

FROM COMMUNITY GARDEN TO WESTMINSTER

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SPACE

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About CLES

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) is an independent think/doing organisation and network of organisations involved in regeneration, local economic development and local governance.

CLES works closely with a range of partner organisations and aims to explain National and European policy at the local level; harness local experiences of delivery and implementation of policy, highlighting best practice and where policy is going wrong; communicate policy ideas and experiences to our subscribers and assist our subscribers in understanding local needs and implementing policy. CLES combines policy development, an information and briefing service, events and a consultancy arm.

CLES develops new thinking, engages with Government and influences debates on regeneration and local governance. CLES is unique; our network of subscribing organisations, consultancy clients and our grounded experiences of policy means we are well placed to represent practitioners and develop ideas and policy that work on the ground.

About Groundwork

Groundwork is a federation of Trusts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, each working with their partners to improve the quality of the local environment, the lives of local people and the success of local businesses in areas in need of investment and support.

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Executive Summary: Active citizenship and the role of public space

'From Community Garden to Westminster' tackles some of the most important issues facing politicians, government and voluntary organisations in the UK today, including, citizenship, local leadership, regeneration and public service provision. It reveals that involvement in a public space or community garden increases individuals' knowledge of politics and aids understanding of citizenship.

Today, by and large, we are passive citizens; decisions about public services and their delivery are made on our behalf, with relatively little input from individuals or communities. Nonetheless, the involvement of citizens in their local community, both formally and informally, has been identified by the Home Office as a "centre-piece of the government's reform agenda for the coming years" and by the ODPM as key to creating sustainable communities, reforming public services and reinvigorating local leadership.

The research draws on the experiences of eight individuals' involvement in community programmes run by Groundwork, a leading environmental regeneration charity, in three communities in the North West of England.

This report argues that public space is uniquely positioned to facilitate the development of active citizenship. It can act as a space for citizenship, as a medium by which debates about citizenship can take place and as a site of debate and interaction. In particular, this report highlights that:

- Public space acts as a site for the pursuit of active citizenship as well as a site for discord, debate and discussion all of which can lead to the development of citizenship skills.
- Several important skills can be fostered by public space development programmes, including; knowledge about politics; an understanding of planning; partnership working; understanding of funding sources and meeting and interacting with others.
- Skill development and knowledge acquisition will lead to increased confidence and self-esteem, and subsequently higher levels of active citizenship, such as formal volunteering, engaging with state organisations, representing the local community, devolved decision making and power sharing.

- Active citizens will be more inclined to define the problems they face and tackle them in partnership with public bodies, thereby shaping the future of public service provision.
- Organisations, such as Groundwork, which deliver public goods, but are not directly part of the local state are increasingly valuable because they are able to act as catalysts to active citizenship; passing on knowledge and understanding; motivating and sustaining interest and activity and directing individuals towards higher levels of active citizenship.
- The routes to active citizenship will also differ with individuals, as will the extent to which active citizenship is embraced, and because motivation will differ with individuals, what is required from public bodies to sustain active citizenship will also differ.
- Considering the different personality types will better prepare public bodies to motivate and sustain active citizenship. This report identifies eight possible personality types, explaining the different motivations for becoming active citizens, these include

The Narcissist
 The Altruist
 The Reluctant
 The Hunter
 The Escapist
 The Gardener
 The Searcher
 The Curious

Public space development programmes provide an opportunity for more active interplay between local/central government and communities, as well as fostering stronger democracy. In order to augment community empowerment and local leadership, and to create truly sustainable communities and to reform public service provision more explicit attention must be paid to citizenship learning and the formalisation of routes to this learning. Key to this is the use of public space settings and the joining up of the Active Citizenship agenda with the existing agenda for regeneration.

Introduction: Active citizenship and the role of public space

"The democratic impulse needs to be strengthened by finding new ways to enable citizens to share in decision making that affects them..." (Tony Blair, 1998)

The health of our democracy is a growing political concern. With a rise in voter apathy, the breakdown of traditional political allegiances, a fall in trade union membership and the rise of 'single issue' politics, our democratic structures are often perceived to be failing. One response to this issue has been the recent development of the concept of active citizenship.

The Home Office has pursued a civil renewal agenda and is developing new institutions such as the Active Communities Unit¹ and Active Citizenship Research Centre² as well as creating new initiatives such as the Civic Pioneer programme (Home Office, 2005). For the Home Office, the need for active citizens is being driven by a desire to create a stronger more cohesive society with improved civic bonds.

