunities for participation in decision making

As Lowndes (2005) has pointed out, participation can be seen as a two-way process, with a supply side – empowered citizens with the desire and capacity to participate – and a demand side – flexible and responsive government that is open to, and encouraging of, participation. If citizens do not have the skills and confidence to engage with the opportunities for participation that do exist, then it is all too likely that these opportunities will become dominated by unrepresentative minorities. However, even the most motivated and engaged citizens will quickly become cynical and disillusioned if they come to see consultation and engagement as mere 'box-ticking' exercises that have no real impact on government.

In response to this, the Government is opening up opportunities for participation: mentoring is being encouraged, both in schools and in the wider community; local government is developing new ways of involving and consulting communities, from using community councils or involving community representatives on decision-making boards to implementing widespread consultation programmes about local priorities; the police force is embracing community policing, in which local residents play a pivotal role in deciding policing priorities; the criminal justice system has

started to explore new initiatives in engaging with the public such as through the community justice centre[5]; primary care trusts incorporate patient and public representation, as well as medical and management expertise.

Nevertheless, there is still more that could be done. Many programmes are still in their infancy. Meanwhile, some have a tendency towards style over substance, with the representation being more for show than to really feed into policy. However, these are important first steps, which form a key element in the wider civil renewal policy framework.

Social capital

The three-step process described above relies upon, and contributes to, social capital. If social capital is defined as the networks of trust, solidarity and reciprocity that exist in a well-functioning community, then it is an important facilitator for the other steps needed to create civil renewal. It is social capital that provides the networks that draw people into formal or informal volunteering, and creates the levels of trust that are needed for a community to work together. People are more inclined to help others, either directly or indirectly, if they trust other people in their community to participate too.

Many of the initiatives outlined above will help to increase social capital by providing more opportunities for people to work, and socialise, alongside the other people in their communities. However, to successfully engage communities they also require a certain level of existing social capital. So other measures designed to build social capital (such as support for social and cultural facilities or activities) are important to the success of any programme seeking to create civil renewal.

Summary

The past decade or so has seen a growing recognition among politicians, policymakers and researchers of the importance of strong communities, a rich associational life, and high levels of political participation – of social capital and civil renewal – both to individual and to collective well-being. Service provision and community regeneration are both more effective when citizens are directly involved. When it is creating thriving communities where people want to live, social capital is as important as good infrastructure and services.

While strong, well-connected, trusting communities benefit everyone who lives in them, they arguably benefit disadvantaged people most of all. After all, the middle classes can buy their way out of many of life's problems. If an area goes downhill, they can move. If they are not satisfied with

a public service provider, they can turn to a private one. They can also purchase access to supportive and helpful networks. In contrast, poorer people tend to be stuck with the communities and services that fate has handed them, and deprived communities tend to have the highest levels of social and political disengagement and the lowest levels of social capital.

Civil renewal is an attempt to redress this balance, and to overcome some of the most intractable problems of long-term, entrenched deprivation, by empowering communities to take charge of their own regeneration and renewal, and supporting them in this process.

Clearly, generating social capital and building communities is no easy task – indeed patterns of community relations and associational life often have their roots in the far distant past. Nevertheless, government can make a difference by helping to do three things: promote volunteering, build capacity and encourage and support civic and political participation.

The next chapter examines more closely some of the data that backs up this analysis. It looks at how the levels of trust and associational membership in the UK have changed, and analyses the socio-economic profile of the distribution of social capital.

2 Where are we now? Trends in social capital and volunteering

People who believe in the value of strong communities and active citizenship tend to take it for granted that both are in decline, and that we need urgent action to reverse this state of affairs. This chapter looks at how far this assumption is justified. It summarises the trends in associational life and trust over the past two decades, and then analyses the socio-demographic profile of who is participating.

Associational membership and volunteering

Putnam's analysis suggested that the United States has seen a decline in associational membership and volunteering across the board (Putnam 2000), but the picture in the UK is much less clear cut. One of the best-known assessments of social capital in the UK was that undertaken by Peter Hall (Hall 2002). Hall's findings indicate that associational life in the UK has not declined in the same way as has been reported in the United States.

Hall finds that in the UK, average membership levels among most kinds of organisations 'have risen enough to keep pace with population growth

Table 1 Membership in community associations

Initiative	1994	1998	2000
		per cent	
Neighbourhood Watch scheme	13	14	11
Any other local community or voluntary group	7	6	6
Tenants' or residents' association	4	5	5
Political party	3	3	3
Parent-teacher association	3	3	2
Local conservation or environmental group	2	2	2
Voluntary group helping sick, elderly or children	n/a	2	2
Board of school governors	1	1	1
Neighbourhood council	1	1	1
Parish or town council	1	1	1
Any of these groups	17	26	25
None of these groups	83	74	75
Base	2302	3144	2293

Source: Adapted from Johnston and Jowell (2001)

and rising levels of educational attainment through the post-war period'
(Hall 2002). He also suggests that Britain does not have the same problems
of generational decline as the United States. He concludes that the indica-
tors suggest a robust – even growing – formal involvement in associational
life, as well as patterns of increasing sociability.

Similarly, Johnston and Jowell found that there has been 'little variation
in membership and participation patterns over the years and, apart from
religious identity, nothing approaching the prolonged (and in some cases,
drastic) fall-off in memberships reported in the US by Putnam' – see Table
1 (Johnston and Jowell 2001).

These findings are backed up by other figures. Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley
argue that 'the evidence from the Citizen Audit suggests that a significant
proportion of people give their time to associational life' (Pattie *et al* 2003).
Meanwhile, Bromley, Curtice and Seyd (2004) argue that in the UK there is
actually little consistent evidence of decline in the stock of social trust, in
contrast to the findings of Putnam and others.

If we look at volunteering, the figures appear even rosier. According to
the Home Office (2004b), almost 20 million people are active in formal or
informal volunteering, and numbers are rising. As Table 2 shows, informal
volunteering in England has increased from 34 per cent in 2001 to 37 per
cent in 2003 and formal volunteering has grown from 27 to 28 per cent in
the same period.

These levels of participation are good news, but this does not mean that
there is nothing to worry about. Not only are figures in the UK starting from
a much lower base than the United States, but the overall increases in partic-
ipation actually mask considerable variations between different social
groups. Participation is concentrated among the more affluent and educated
sections of society, and those who are most excluded are also least likely to

Table 2 Participation in voluntary activities at least once a month in
12 months before interview, England, 2001 and 2003

| Type of activity | Percentage who participated at least once a month | | Equivalent number of people (000s) | |
	2001	2003	2001	2003
Informal volunteering	34	37	13,507	14,855
Formal volunteering	27	28	10,545	11,124

Notes: 'Informal volunteering' is defined as giving unpaid help as an individual to people who
are not relatives. 'Formal volunteering' is defined as giving unpaid help through groups, clubs
or organisations to benefit other people or the environment (for example, the protection of
wildlife or the improvement of public open spaces).
Source: Adapted from Home Office (2004a)

participate in national associational life (Aldridge *et al* 2002, Grenier and Wright 2003, Hall 2002, Johnston and Jowell 2001, Pattie *et al* 2003). For example, those in the highest socio-economic group are twice as likely to volunteer formally as those in the lowest socio-economic group. Similarly, participation in general is significantly higher among people who live in the least deprived areas than it is among those who live in the most deprived areas, as Table 3 demonstrates.

Table 3 Participation in community and voluntary activities in 12 months before interview, England and Wales, 2003, by index of multiple deprivation

Index of multiple deprivation for England*	Civic participation	Informal volunteering	Formal volunteering	Respondents
1 (least deprived)	42	72	52	730
2	43	65	49	826
3	44	70	49	639
4	43	68	45	731
5	40	67	45	775
6	38	64	47	870
7	39	61	43	887
8	37	64	41	884
9	33	57	37	1231
10 (most deprived)	32	54	31	1346
All (including Wales)	38	62	42	9483

*Note: The index is not available for Wales
Source: Adapted from Home Office (2004a)

Table 3 shows that while the overall level of associational activity remains high, participation is increasingly dominated by the wealthy and educated. On average, people in the middle class have twice as many organisational affiliations as those in the working class and are likely to be active in twice as many organisations (Hall 2002). Coupled with the withering of many active working-class institutions (such as trade unions and working members clubs) over the past 20 years, this is creating a growing participation gap. As a result, those who are already disadvantaged in other ways are also least likely to be active in community life.