In parallel, the Sustainable Communities Plan, the Neighbourhood Renewal agenda of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (ODPM, 2005b), and the debate about neighbourhood services (ODPM, 2005a) also has strong relationships to the concept of active citizenship. For the ODPM, getting local people involved in their communities is seen as key to creating better places to live and work, addressing inequality and reinvigorating local leadership.

"We need to reconnect politics with the things that people really care about in their local communities – by giving them more power and a bigger stake in the way their areas are run" (ODPM, 2005b)

Furthermore, in recent years we have witnessed an increase in the regeneration of local community space as a key component of the 'liveability agenda'³ and as part of New Urbanism more generally, as such it has risen up the political agenda.⁴

1 See <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/inside/org/dob/direct/acomu.html>

2 See <http://www.active-citizen.org.uk>

3 for direct linkages with public space see the work of Centre of Architecture & the Built Environment, <http://www.cabespace.org.uk>

4 see <http://www.newurbanism.org.uk>

This research and policy paper aims to explore the link between community space and active citizenship. It asks - can community development work, which takes place in and around public space, assist in the development of active citizens? It considers three different community public spaces and local communities in the North West of England. It assesses the extent to which the development of these spaces serves as a medium by which active citizenship has been developed, or is developing. In this we have been driven by four core research questions:

- To what extent does public space play a role in the development of active citizens?
- Which active citizenship skills and learning opportunities develop through working in public space?
- What are the individual pathways and routes to active citizenship via public space?
- What can government, public agencies and other organisations do to develop active citizenship using the medium of public space?

In attempting to answer the above, this research work did not set out to provide a definitive guide or toolkit for developing active citizenship. Furthermore, it is not an evaluation or inquiry into the efficacy or otherwise of particular community spaces or individual agencies. Instead, it is a qualitative snapshot of three public spaces in three communities, and the role and work of eight community participants in developing a public space. This method was chosen because we believe that it is only through a deep understanding of individuals, and how they work, that we can begin to unpack the role of public space in active citizenship. In combination with ongoing studies,⁵ it is hoped that this work can assist in creating a broader and deeper understanding of the routes to active citizenship, via public space, in the UK today.

Groundwork

The research was carried out in conjunction with Groundwork – one of the UK's leading environmental regeneration organisations with particular experience in enabling communities to develop neighbourhood public spaces. Groundwork's purpose is to build sustainable communities through joint environmental action. Groundwork recognises that people, places and prosperity are inextricably linked and so aim to design projects that bring benefits for all three at once. They believe this integrated approach is vital to ensure sustainable development – 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.⁶

They do this by involving residents, businesses and other local organisations in practical projects that improve quality of life, bring about regeneration and lay the foundations for sustainable development. Groundwork defines a 'sustainable community' as one, which is

5 Such as the Civil Renewal Research Programme, due to report in September 2005 and Promoting Community Involvement Through Regeneration: exploring the configurational comparative approach, see www.active-citizen.org.uk

6 Groundwork website, <http://www.groundwork.org.uk/what/index.htm>

vibrant, healthy and safe, which values the local and global environment and where individuals and enterprise prosper.

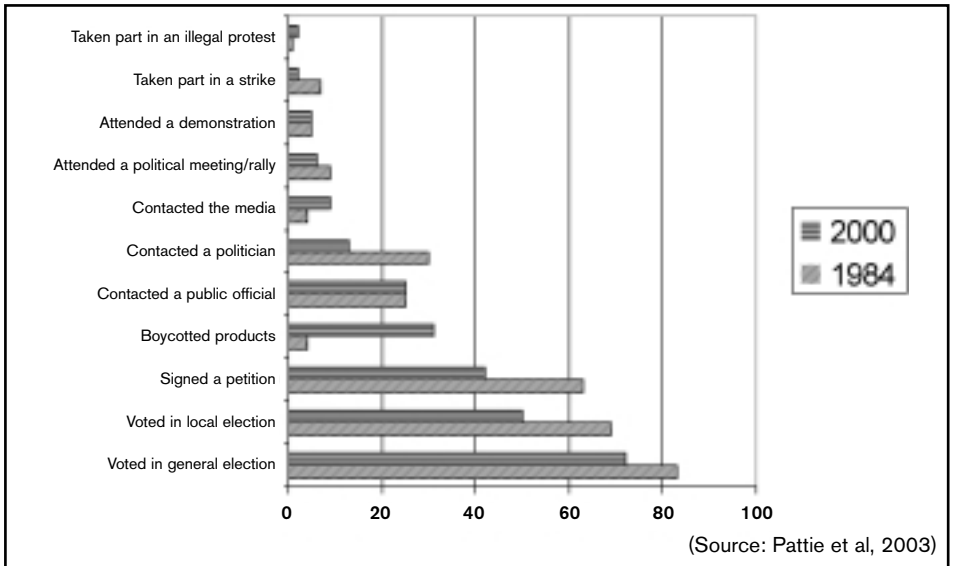
Defining Active Citizenship

At delivery level, in local government and other organisations, active citizenship sometimes remains a hazy, confused concept, with a lack of knowledge about how it differs from community involvement. In academia, and contemporary political commentary however, there is a growing appreciation and consensus surrounding active citizenship (see Progress, 2004, Rogers et al, 2004, Fung & Wright, 2001). In this emerging definition, active citizenship is viewed as being part of a deep democracy, in which democratic processes and politics, more widely, is not confined to party meetings and esoteric debates, but is defined by meaningful (and often everyday) debate and dialogue, through which citizens engage in real decision-making with regard to civic life and public services. Active citizenship represents a process in which a new culture of participation in civic life (including politics and work) is being developed, indicative of a new era in relations between the citizen, services and the local and central state. This definition places it beyond community involvement or consultation. For the government, active citizenship springs from a new view of progressive politics in which civic virtues and values are rekindled, creating a collective willingness to play a greater role in public decision making. Whilst community involvement and empowerment are both important subsets of active citizenship, active citizenship itself is much more about being involved in the political life of society. Included within this are activities such as attending a political rally and contacting a public official (see figure 1). In short, active citizenship is about developing a sense of belonging in which people are interested and able to play a role in public affairs and the delivery of public goods.

How active or inactive are we?

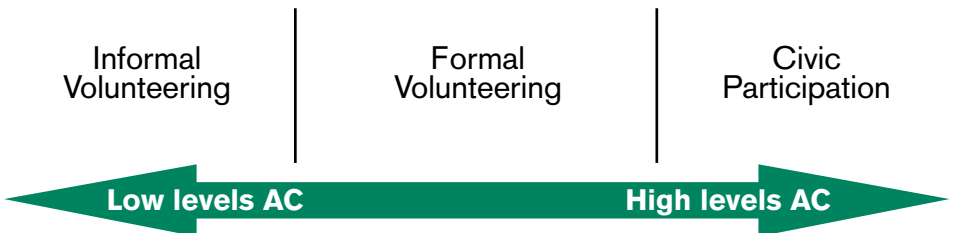
It's widely recognised that Britain, as a nation, and 21st century society more generally, is increasingly passive. Robert Putnam's seminal book on American civic life, *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2001), and the writings of Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 1992), present a picture of civic disengagement. They posit that as citizens we are now less likely to rally around a particular collective consciousness, including class and/or modes of behaviour. Instead, we are more likely to engage in a myriad of interests that are much more individualised or 'atomised', rather than reflecting a collective or group view. Furthermore, the work of David Marquand (Marquand, 2004) suggests that public life has been denuded. For Marquand, it is no longer important for us to become involved in public life or public goods, as there is a perception that most things can be provided by, and bought through, the market. This situation is borne out in Figure 1, which indicates that aside from boycotting a product we are becoming less and less involved in participating in an array of political activities.

Figure 1 – Changes in Political Participation 1984 – 2000 (% saying yes)⁷



In unpacking the concept of active citizenship further, the Home Office has suggested three components which might constitute active citizenship (see figure 2). These are civic participation (includes activities such as signing a petition, contacting a local councillor, contacting a public official, attending a public meeting or rally, contacting an MP), formal volunteering (involving activities, relating to unpaid help through a group or organisation) and informal volunteering (giving unpaid help to an individual or others who are not members of the family).

Figure 2 - Diagram of Active Citizenship based on Home Office components

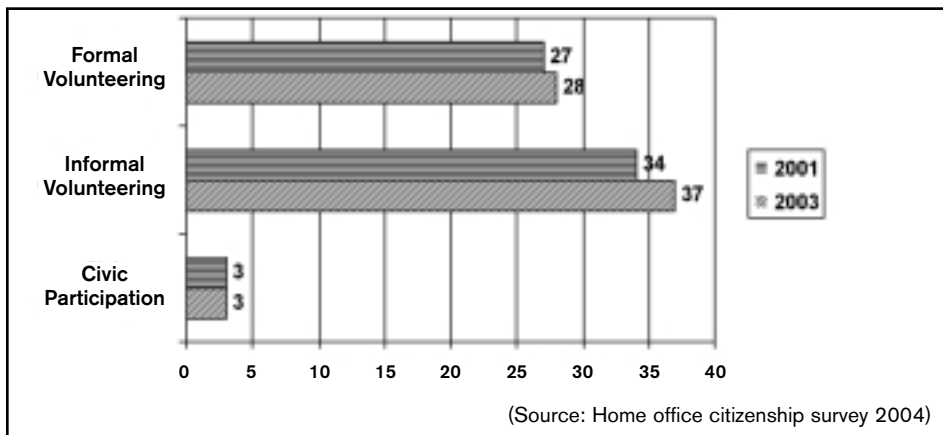


However, we would argue that a different and much more nuanced picture emerges if we examine this in more detail. Some citizens are involved in informal and formal volunteering.