Social trust

Putnam's findings showed that in the United States, the decline in

associational life was accompanied by a decline in social trust. As people engaged less with their fellow citizens, they also became less likely to trust them. In the UK, however, there does not seem to have been a corresponding decline. Figure 1 presents data from MORI (2005) showing people's belief that different groups would be likely to tell the truth. It shows that people's belief that the average man or woman on the street would be generally likely to tell the truth has remained fairly constant over the past 20 years.

Figure 1 Belief that the public can generally be trusted to tell the truth

Source: derived from www.mori.com/polls/trends/truth.shtml
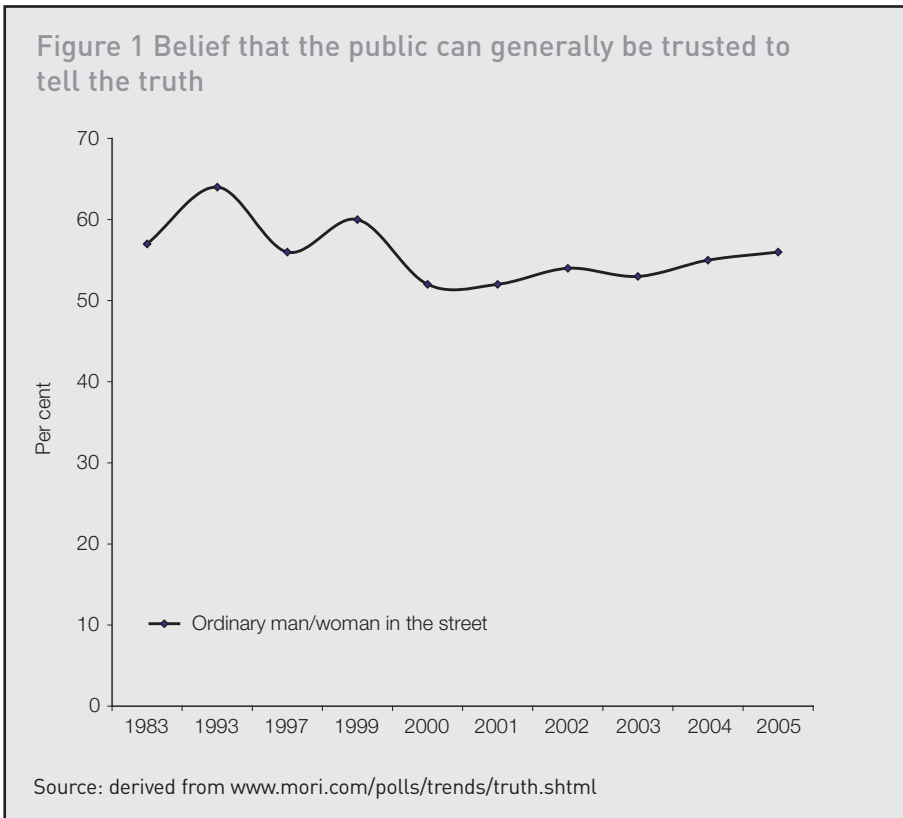
Johnston and Jowell's analysis of the data paints a similar picture, arguing that 'in the two decades in which social trust has been in secular decline in the US, we can find no similar pattern in Britain' (Johnston and Jowell 2001).

Given that associational membership and volunteering have not fallen overall, these findings are not altogether surprising. However, once again, while social trust is not declining overall, it does tend to be weaker in the most deprived and troubled communities, and people living in deprived areas are less likely than those in affluent areas to trust their neighbours (Strategy Unit 2005).

It is also important to note that although social trust in the UK has remained stable, it began – like associational membership – from a relatively low base. Figure 2 shows the results from the European Social Survey, which asked respondents to rate how much they trusted other people, and whether they thought that people generally tried to be fair and helpful, on a scale of one to ten. The UK comes just above the average on all three measures, but there is still considerable room for improvement before we match the levels of most Scandinavian countries[6].

Figure 2 Trust in other people[7]

Source: derived from European Social Survey 2002
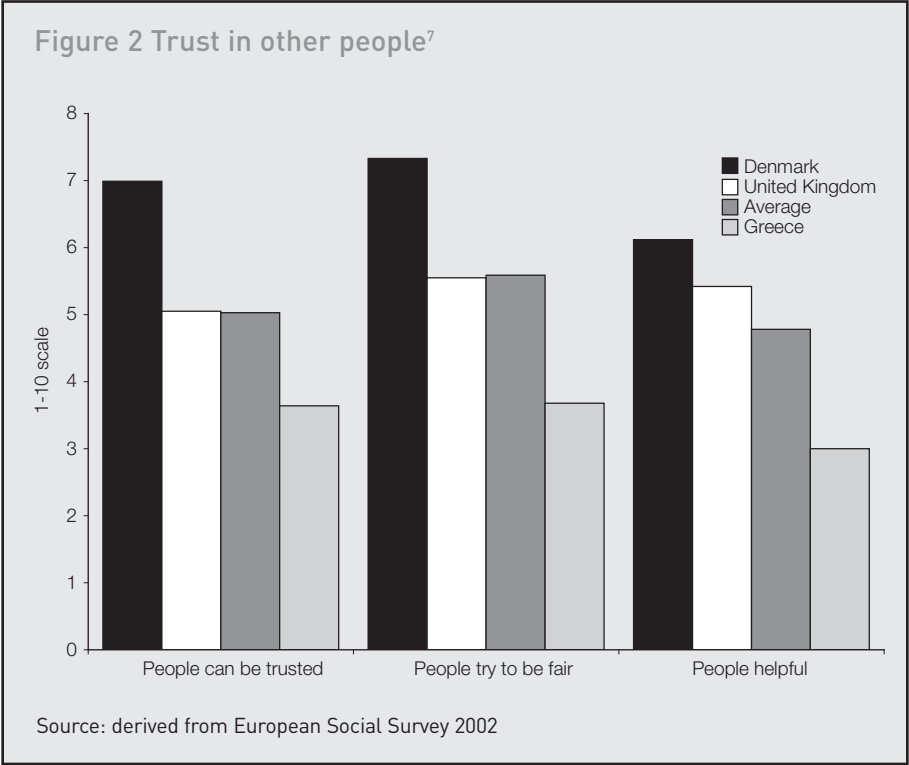
Civic participation

Unlike associational membership and volunteering, traditional forms of political participation in the UK have been falling. The trend, both in national and in local election turnouts, has been downwards, as has people's propensity to contact a politician or attend a political meeting. This partly reflects a shift in the nature of political engagement over the past 20 years: the fall in traditional forms of civic engagement has been accompanied by an increase in consumption and contact politics, such as boycotting goods and contacting the media (Patti *et al* 2003).

However, it also reflects a worrying skew in the distribution of civic

participation across the population. Those in the lowest social class, the poorest and the least educated are significantly less likely to engage in traditional forms of civic participation, such as voting. What is more, they are also less likely to take part in the new 'contact and consumption' politics, which include signing a petition, shopping ethically, or contacting their MP, councillor or the media (Pearce and Paxton 2005).
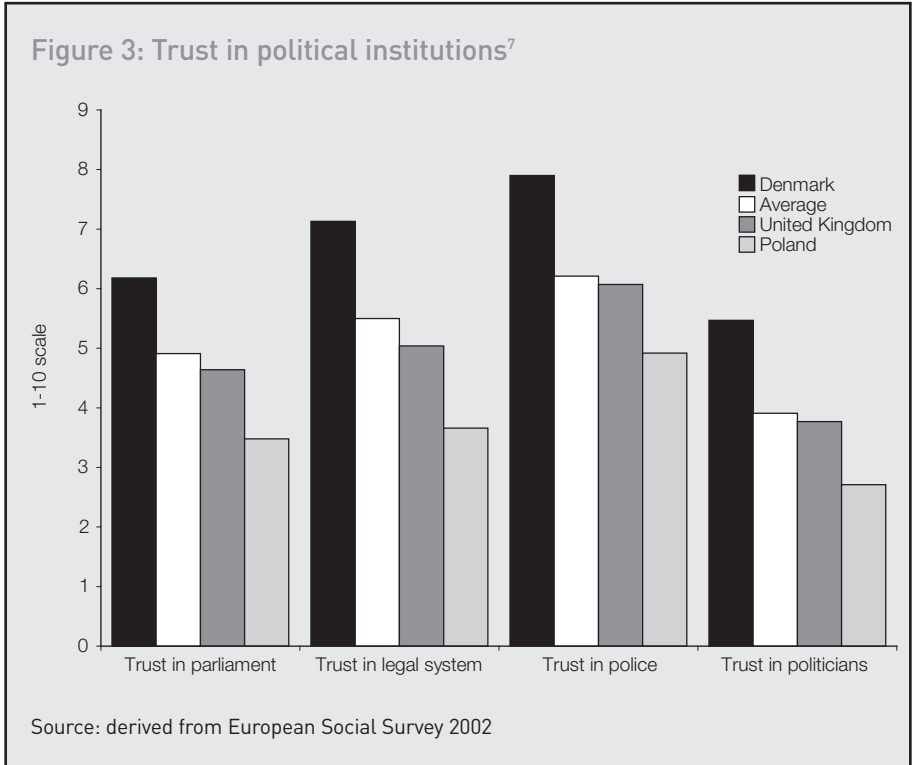
Civic trust

Trust in our civic institutions is as important as trust in society. Democracies with low levels of civic trust run the risk of their institutions, and the basis of their right to govern, being undermined. Of course, this relationship is complex, and it must be emphasised that low levels of political trust may be as much a sign of an informed and interested citizenry as a disengaged and uninterested one. For instance, a lack of trust in politicians could simply be an informed and rational reaction to political scandal and corruption. Nevertheless, this in itself suggests problems with the system and its institutions that may be cause for concern.