⁷ The figures for those who voted in local and general elections represent people indicating that they would vote in a general election. Actual figures in 2001 and 2005 were much less, averaging 60%.

Yet as figure 3 indicates, very few of us are actually engaged in higher-level activities (categorised in this instance by civic participation). Moreover, whilst both of these sectors has grown since 2001, there has been no growth in civic participation, suggesting that whilst as a nation we may volunteer more, this does not necessarily mean that we are involved in higher levels of active citizenship.

Figure 3 – Participation in voluntary and community activities at least once a month in the 12 months before interview, by type of activity, 2001 and 2003 (%)



Do we need active citizens?

One can argue that passivity and low levels of civic participation are a feature of modern society and should not overly concern us. Indeed, it could be read as a symptom of good governance, in that lack of interest means a happy, contented populace. Similarly, some may form the view that governance and civic life should be left to elected representatives, or that ultimately, the momentum of choice and the market will diminish the need for active citizens. However, this fails to recognise the important link between active citizenship and social justice and the strong causal link between good policy and civic involvement. To create cost-effective public services and socially just and healthy societies, it is imperative that citizenship is strengthened and routes and means to playing a role in society are kept open. Good policy clearly needs to be mediated through local needs, wants and desires and steered by strong democratic mandates (McInroy and MacDonald 2004).

This is particularly important for those who are less well off and most excluded. For instance, work by Pattie et al (2003) suggests that passivity is not universal but is most prevalent amongst the least well off. It is those with higher household incomes and a university education who dominate political action. However, it is in the most deprived communities in the country that the requirement for state intervention is highest and the demands on public services are the greatest. Yet it is these areas that the collective voice

is the weakest – compounding economic poverty with a poverty of representation.

Furthermore, the decline in traditional vehicles for political engagement exacerbates the situation. The work of the Education and Training for Governance and Active Citizenship in Europe (ETGACE, April 2003) has identified four domains in which people engage in active citizenship. These are politics, work, civil society and the private domain. Skills and knowledge which active citizens develop in one “domain” (political, work, civil society and private) can be, and frequently are, transferred into the other domains. However, the learning of citizenship in civil society appears to be under resourced by comparison with similar learning for example in the workplace (e.g. trade union involvement). As a result, work to develop citizenship skills in this domain tends to be short term and unsustainable.

The role of public space in the active citizenship agenda

“Public spaces are spaces in which citizens gather to form themselves into, and represent themselves as a public” (Light and Smith 1998)

This work only explores active citizenship through the lens of public space, namely local community spaces. Public spaces bring special qualities to this debate. For CLES, public space is a useful medium to examine active citizenship, because it is ‘everyday’, inspires high levels of interest and is a crucial facet of a civic identity. However, this understanding is not new. Public spaces have long been seen as useful components of regeneration strategies as they assist in developing positive images of an area and can potentially serve to improve its attractiveness. Bound up with this increase in the significance of public space, is a desire to include and involve ‘the community’ and create active citizens who participate in developing and/or implementing measures that affect their local area.

Public space is important in this as it can serve as a useful, local, everyday resource; as a focus for community involvement in regeneration and can assist in generating a localised sense of belonging. In this, Groundwork UK and individual Groundwork Trusts around the country have been at the forefront of the creative redevelopment of community spaces. Groundwork and its partners have put considerable energies into working with the community. Significantly, communities and groups who have consistently called for a revival of public space have been reinvigorated by this context.

Community public spaces relate to active citizenship in many ways, including acting as potential locations whereby people can publicly interact and engage with each other. This is significant because one can view this interaction as a vital component of the public sphere of politics and active citizenship. Public space, given this notion, can ideally be seen as a location for democratic interaction.

As Mitchell (1995, p116) says,

"a public space represents the material location where the social interaction and political activities of all members of 'the public' occur"

Furthermore, invoking the notion that public spaces can be fora for social interaction, they can also be identified as ideal sites for debate. Richard Sennett argues, in his seminal work *The Uses of Disorder* (1970), public spaces should be developed to embrace the public sphere of the city and accommodate a wide range of city life where human contradictions, disagreements and ambiguities can be expressed and negotiated. Hence, sites of public protest, as well as celebration, communication, conversation and everyday social interaction are created, public space has traditionally (and ideally) been associated with active citizenship. However, this notion of public space as an ideal site for active citizenship and democratic interaction is rarely seen in practice.