Many commentators have argued that social and political trust are linked, and that low levels of social trust are associated with low levels of political trust (Warren 1999, Inglehart 1999). Their argument is that an active, socially integrated community will also be more secure and confident, and that this in turn will make its citizens better disposed both to one another, and to political and public institutions. It is also argued that participation in one type of activity is more likely to generate participation in other areas. This has been disputed, but the evidence certainly seems to point to there being a relationship. Organisational membership is related to higher levels of trust in government, police, civil servants and MPs, as the next chapter demonstrates.

There is some controversy over how far trust in political figures and systems has held up, and the evidence about trends in political trust is conflicting. However, what does seem to be beyond doubt is that political trust, like participation and social trust, is concentrated in the more affluent and educated sections of society (Aldridge *et al* 2002, Grenier and Wright 2003, Hall 2002, Johnston and Jowell 2001, Pattie *et al* 2003).

In addition, levels in the UK are not particularly high compared to the rest of Europe. Figure 3 (page 20) shows the results from the European Social Survey, which asked respondents to rate on a scale of one to ten how much they trusted a variety of institutions. It shows that the UK is slightly below the European average for levels of trust in politicians, parliament, the police and the legal system. Again, there is considerable room for improvement before we match the levels of most Scandinavian countries.[8]

Figure 3: Trust in political institutions[7]

Legend: Denmark, Average, United Kingdom, Poland

Y-axis: 1-10 scale (0 to 9)

X-axis categories: Trust in parliament, Trust in legal system, Trust in police, Trust in politicians

Source: derived from European Social Survey 2002

Summary

The Government's civil renewal agenda, and broader concern around strengthening civic life, both among academics and the public, have been prompted partly by a concern that participation and trust in community and civic life are declining. However, our analysis indicates that, unlike the United States, the UK does not appear to be suffering from an across-the-board decline in either participation or trust.

However, this does not mean that the focus on civil renewal is mis-guided. While overall levels have not declined, levels of participation and trust are fairly low compared to those of most Scandinavian countries, and measures to increase them would benefit all citizens. Moreover, while over-all figures remain fairly constant, participation and trust tend to be con-centrated among the more affluent and educated sectors of society, so civil renewal is particularly important for our most deprived communities.

3 The role of cultural activity in social capital and civil renewal

So far, we have seen that there is concentrated disadvantage and unequal participation, and that this unequal participation itself can have negative consequences. We have also provided some account of the current strands in government policy that address this set of issues. Now, we turn to the role of cultural activity in generating social capital and civil renewal.

This is not to suggest that cultural activity can regenerate or renew communities single-handedly. Cultural activities form just one element of all the different forms of interaction – speaking to our neighbour in the street, volunteering to run meals on wheels, being a member of the local football club – that help to create trust, confidence and the willingness to get involved.

It would also be absurd to suggest that cultural policy be aimed purely at civil renewal. Cultural activities can, and should, serve an array of ends – both 'intrinsic' (for example, enriching experience and deepening intellectual and emotional resources) and 'instrumental' (such as attracting investment and boosting tourism). At the same time, however, there are good reasons for thinking that cultural policy might have a special contribution to make to strengthening communal ties and shifting the terms of exchange between citizens and authority.

This chapter examines exactly what we mean by 'culture'. It will then trace some of the major shifts in cultural policy, and look at the role that culture can play in regenerating communities, focusing in particular on the importance of participation.

What do we mean by 'culture'?

'Culture' is a very broad term, and can mean different things to different people. For the purposes of this book the term is used to refer to the arts and heritage, in all their many forms. Here, the term 'the arts' is used to incorporate everything from playing in a band or singing in a choir, taking part in a play or a carnival, or joining a painting or reading group. Meanwhile, heritage is defined as 'what we value and want to hand on to the future' (Clark 2005). This can include the tangible (buildings, landscapes and objects) and the intangible (memory, language, ideas, skills and traditions). Heritage activities vary from membership of local history groups to participating in heritage trails or oral history projects, or renovating local landscapes. Heritage is something that communities and societies wish to preserve, remember and (in some cases) celebrate.

In this book, we are particularly interested in participation in culture,

rather than consumption of it. The focus of civil renewal and social capital is citizen participation. So it is the interactions between different people, and the act of doing and creating something positive in partnership with others, that makes communal cultural activity important. This inevitably means that making music in a group, on a regular basis, is going to be more important for this agenda than occasionally attending a concert alone, or even with one or two others. The same goes for being a member of a local history group rather than just visiting a historic house, say, or becoming a museum volunteer rather than just visiting a museum.

That is not to say that visiting, viewing and consuming culture does not have benefits. Individual cultural consumption can be hugely moving and enlightening. It can change the way we perceive the world and ourselves, inform us about other lives and cultures, and bestow us with a sense of empathy and adventure, opening up new avenues in our lives that we never dreamed existed. However, these tend to be very personal journeys. If we are to reinvigorate our sense of community and renew the ties that bind us to one another, we also need to recognise the importance of making collective journeys.

How can culture contribute to renewal?

Culture has not been absent from the debate about how to renew our communities. In recent years, there have been some high-profile successes in culture-led regeneration. Developments such as the BALTIC in Gateshead, the Lowry in Salford, and the Eden Project in Cornwall have not only increased access, and provided opportunity, for citizens to experience the arts and culture: they have also often been the cornerstone of wider economic regeneration.

However, this book aims to move the focus away from capital projects, instead looking at how individuals and communities can develop the skills to rebuild their communities themselves – and the confidence to use these skills. The role that culture can play in this kind of social regeneration has often been neglected by government and policymakers, but its impact can be hugely significant.

Community cultural groups can provide a unique space and platform for bringing communities together, and overcoming barriers of mistrust between different groups. This point was made in the Cantle report (Cantle 2002), following the 2001 riots in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley. The author highlighted a local arts programme as one of the few places in a polarised society where individuals from different communities came together on an equal basis. This is backed up by new evidence from ippr that shows that participation in cultural activities can also lead to increased levels of trust (Keaney and Delaney 2006).

Another reason that cultural activities are important is their broad

appeal. Many of the other types of participation promoted by the civil renewal agenda are focused around initiatives such as tenancy committees or neighbourhood watch schemes. Cultural activities, on the other hand, can draw in people who might be reluctant to engage with authority or take part in more formal processes – particularly young people and members of vulnerable groups.

Once people are engaged, they then become more likely to participate in other types of activity. So cultural activity can act as a vital stepping stone in the process of becoming an active and engaged citizen. Finally, participation in culture can help citizens develop valuable transferable skills and positive community identities – particularly among deprived communities. All these issues are explored in more detail below.

Culture and trust

New evidence from ippr supports the idea that participating in cultural activities with other people can help to overcome barriers of mistrust and fear (Delaney and Keaney 2005). Analysis of the 2002 European Social Survey shows that cultural participation appears to have a significant impact on levels of trust, both in terms of trust in other people and in government institutions. Countries with higher levels of cultural engagement also have higher levels of social and institutional trust. Figure 4 (page 24) presents some of the comparative European data.

The relationship between levels of cultural engagement and levels of trust also holds true for individuals within Britain. As Table 4 shows, British

Table 4 Correlations between cultural participation and measures of individual social capital in the UK

Viewpoint	Member of cultural club	Participate in cultural club
People can generally be trusted	0.10*	0.13*
People are generally fair	0.09*	0.11*
People are generally helpful	0.07*	0.10*
Trust in Parliament	0.05*	0.06*
Trust in the legal system	0.07*	0.05*
Trust in the police	0.03	0.02
Trust in politicians	0.04	0.03
Satisfied with life	0.04	0.06*
How often meet with friends	0.08*	0.06*
Unsafe	-0.12*	-0.13*
Unhealthy	-0.07*	-0.07*
Education	0.14*	0.18*

Notes: bold indicates correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
* indicates correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Source: adapted from Keaney and Delaney (2006)

people who participate in cultural activities are more likely than the average British citizen to believe that other people are fair, helpful and can be trusted, and to have trust in the police, the legal system, politicians and Parliament.

Figure 4 Cultural engagement across countries

Legend:
- ■ % of population member of cultural group
- □ % of population participated in cultural activity
- ▨ % of population volunteered in cultural activity

Denmark and Norway: the two highest-performing countries for social and institutional trust

Greece and Poland: the two lowest-performing countries for social and institutional trust

Source: derived from European Social Survey 2002

The relationships between cultural participation and measures of individual social capital remain even after controlling for other factors, including income and education. In other words, it appears that if you had two groups of people who were alike in levels of education and income, and the first group participated in cultural activity while the others did not, the first group would be more trusting.

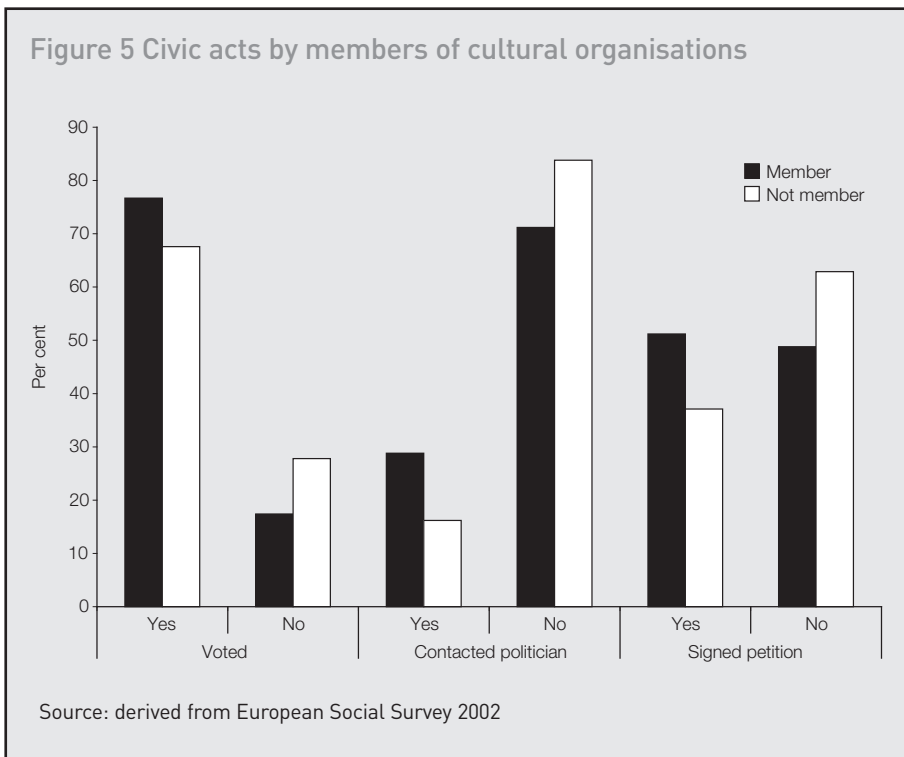Culture and participation

There is a considerable body of research indicating that people who participate in culture are also more likely to participate in society in other ways. Robson's 2003 analysis of the British Cohort Study (Robson 2003) found a positive relationship between participation in cultural activity when young and participation in voluntary organisations later in life – even after

controlling for the effects of wealth and income.

Similarly, Jeannotte's study of the Canadian 1998 General Social Survey (Jeannotte 2003) found that people who participated in any type of cultural activity or cultural event were more likely to volunteer (in any sectors – not just the cultural sector) than people who did not. The more cultural activities in which people were involved, the higher the rate of volunteerism.

New ippr evidence (Delaney and Keaney 2006) suggests that participation in cultural activities may also encourage civic participation. Figure 5 draws on data from the 2002 European Social Survey to compare members and non-members of cultural organisations in terms how likely they were to vote, contact their local politician or sign a petition. The findings show that members of cultural groups are more likely to do all of these things.

Figure 5 Civic acts by members of cultural organisations

Source: derived from European Social Survey 2002

Culture and skills

To participate in community and civic life, citizens need skills and confidence. This relates back to the second part of that three-step process identified in Chapter 2. A number of studies have shown that culture can increase self-confidence and self-belief (Cowling 2004, Harland *et al* 2000). This ability means that cultural activities can have a transformative effect, with the power to 'slay the poverty of aspiration which compromises all

our attempts to lift people out of physical poverty' (Jowell 2004).

There is also strong evidence that participation in cultural activity can improve interpersonal skills and relationship development (Harland 2000). Cultural activities also provide a creative and non-threatening environment that is unlike many people's experiences of traditional education (Cowling 2004). Numerous case studies reiterate these benefits, repeatedly highlighting increased confidence and communication skills as among the benefits of participating in cultural activities (English Heritage 2003, Gould 2005, Research Centre for Museums and Galleries 2000, Shaw 2003).

Cultural participation can also provide more tangible skills. For instance, participants in the Imperial War Museum North's programme to recruit volunteers to act as 'activists' within the museum developed a range of vocational skills and qualifications, including National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Tourist Board-accredited qualifications and First Aid in the Workplace, and many of them went on to university or permanent employment as a result of the scheme. Similarly, analysis of the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey shows that organising events, raising money and leading groups and committees are the most common ways in which people volunteer in the cultural sector – all activities that provide people with the skills to help build civil renewal.[9]

Culture and youth

Cultural activities can be particularly effective at engaging young people, presenting them with positive and fun things to do with their time, and engaging them with their communities from an early age. This positive approach to engaging young people provides an important alternative to punishment for anti-social behaviour – for instance through anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) – by tackling the boredom and lack of facilities that can be contributing factors to such behaviour.

One example of this was the Splash Extra scheme, run in the summer of 2002, which offered hard-to-reach young people, such as those at risk of reoffending, a variety of options, including arts activities. The evaluation found that in providing access to specialist equipment and artists, the scheme offered experiences not normally available, resulting in a sense of real excitement and achievement among the young people. The evaluation of the scheme was not able to prove a definitive link between participation and propensity to commit crime. However, a comparison of robbery levels with the same period in 2001 showed that in most areas in which Splash Extra operated, robbery had fallen significantly, while this was not the case in other areas. It concluded that arts activities are particularly well suited to directly addressing risk factors such as aggressive, hyperactive behaviour, peer-group pressure or drug and alcohol use (Woolland 2003).

Finally, cultural activities and projects can also help communities create and consolidate positive, secure identities. They can make people feel that their area is valued and interesting, providing a focus for community pride and a feeling of ownership. One of the best-known examples of this was when the Angel of the North was dressed in a Newcastle football shirt, symbolising the appropriation by the local community of a work of art that had until then been extremely controversial.

Another example was *Living it up: the tower block story*, an exhibition at the Museum of Liverpool Life. This told the story of the Liverpool Housing Action Trust (HAT) and the residents of 5,337 properties who worked together to improve the environmental, housing and social conditions of their areas. As part of the exhibition, Tenantspin (a community-led internet TV channel co-managed by high-rise tenants, HAT and Foundation for Arts and Creative Technologies, or FACT), presented a series of webcast discussions about Liverpool's tower blocks. The project told the story of a community that had often been marginalised or ignored by the mainstream stories about the city. It provided them with a sense of pride in their own identity as a community, and in their achievements.

The findings of Newman and McLean (2004b) lend further support to this argument. They analysed the impact of a number of museum-based community development projects – that is, projects that engaged local people not just as viewers but as participants. A recurring theme was the ability of these projects to make the participants and visitors feel more positive about themselves and their communities. Particularly important was the ability to create a positive identity in deprived areas, by focusing on the social history of the area and the people in it, and holding that up as valuable. This provided a sense of pride in an area and a feeling that this was a community worth becoming involved in.