As the urban social geographer, David Harvey, indicates, more often than not it is the debates that surround public spaces as opposed to those about residing within the public space itself, that are prominent (David Harvey 2001). Debate more often than not exists around the function, or around the development stages of public space, and little attention is paid to the democratic function of the space.

For CLES, it is these qualities of general public space - as a space for citizenship, as a medium by which debates about citizenship can take place and as a site of debate and interaction - that make it a significant player in the active citizenship agenda. Furthermore, it is those community public spaces, spaces with which local people have a direct and everyday relationship that are focused upon in this research and policy paper.

The Research

As indicated above, this work was borne out of four key questions.

- To what extent does public space play a role in the development of active citizens?
- What active citizenship skills and learning opportunities develop through working in public space?
- What are the individual pathways and routes to active citizenship via public space that local people take?
- What can public agencies do to develop active citizenship?

This research considered three different Groundwork projects in three locations throughout the North West.

1. Carter Thackeray Community Space, Liverpool
2. Haughton Green Doorstep Green, Tameside
3. Peterchurch Estate Improvements, Manchester

All three projects were selected on the basis of two factors. Firstly all the projects for this research needed to have public space improvements at their heart with the involvement of the local community key. Secondly, projects were selected on the basis of their stage of completion.

The Carter Thackeray project that was selected was still at an early stage of implementation, with physical improvements to the project area not having begun. The project involved the creation of a community space in the middle of a housing estate on land that was currently derelict. The Haughton Green project was selected due to current physical improvements being underway - this project was in the middle of the project life cycle. The project involved the redevelopment of playing fields and a public recreation ground. The Peterchurch Estate project was selected because it was completed and it involved the redevelopment of public spaces surrounding a small housing estate. For more methodological detail, refer to Appendix 1.

The case studies

1. Carter Thackeray Community Space

The Carter Thackeray Community Space is located approximately 4km Southeast of Liverpool City Centre, in the Toxteth District of the city, and in the ward of Granby. In the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2000) the Granby ward ranked 10th out of a total of 8414 wards in England. The area suffers from some of the worst social, economic and physical conditions of inner city Liverpool. The public space is a small open area (2400m²) left after housing renovation processes undertaken by Riverside Housing Association. Following demolition of old housing and the construction of new units, the site has been left derelict. When residents were asked how they used the public space the main response was “I pass people I know on the path, but that’s it. It’s horrible”. Residents say they often meet with other people they know while crossing the site, but the current state of it does not encourage people to stop and talk.

Project Aims

The aim of the project is to create a community space where people can interact with each other and an improved environment to increase the resident’s quality of life. “I just want it to look nice, it’s such an eyesore”. The project has been designed since inception to take place in two phases. Phase 1 included the initial consultation, design and clearance work, with Phase 2 being the implementation of the plans on the ground; including community arts projects and skills training for volunteers.

Progress

Through the consultation work, it was discovered that the community thought the area to be scruffy, neglected and intimidating, with the main problems on the site being litter/dumping, wasted space and youth problems. The consultation exercise discovered that people wanted the site to become a welcoming/friendly place, which is bright and exciting. “Somewhere to sit would be nice, in the summer months it could be really nice” The features people wanted to see most in the new development are security, litterbins and new paving. Artwork, wildflowers and shrubs were also desirable features for the site. “Some green would be good, its just rubble at the moment and has been for years, they keep saying they are going to do something”.

However, some residents were not convinced about the viability of a community park on the site. As one resident said “that space over there is an eyesore and needs something put there. I don’t know who came up with the idea of putting benches and flowerbeds in the park but when I asked them they said ‘so mothers can sit there’. I said ‘you’re taking your life in your own hands sitting over there’ – the kids are going to come out of school and throw bricks at you”.

The project began in 2002 but is still at an early stage in terms of implementation. Phase 1 was completed in March 2004 and included a series of consultation events, master planning, questionnaires, exhibitions and leaflets. A number of residents said they had been directly involved in the development so far, "I was asked to plant these bulbs in my garden ages ago for the new park, it grew up a bit as I watered it, then it withered and died". Several residents said they had seen the plans at a Groundwork consultation exercise, the remainder were aware of the plans from word of mouth.