Summary

Participatory cultural activity can play an important role in generating social capital and creating civil renewal. It has long been argued that culture can help develop skills and confidence, and shape identities and local pride. New ippr evidence has shown that cultural activities can also increase that vital factor in social capital – trust. Taking part in a cultural activity can make a difference to a person regardless of the person's privilege and education, increasing his or her trust not just in other people but also in our democratic institutions. So, it is clear that cultural participation brings benefits.

The next chapter looks at who is currently participating in cultural activity, and how those benefits are being distributed across society, before
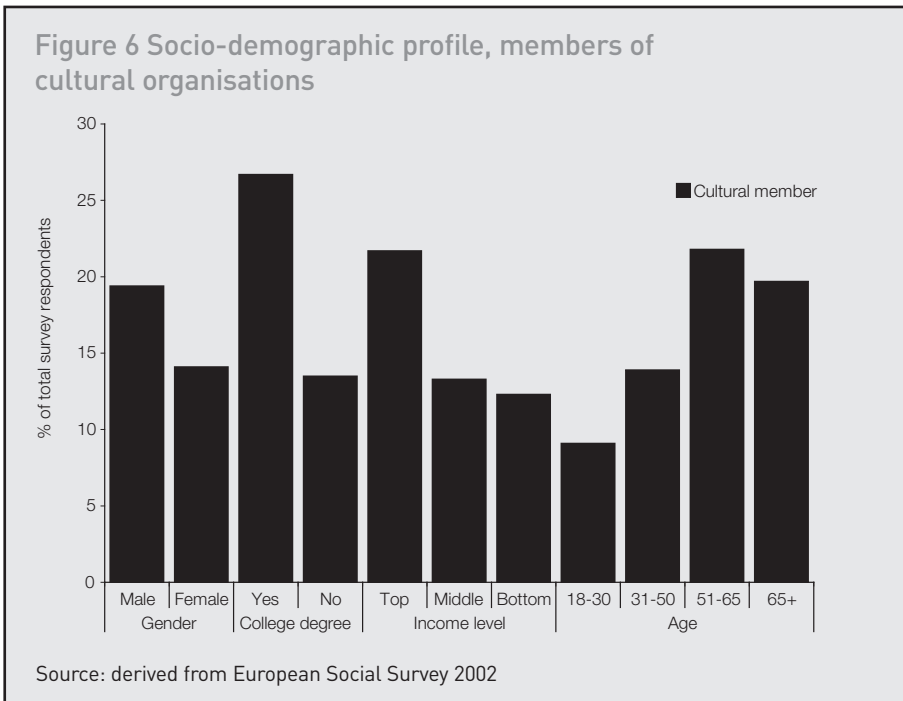
looking at how we can improve current cultural policy and practice to max-
imise the impact that cultural activities can have on civil renewal.

4 The inequality of cultural participation

The previous chapter showed that cultural participation can bring real benefits. It can help develop skills and self-confidence, build trust and increase engagement, offer meaningful activity, and provide a sense of positive identity and self-worth, for communities and individuals alike. However, while this evidence points to a positive role for culture, the benefits are not evenly distributed across society, and there is a distinct class profile to participation. This chapter maps the profile of cultural participation, illustrating who participates, and in what types of activity.

The profile of participation

Although overall levels of cultural participation in the UK are relatively high, patterns of participation are similar to those for other types and areas of activity. Data from the 2002 European Social Survey, shown in Figure 6, demonstrates that membership of cultural groups is concentrated in the more affluent and educated sections of society. This means that the most excluded are also excluded from participating in the cultural life of the nation.

Figure 6 Socio-demographic profile, members of cultural organisations

Source: derived from European Social Survey 2002

Encouragingly, though, as further ippr evidence demonstrates (Delaney and Keaney 2006), when it comes to gender and ethnicity the picture is much more mixed – and members of a black or minority ethnic (BME) group are actually more likely than others to be members of cultural organisations.

If we look in more detail at different types of activity within the cultural sector, we can see that although income and education are the overriding factors, the picture is complex. The effect of education is substantially higher than the effect of income, suggesting that taste and exposure are more important than access to resources. Performances such as opera, classical concerts and ballet are almost exclusively attended by those with a college degree, whereas the difference is much less pronounced for craft fairs, films, cultural festivals and libraries. The picture for ethnicity is even more mixed, with black and minority ethnic groups more likely than white groups to attend many cultural events.

Figures 7-9 show the likelihood of attendance for the two most popular activities for those from the lowest income bracket, with no formal education and from an ethnic minority, and again for the two least popular. Libraries perform particularly well, coming in the top two in almost all categories.

Research by Bennett (2005) finds similar patterns. Respondents to a questionnaire were asked how many times they went to a variety of social and cultural events. Their responses suggested that well-educated middle-

Figure 7 Likelihood of attending different cultural events – lowest income bracket, in comparison with top income bracket

Source: derived from MORI/ONS Omnibus survey 2001
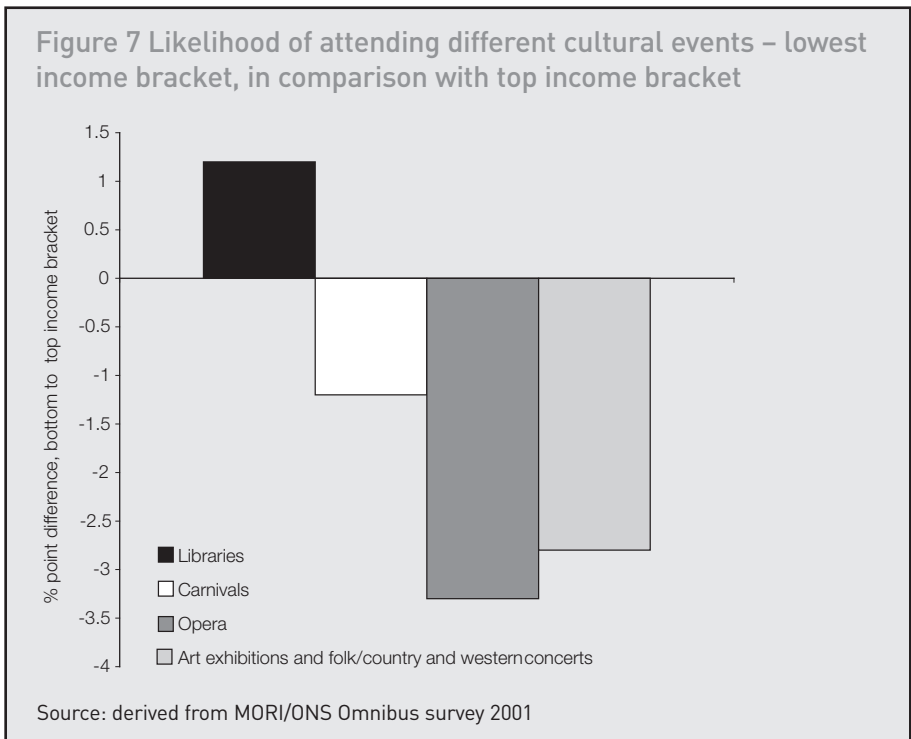
Figure 8 Likelihood of attending different cultural events for those with no formal education, compared to those with degrees

Legend:
- Folk/country and western concert
- Library
- Cultural festival
- Art exhibition

Y-axis: % point different, no formal education - degree/higher degree
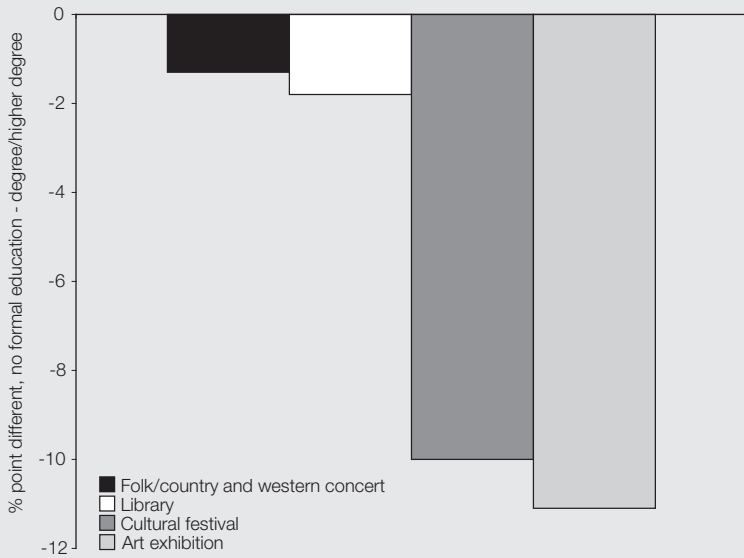
Source: derived from MORI/ONS Omnibus survey 2001

Figure 9 Likelihood of attending different cultural events for members of BME groups, in comparison to others

Legend:
- Cultural festival
- Folk/country and western concert
- Play
- Rock/pop concert

Y-axis: % point difference, black and minority ethnic - white
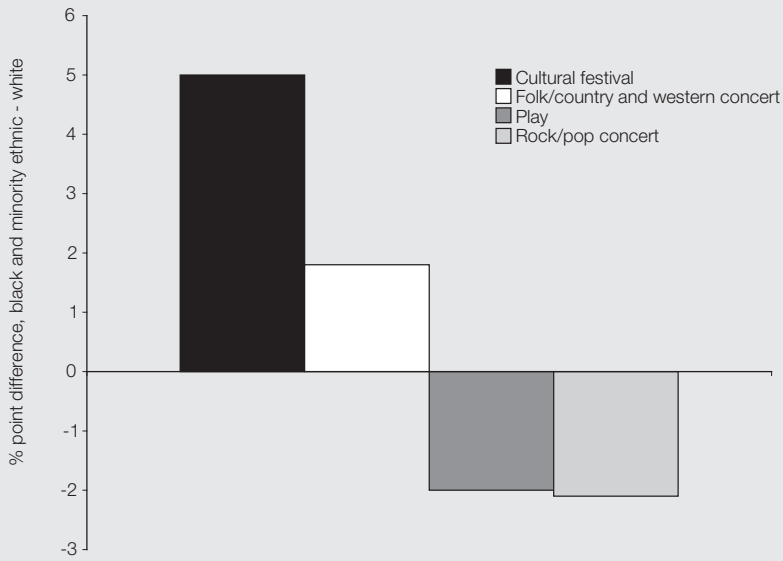
Source: derived from MORI/ONS Omnibus survey 2001

class professionals and managers are the most likely to be heavily involved in those parts of the cultural sector that are dependent on public funding, such as museums, the opera, theatre, art galleries and stately homes, while less well educated unskilled and semi-skilled workers are more exclusively involved in the commercial cultural sector – for instance, cinema or bingo[10].

Image probably plays a role in this. A study of members of minority ethnic groups and the arts found that people tended to see the arts as 'off-putting and elitist, and assumed that such events were mainly for "posh" people, those over 35, and White people' (Helen and Desai 2000), although it is also worth noting that the study found that representatives of minority ethnic groups did identify strongly with arts activities related to the celebration of their heritage.

The more educated and affluent are not only more likely to attend cultural events – they are more likely to participate in the cultural sector in other ways too. Figure 10 shows the trustees for bodies sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Attempts have been made to increase the diversity of this group, and there has been some improvement, but the trustees of our national cultural bodies are still largely over 50, able-bodied, white men.

Figure 10 Trustees for bodies sponsored by the DCMS

Source: derived from DCMS data
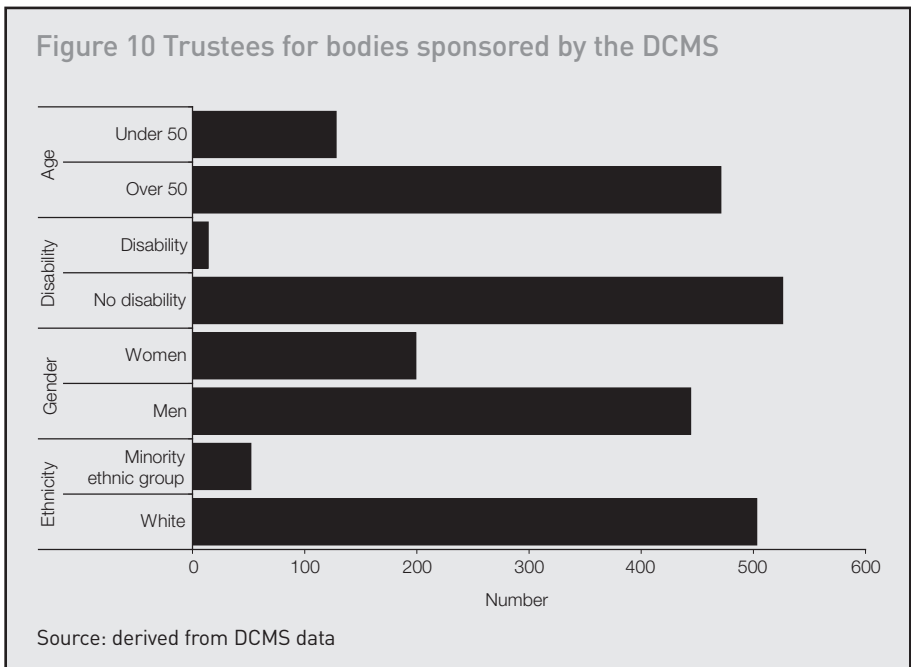
Increasing diversity in this area is important not just because of the skills that can be acquired through acting as a trustee, or because of the benefits associated with participating in civil society, but also because it is very

important that national cultural bodies, largely funded by public money, are representative of the public – and that a variety of experience and viewpoints are being fed in to these institutions at the highest levels.

It may be that we are taking an overly narrow view of what constitutes culture, and that participation and governance become much more diverse in those cultural organisations and activities that are operating below the radar. However, Mount (2004), among others, has pointed out that it is invariably the elites in society who define what culture is, and as Bennett (2005) and Everitt (2001) point out, cultural activities of the lower classes tend to operate outside of state-subsidised and sanctioned forms. By defining cultural activity in narrow ways, policymakers miss out on vibrant and interesting activities, and this also means that opportunities to support these activities are missed.

Summary

The evidence indicates that cultural participation is still dominated by the better educated and more affluent, although there are, doubtless, some types of activity that are not picked up by the existing surveys and measurement tools. This is despite efforts to widen the appeal of the cultural sector and increase participation from deprived groups. This is particularly the case in those sections of the cultural sector that rely most heavily on public subsidy, and it is replicated at the highest levels, with the governance of national cultural organisations still dominated by over-50, able bodied, white men. There is still work to be done to redress this disparity and ensure that diversity of cultural participation is increased at all levels, from taking part in cultural activities to getting involved in governance.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

This book has sought to show that more active forms of participation can contribute to trust, mutual self-help and civil renewal. It has also argued that cultural participation is not only an effective way of drawing people in to other types of community and civic engagement, but that it helps to build civil renewal though building trust, skills and capacity, and by forging positive community identities – particularly among disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. However, the skew in the socio-demographic profile of cultural participation means that culture is not yet reaching its full potential in these respects.

In this chapter, we look at how government and cultural organisations could do more to make sure that cultural activity promotes associational life and builds social capital and civic engagement – particularly among disadvantaged groups, where participation is lowest. We recognise that local and central government, non-departmental public bodies and non-governmental organisations have worked hard to engage disadvantaged groups in cultural activities. But the sort of engagement aimed at, and achieved, has often been rather passive or superficial, and understanding of what counts as 'cultural activity' remains fairly traditional and class-bound.

Developments in cultural policy

As Mulgan (2006) has pointed out, modern cultural policy really originates with the institutions founded between the 1920s and 1940s, such as the BBC and the Arts Council. In their early years, as impressive as their achievements were, they were very much creations of their time. They took a fairly narrow view of what counted as culture, mainly supporting pre-modern forms (such as painting, theatre and classical music) over modern ones (such as photography, film and popular music). And they were both centralised and paternalistic in tendency. They favoured national or regional organisations over local or community ones, and professional production over amateur or grassroots participation. Their primary rationale was to educate and improve, rather than to connect and empower.

In the 1970s and 1980s this began to change, with organisations such as the Greater London Authority (GLA) championing minority and community arts, and attempting very deliberately to widen the reach of publicly subsidised culture. But these attempts to broaden the social reach of arts and heritage were not always successful, and little was done to promote volunteering, or to engage people in shaping cultural policy or governing institutions.

The Labour government elected in 1997 built on this approach. It, too, attached a new priority to encouraging engagement with hard-to-reach 'priority groups' (defined as those with disabilities, members of black and minority ethnic groups and those in socio-economic groups C2, D and E)[11]. In particular, the heritage sector has worked hard to increase access and promote attendance – for instance, by giving the public much more involvement in decisions about what to preserve (Clark 2005).

The National Lottery has also made a difference, providing a valuable alternative source of funding that has, in some instances, been channelled into community-focused and community-led activity. However, the heritage sector has done more here than the arts sector. Not only are there more revenue schemes available to community groups in the heritage sector,[12] but the Heritage Lottery Fund has also devolved the grant-making process to the community: decisions on applications up to the value of £5 million are made by regional and country committees comprised of local people recruited through open advertisement.