Site design and the gaining of planning permission for the project were also achieved in the first phase. Since March 2004 little has happened in terms of implementation. Some preliminary construction has taken place (gabes) and some lighting has been installed on the site. Clearance and construction so far have been completed by a local ILM organisation called Diggers. One resident, particularly, was frustrated with the progress made so far, "all we want is a simple garden and it's become a £33,000 project. We didn't want a £33,000 project, all we wanted was something that looked nice and for people to be able to sit and meet – it's just been blown out of all proportion".

The Phase 2 skills training has been completed, with the volunteers having undertaken a health & safety course including training in risk assessment, first aid, tool handling and implementation work.

Community Engagement

Most people surveyed were not interested in being involved in the project. People have grown complacent about the site, as it has been in its current state for at least two years. People don't expect anything to ever happen. "*The place is a shit hole, is it really surprising people don't want to know*" commented one resident.

The project has so far only involved a handful of volunteers who have been directly involved. A couple of people mentioned that they had been asked to plant some bulbs in their own gardens that are to be transferred to the new open space when the time arrives.

The majority, who were not active in their communities, said they were not interested in volunteering either due to time restraints or simply no interest in volunteering. Many people did not feel they were prevented from being more involved in their communities - the only things stopping them were commitments that all people have such as family, children and work. Very few respondents mentioned that they were active outside their own family setting. A few residents mentioned that they looked after the neighbours property when they were away, and held the spare key for that property. Only one resident mentioned that she went next door to look after an elderly neighbour, to see if there was anything she needed e.g. shopping, bills paying etc.

2. Haughton Green Doorstep Green

Haughton Green Doorstep Green is located in the district of Tameside near Denton and Ashton-under-Lyne. Haughton Green itself takes up most of the Denton South ward, which is the fourth most deprived ward in Tameside, according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2000. Nationally, it is ranked 1023 out of 8414 wards and scores particularly poorly on the income, employment and health domains.

Haughton Green is an ancient village that became the overspill for 5000 Manchester council tenants. It is mainly residential, with the estate including about 1500 council houses and flats built in the 1960s. In the middle of the estate there are playing fields, a community centre and a disused bowling green. Previously, there was a children's play area and tennis court, but these were vandalised and became unsuitable and unsafe for public use.

Project aims

The definition of a Doorstep Green is a multi-purpose site that can be used by the whole community. The aims of this project were to bring the playing fields in Haughton Green back into use for the whole community by providing a sports cage, play area, footpaths and landscaping. The vision for the site is to create an area that all members of the community can benefit from, to promote a sense of community feeling that is felt to be lacking at present.

Project details

Haughton Green Community Forum is responsible for co-ordinating the project and kick-started the process by applying for a Countryside Agency 'Doorstep Green' grant of £3,500. Further funding has been secured from a number of sources, including Living Spaces, the National Lottery Fair Share Programme, Single Regeneration Budget, the Denton and Audenshaw District Assembly and local councillors' discretionary ward funds.

The project has been in development for nearly 3 years and work has started on the site, including the installation of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and landscaping. The next phase of the project will include the laying of footpaths, seating and bins and is due to be completed in 2006.

The space is used regularly and many people use it at least once a week, although the majority of these use it as a short cut. In addition, people walking their dogs use the area. At present there is limited use of the space for recreational purposes but it is hoped that this will increase when the work has been completed. There is evidence that the MUGA is already well used, even though it has only recently been completed, and the marking of the sports pitches and installation of the play equipment will serve to increase this further. One person said that the MUGA was great and it was hoped

that it would not be vandalised, as it is an excellent thing for local residents, especially young people.

At present there is limited interaction between people using the space. The new footpaths and benches are a welcome addition as it is felt that they will help to improve interaction and open up the space to a larger number of people. The refurbishment of the bowling green was mentioned as an additional means of bringing more people together.

Local residents like the playing fields as they provide an area to walk dogs, are a potential meeting place and an area of green space in an otherwise built up area. However it is noted that the area is run down and neglected. Although there is a sense of anticipation about the work, many people are looking forward to it being completed and the opportunities it will provide. It is hoped that the new site will improve the area as a whole.

Events are planned and are ongoing in the area, co-ordinated by Groundwork and the Community Forum. They include bulb planting with local schools, community tree planting and a celebration event when the project is completed.

Community engagement

The Community Forum and Groundwork Tameside carried out consultation with residents and local community groups to develop the initial proposals for the playing fields. They used a variety of methods, including a door-to-door survey, work in local schools and a family fun day where local groups set up their own stalls and entertainment and events were organised. Many people had not been directly involved in the development of the space, but there are high levels of awareness about the plans and many people feel that they have been kept informed. A number of people said that they had been involved in part of the consultation too.