Moving policy forward

Despite real progress across the board, and some trailblazing initiatives, cultural policy has still not placed civil renewal thinking at the heart of its outlook. There is much that can be done to increase the role that culture plays in renewing communities and engaging citizens. There are two main goals:

- embedding the thinking about social capital and civil renewal into the heart of cultural policymaking
- translating that thinking into practical steps on the ground – in particular, making sure that people from all walks of life participate at all levels in the cultural sector.

These two goals are described in more detail below.

Goal 1: Embedding the thinking

Very few serious evaluations have been carried out to assess the value added by cultural spending, and the thinking about the role of culture often lacks clarity and direction. As Mulgan (2006) points out, it is not culture per se, but rather particular kinds of cultural activity that make the difference. We need more clarity on the problems that we are seeking to address and the tools we use to address them.

If we are interested in promoting civil renewal, we need to support activities that are collective and participative. In particular, we need to focus on initiatives in which the decision making and control is in the hands of the participants. This focus needs to be much more clearly articulated by

policymakers than it is at present. The current DCMS Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for 2005/08 (DCMS 2005) are illustrative of the need for improvement. Currently they measure attendance at, and participation in, only a small number of very traditional cultural activities, and do not emphasise the importance of participation.[13]

We are not only interested in an instrumentalist approach to cultural policy. Culture should be supported for its own sake too. Neither is this an issue of choice between access and participation on the one hand, and excellence on the other. Access and excellence should not be mutually exclusive, and cultural activities of a high quality are much more likely to engage people and encourage them to participate. However, if culture is to fulfil the potential it has to help renew our communities and engage our citizens, we need to be clear that this is one of our aims – and promote policies and approaches that will achieve this.

Goal 2: Translating policy into practice

The second goal focuses on translating policy into practice. Despite many efforts to increase access to culture, the profile of those who participate is still dominated by the middle classes. We need to step up our efforts to encourage people from all sections of society to participate, and broaden our understanding of what that participation means: moving from a focus on 'bums on seats' to governance and community-led projects. A simple way of thinking about this is to aim to get involvement at three levels:

- **Level 1:** as a 'cultural' doer – somebody who takes part in cultural activities
- **Level 2:** as a cultural volunteer – helping to run or organise cultural activities
- **Level 3:** as a cultural leader – helping to lead and govern cultural organisations and determine priorities for cultural provision and spending.

This applies to everyone, but is particularly important for those hard-to-reach groups who are not currently reaping the benefits of cultural engagement.

Recommendations

The following recommendations set out simple steps to help cultural policymakers and practitioners achieve both of the above goals.

Goal 1: Embedding the thinking
Recommendation: Government needs to introduce targets for participation in collective and community-led cultural activity to encourage the creation of civil renewal.
The PSA targets emerging from the CSR2007 need to include a target to encourage collective and community-led cultural activities – particularly

among those from priority groups and in disadvantaged communities. 'Participation' in cultural activities should be defined as taking part in them, rather than viewing or attending them. 'Collective activities' should be defined as activities that are primarily conducted in groups. 'Community-led activities' should be defined as activities that are partly or wholly conceived, led and run by local community groups.

Recommendation: Government needs to expand what is defined as 'culture', to include a broader range of activities.
The PSA targets emerging from the CSR2007 need to avoid a prescriptive definition of culture, in favour of a more open one that recognises activities such as visiting libraries, belonging to a book club, or attending festivals and country and western/folk music concerts, as forms of cultural activity. Given the difficulty of drawing up a definitive list of cultural activities, the DCMS should explore the possibility of incorporating self-defined cultural activity into its targets. For instance, a metric could be devised that combines attendance or participation in a broad list of specified activities, with attendance or participation in self-defined cultural activities. The new 'Taking Part' data set could become a valuable measurement tool for this.

Goal 2: Translating policy into practice

Level 1: Cultural 'doers'

Recommendation: Cultural organisations need to use forms of cultural participation that already have high popularity levels among priority groups as gateways into further cultural participation.
One way of doing this is to create better links between the activities that priority groups already use and other types of cultural activity. One example would be to set up film networks or discussion groups as partnerships between film museums and cinemas. Libraries are also a valuable resource, not just for advertising cultural opportunities, but also as a safe and familiar space within which to host new types of cultural activities. Cultural outreach workers need to think about making stronger links with libraries.

Recommendation: The DCMS, DfES and Creative Partnerships need to use the Extended Schools and Building Schools for the Future initiatives to put culture into the heart of communities.
As part of the Every Child Matters programme, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) wants all schools to become extended schools, which will include extended opening hours for school premises and widespread community use of the school's facilities. This initiative is occurring at the same time as Building schools for the Future, which aims to see the

entire secondary-school building stock upgraded and refurbished. Both these initiatives provide exciting opportunities to place cultural activities at the heart of communities, opening up first-class facilities not just to all school children, but also to the communities in which the schools are based, hopefully helping to increase the diversity of participation.

Creative Partnerships, in particular, though currently focused on providing cultural activities within the school day and curriculum, could be expanded to promote after-hours and community-wide participation in arts and heritage activities.

Level 2: Cultural volunteers

Recommendation: Cultural organisations need to implement measures to increase the diversity of cultural volunteers.
A number of simple steps can be taken to increase the diversity of cultural volunteers. These include:

- Advertising – thinking about where and how you advertise for volunteers
- Inclusivity and flexibility – making sure volunteering placements are accessible to everyone – for example, by providing disability access, translators, sign-language interpreters and child-friendly arrangements
- Minimising cost – reimbursing expenses so that volunteering placements are within the reach of everyone.

Volunteering England provides support and guidance for organisations trying to encourage under-represented groups to become volunteers. It is a valuable further resource for cultural organisations.[14]

Another important resource is the website of the Russell Commission, set up by the Government to develop a new national framwork for youth action and engagement.[15] The Commission has recommended targeting specific groups of young people – particularly those who are currently under-represented in volunteering – and some funding will be available for this. It may be possible for the cultural sector to access some of this funding.

Recommendation: Government and non-departmental public bodies need to provide advice to cultural organisations on how best to attract and utilise volunteers in their sector.
Although there are some excellent organisations providing support for cultural volunteering (for instance the Voluntary Arts Network or Heritage Link), there is still surprisingly little connection between the cultural sector and the mainstream volunteering organisations. This makes it more difficult for cultural organisations to find information about best practice for using and attracting volunteers. The major non-departmental public bodies that support the cultural sector need to create prominent links from their

websites to the Volunteering England website. In the medium to long term, these links should be accompanied by easily accessible, downloadable guidelines for their sectors.

Recommendation: Government and cultural organisations need to work together to increase the visibility of volunteering opportunities.
The websites of major museums, galleries and organisations such as the Arts Council and English Heritage should add web links to organisations that advertise volunteering, such as the do-it website[16]. This would be a simple but effective way to inform a wider audience about existing volunteering opportunities in the cultural sector.

Recommendation: Creative Partnerships needs to flag up volunteering opportunities as part of routine practice during projects with young people and communities.
Creative Partnerships already works with a wide variety of young people from diverse backgrounds, engaging them with culture. It needs to flag up volunteering opportunities in the cultural sector, as a matter of routine, in projects for all pupils at key stage 3 and above. This should act as a stepping stone into other forms of volunteering. It should also encourage a long-term commitment to volunteering in a wide variety of people, as research indicates that if people volunteer when they are young they are more likely to volunteer later in life (Putnam 2004).

Level 3: Cultural leaders

Recommendation: The DCMS and the main non-departmental public bodies need to work together to make governors and board members in the cultural sector more representative. In particular, they need to move towards best practice in public appointments, as laid out in the Public Administration Select Committee's 2003 report *Government by Appointment: Opening up the patronage state* (Public Administration Select Committee 2003).
Every effort must be made to increase the representativeness of trustees and governors of cultural organisations. The Public Administration Select Committee (2003) identified a number of ways of doing this, including:

- more focus on competency rather than experience when appointing
- improving facilities and payments for the care of dependents and meeting other reasonable costs
- making meeting times and frequency of meetings more family and employer friendly
- using selection by lot
- elections to the boards of public bodies to leaven the appointed

membership with appropriate representation
- developing apprenticeship, mentoring and shadowing schemes for new or potential appointees.

DCMS needs to work with cultural bodies to encourage and help them in making their boards more representative.

Recommendation: Local authorities need to create opportunities for citizens to determine what kind of cultural provision is of value to their communities.

Many local authorities have already begun to implement processes to allow citizens greater input into decision making. These include open meetings and community councils. However, cultural provision is often not a priority for these new consultative techniques, and should be made more so. Methods that local authorities could use to increase input in cultural policymaking include:

- committees made up entirely of lay people, as in the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)
- large-scale town meetings, as seen in the Listening to the City project in Manhattan[17]
- participatory cultural budgeting, using the same principles as those in Porto Allegre, Brazil[18]
- e-consultation – for example, that used in other contexts, such as the all-party parliamentary committee on domestic violence[19].

Recommendation: Lottery distributors need to use community panels created through open advertisement or appointment by lot, to allocate spending.

Lottery funding holds a unique place in the cultural provision. It is perceived as being closer to the public, and has traditionally been governed by the principle of 'additionality'. In other words, it is supposed to do something over and above traditional funding. This provides an opportunity to create a fund that is not just close to the public, but also has its priorities determined by the public. The Community Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund use regional and country committees made up of local people, recruited through open advertisement, to make grant-making decisions. This good practice should be applied to Lottery funds throughout the cultural sector.

Recommendation: The Arts Council England and the Big Lottery Fund need to set up a Local Arts Initiative.

The Local Heritage Initiative (LHI) was launched in February 2000, and will run for ten years. It aims to help communities bring their local heritage

alive. It gives communities funds, advice and support to help them care for the special features that make each locality unique. The scheme is administered by the Countryside Agency, grants are provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and additional funding comes from the Nationwide Building Society. It has been successful both at bringing in new people to participate in heritage and at handing over responsibility for decision making to local communities.[20]

LHI provides an innovative model that could be usefully applied to the arts sector. The newly-created Big Lottery Fund has a strong focus on community transformation, and provides an exciting opportunity to integrate public involvement into Lottery distribution mechanisms – and into the activities it funds. The creation of a Local Arts Initiative would make a strong statement that Lottery Funding for the cultural sector, while still adhering to the principle of additionality, also has a strong vision behind it: one that is about local and community empowerment, and is shaped by communities themselves.

Jointly funded and run by the Arts Council and the Big Lottery Fund, the Local Arts Initiative should work on the same lines as the LHI. It should provide small grants to local community groups, either to commission public artworks or to run cultural activities and festivals in their areas. It should provide support and access to artists, but the local communities themselves should decide what the projects focus on. Grant-making decisions should be run by regional and country committees comprised of local people recruited either by appointment by lot or through open advertisement. The funding should be contingent on the group involving the wider community.

Notes

1. www.togetherwecan.info/togetherwecan.html
2. For a more detailed treatment of both civic republicanism and citizenship theory see Kymlicka, W (2002) *Contemporary Political Philosophy*
3. Active Citizenship website, Home Office: www.active-citizen.org.uk/active.asp?cat=6&parentid=1
4. *Future*builders is an investment fund run by people from the voluntary sector, which aims to increase the role that the voluntary and community sector plays in the delivery of public services; the Adventure Capital Fund provides tailored investment and support to community organisations; the ChangeUp fund focuses on the infrastructure that supports frontline delivery.
5. The Community Justice Centre, based in Liverpool, aims to involve the local community in the way it provides its services. See www.community justice.gov.uk
6. Denmark scored highest on all three of these measures. For 'trust and fairness', Norway scored highest, followed by Finland, and for 'helpful' Finland came first, with Norway and Sweden coming joint second.
7. We compared the UK with Denmark, which is the best performing country on these measures, and Poland, the worst, as well the average.
8. Denmark and Norway were the two top scorers for these categories.
9. The Volunteer Programme had a substantial budget for paying volunteering expenses, including childcare, which encouraged lone parents to participate in the Programme. Volunteers received training and accreditation of their skills and qualifications from Salford College:
    - 23 volunteers completed their NVQ
    - Five volunteers part completed their NVQ, gaining one or more units
    - 12 volunteers are currently working towards their NVQ
    - 40 volunteers completed a pre-NVQ
    - 80 volunteers completed Tourist Board accredited qualifications
    - All volunteers gained First Aid in the Workplace
    - 20 volunteers went on to gain permanent employment
    - Two have gone on to university
    - One who had no previous qualifications before gaining his NVQ is now a Park Ranger and working towards an NVQ in Horticulture
    - Volunteers have gone on to volunteer with other organisations.
10. Survey respondents were given a pre-selected list of activities to choose

from, including: the cinema, museums, pubs, rock concerts, opera, bingo, orchestral/choral concerts, the theatre, stately homes/heritage sites, art galleries, night clubs, and eating out. Those with professional occupations, managers and employers had rates of participation in all of these above the mean – except for pubs, bingo, and night clubs where their rates of participation were below the mean. For museums, opera, concerts, and art galleries, only professionals recorded levels of participation above the mean. These patterns were reversed for respondents in the four lowest occupational classes – skilled, semi-skilled, and lower supervisory workers, and the self-employed.These participated above the mean only in relation to cinema, bingo and night clubs, participating less than the mean in all the other activities. Looking at the same cultural activities in relation to levels of education shows that having, or not having, a degree is the main dividing line. Only those with degrees participated above the mean in visiting museums, attending orchestral/choral concerts, visiting stately homes/heritage sites, or going to the theatre, and the same tendency was discernible in the case of art galleries except that the key dividing line here was between those with, and those without, A levels.

11. As defined by the 2005-2008 Public Service Agreement Technical Note.

12. The Arts sector only runs one scheme, Grants for the arts, which is open to voluntary and community groups as well as professional artists and arts organisations. The Heritage Lottery Fund runs two that are directly available to communities: Awards for a ll, which makes grants to small community groups, parish/town councils, schools and health bodies with the aim of involving people in their local community and widening the appreciation, understanding and experience of heritage; and the Local Heritage Initiative which is available to local community groups to investigate, explain and care for their local landscape, landmarks, traditions and culture. It also runs other community focused schemes including Your Heritage, aimed at not-for profit bodies which support community-focused heritage projects; Landscape Partnerships, which allows partnerships representing a range of heritage and community interests to tackle the needs of landscapes, whose various elements may be in different ownership; and Young Roots, a scheme which aims to involve 13- to 20-year-olds (up to 25 for those with special needs) in finding out about their heritage, developing skills, building confidence and promoting community involvement.

13. DCMS's PSA targets, agreed with the Treasury for 2005 to 2008, include increasing the take-up of cultural and sporting opportunities by people aged 16 and above from priority groups by 2008, for cultural opportunities. This is broken down as:

- Increasing the number who participate in arts activity at least twice a year by two per cent and increasing the number who attend arts events at least twice a year by three per cent.
- Increasing the number accessing museums and galleries collections by two per cent.
- Increasing the number visiting designated Historic Environment sites by three per cent.

'Attendance' is defined as at least one attendance in at least two of the following activities in the last 12 months: plays, ballet, contemporary dance, opera, classical music, jazz, art galleries/exhibitions, or theatre performances. 'Participation' is defined as having engaged in the last 12 months in at least two of the following activities: writing stories, plays or poetry; doing any ballet or other dance; playing a musical instrument for own pleasure; writing or composing a piece of music; performing or rehearsing a play or drama; painting, drawing, print-making or [participating in] sculpture and crafts. 'Accessing Museums and galleries' is defined as taking part in any activity organised by a national or regional museum or gallery including outreach or a visit to a national or regional museum or gallery. 'Designated sites' are described as historical attractions open to the public (buildings, monuments, landscapes, gardens) visited for the purpose of academic study or recreation as defined by the user or visitor (DCMS, nd).

14. www.volunteering.org.uk
15. www.russellcommission.org
16. www.do-it.org.uk
17. www.listeningtothecity.org
18. www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk
19. www.democracyforum.org.uk/womendiscuss/default.htm
20. The 2003-04 Annual Report shows that 41 per cent of awards are made to groups in recognised disadvantage areas including coalfields, Objective 1, 2 and 5b, Rural Priority Areas and areas defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation and the Single Regeneration Budget. An evaluation sample of 104 projects showed that in 40 per cent of the groups all members were new to heritage work, suggesting the programme has been very successful at drawing in new people. Evaluations also show that projects have involved high proportions of minority groups. Forty-seven per cent of groups included somebody who was unemployed, 40 per cent included someone with disabilities, 64 per cent included children under 16 and 92 per cent included senior citizens. The figure for minority or ethnic groups was lower at 14 per cent but this is still significant given that LHI predominantly targets rural areas, whereas the majority of the UK's ethnic minorities live in urban areas.

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