There is some reluctance for people to become more directly involved. This is partly due to the fact that they did not have a lot of spare time to commit, as they had to work, look after their families or were involved in other voluntary activities. Despite this, people are happy with the work to date and feel as though they have been kept up to date with what is happening.

A number of local residents are active in other groups, committees and voluntary activities. The range of activities included helping at schools and the church. There were varying levels of commitment, in terms of time, and this varied according to the time of year. Many people are unable to dedicate any more time due to other commitments but are happy in their current levels of involvement. Some people simply had no interest in being involved.

3. Peterchurch Estate

The Peterchurch estate is located alongside the Ashton Old Road in Openshaw, East Manchester approximately 7km from Manchester city centre. The estate is located in the Bradford ward of the city and in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2000) the ward ranked 22nd out of a total of 8414 wards in England. The area suffers from high levels of income deprivation and poor health.

The Peterchurch estate was built in the 1970s and at that time some provision for green space was made in the land that surrounds the housing stock. However, the space fell into disrepair through minimal maintenance, the bushes and shrubs grew out of their spaces and the area generally became run down. Rather than being an attractive addition to the estate, the green areas contributed to the decline of the area's environment as they collected litter and became the sites of fly tipping and fire damage. The estate is small and friendly, covering only four streets with approximately 70 dwellings (houses & flats). One resident commented that he knew most of the other residents and that "there is saying on our estate, the only way you go off it is in a box and it's true. I think we have only had one family in 27 years that has left".

Project Aims

The aim of the project was to improve the open spaces around the Peterchurch estate and provide it with a tangible identity. The residents wanted the opportunity to start again, to create a new boundary and identity and to introduce colour into the planting schemes.

Project Details

The project was first started by the residents of the estate through a local environmental funding competition, called Green Streets in East Manchester. The Residents Association on the estate had become very active and was already involved in the regeneration of the area. It had however not been involved in a formal environmental project prior to winning the Green Streets competition.

Residents now use the redeveloped area daily, due to the nature of the project. The estate improvements have been focused on the borders of the estate where previously the land had been poorly maintained. Groundwork installed low level railings and planted in the open spaces that surround the estate. This has contributed to a more general improvement to the environment and the public space that had been left in a state of disrepair, "the estate is much tidier now than it used to be". They have also upgraded areas of paving in the pathways within the estate and generally improved the overall appearance. "It looks pretty, the area is pleasant, looks much better now than it did".

Because the spaces that have been improved, on the whole, are at the edge of the estate, several people living in the middle felt that they had not benefited from the project. The Peterchurch estate is very small with only approximately 70 dwellings over

4 streets, so the edge of the estate where the improvements can be found is at most 50 yards from any house. However, a number of people felt that more money should have been allocated to the middle of the estate.

The majority of people feel the open space has improved the area greatly and the previous state of disrepair and lack of general maintenance made the place feel depressing. Many people said that the improvements had made them feel better about the estate on the whole. "It looks really nice when you come into the estate, it gives you a nice feeling".

The project was completed in June 2003, and resulted in a much improved environment. Groundwork handed over the project to the landowner and Manchester City Council now maintains it.

Community Engagement

Groundwork was asked to support the project after the competition win. They took the lead role and organised consultation with the community in the form of formal meetings and questionnaires, which included as many people as possible. The meetings were very well attended with 15 to 20 people regularly attending. The residents still have a strong Residents Association and are still actively involved with the regeneration process in East Manchester. Those who live in it, and passers-by, admire the work on the estate.

Many of the residents of the Peterchurch estate are quite active in other parts of their lives. Residents are involved with organisations such as the Parish Church, local schools, Eastland Homes and Age Concern. Those who were active with organisations were quite happy with the level to which they were involved. Those who were not active said they were not interested in volunteering either due to time restraints or simply no interest in volunteering. One resident said that to get more people to volunteer time then they needed to offer more of an incentive, by either making it more interesting to get people there in the first place or to get some other form of reward, free plants in return for labour was given as an example. A few residents look after their neighbour's property while they are away, and hold the spare key for that property. Only one resident surveyed mentioned that she went next door to look after an elderly neighbour, to see if there was anything she needed, for example shopping or paying bills.

Many people did not feel they were prevented from being more involved in their communities, only that they had the commitments that all people have, such as family, children and work. The only solution provided by the residents of the Peterchurch estate was to have an employer that was sympathetic to commitments outside of work. Expanding on this, residents suggested that perhaps employers should give people time off for voluntary commitments in the way they do for parents who require flexible working patterns.

Several older people commented that society has changed from when they were young. People used to help each other much more than they do now. “Young people just don't have the time these days, they don't want to know, they just get on with their own stuff”.

Participation in Public Space: Individual tales of citizenship

In this section, we detail the findings from the biographical interviews with participants in the community spaces. Firstly, however, we give a brief profile of the individuals who took part in the research.

The Active Citizens

The following are descriptions of the participants who took part in the research, all have been or are currently volunteers in Groundwork projects. The motivations of the individuals are outlined and their experiences so far are generalised. More details about their views follow.

Mrs Dee

Mrs Dee is in her late 60s. She is motivated by a desire to help others in the community around her. With a long history of volunteering and an unselfish concern for the welfare of others, Mrs Dee has been involved in a wide range of activities in her community for the majority of her life. She is involved with her local church, St Johns Ambulance and Victim Support, and has been a Magistrate in the Courts and set up the local residents association. Mrs Dee's motivations are sustained by her altruistic nature.

She became involved in a Groundwork project through a desire to improve the environment around her, but not only for her, "I want to see people living properly". She has concerns for the people around her as much as for herself.

In the process of becoming an active citizen Mrs Dee has learnt an array of skills that allow her to get things done. Through her sustained involvement, she has gained knowledge of the way things work in the community

Mr Lune

Mr Lune is in his late 60s. He has become significantly more active in the later stages of his life. He wants purpose and direction in the activities he becomes involved with. He is motivated by the problems he sees around him in the community, and by the knowledge that nobody else will take responsibility for actively seeking improvements to the community in which he lives. "If we didn't go to meetings and put up a notice board they wouldn't know what was going on". Mr Lune motivations are sustained by a sense of duty and belief in the community. Mr Lune became involved in a Groundwork project through his involvement in the local residents association.

Mr Bollin

Mr Bollin is in his 40s. His initial motivation to become active in his community was a self interested desire to see an improvement in the environment that would in turn assist his property to retain value. Finding that he enjoyed his involvement in the community he has learnt a lot about local politics, planning and has built up relationships and friendships with a number of people.

Mr Bollin became involved in the Groundwork project through his involvement in the residents association. Through this particular project, his involvement has deepened.

Subsequently, he has learnt a number of skills and has gone on to higher levels of active citizenship. He has now joined a political party and is looking to stand as a local councillor.

Mrs Goyt

Mrs Goyt is in her late 40s and has been active in the community for a considerable amount of time. Getting things done and seeing real change within her community sustains her motivation. She is passionate about the renewal of her neighbourhood.

She became involved in Groundwork through her involvement in the Neighbourhood Council. The environment is one of the Council's main concerns, and is a significant part of their workload.

Mrs Goyt appears to have been frustrated by her involvement in the community space. However, whilst she is deeply cynical and unhappy about the process, she has learnt a lot from her experiences and has developed higher-level skills. The problems are mere hurdles for Mrs Goyt and she thrives on overcoming these difficulties.

Ms Derwent

Ms Derwent is in her early 60s. She has become more active in the later stages of her life, in a similar way to Mr Lune, however their motivations are quite different. Ms Derwent is motivated by a desire to be involved, to keep physically active and do something different.

Ms Derwent became involved in a Groundwork project through a friend who was also involved.

Ms Ribble

Ms Ribble is 19. She finds herself active in her community but is unsure of her purpose. Her personal circumstances mean she is unable to work and community involvement provides her with an escape from her daily responsibilities.

Ms Eden

Ms Eden is in her 40s. She enjoys being active in her community because of the benefit it brings to other people. She gains satisfaction from seeing real change.

She became involved in the community space through her involvement in the residents association.

Ms Tame

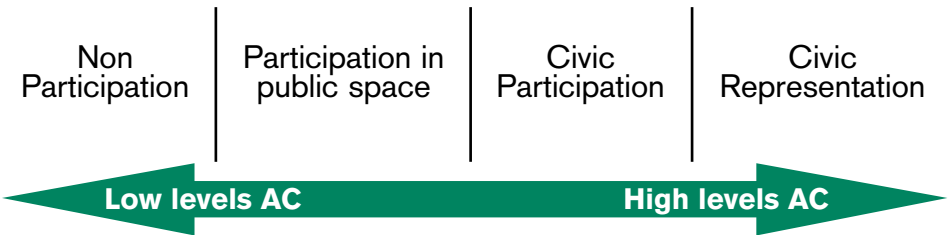
Ms Tame is in her 50s. She has a long history of community involvement, in the same way as Mrs Goyt. However, she is motivated in a different way. She is both interested in the community and is motivated by participating in activities that boost her own self esteem.

Whilst she has a range of sophisticated pre-existing skills, it is evident that her experiences as an active citizen have served to bolster these skills and add more depth.

Routes to Citizenship in Public Space

In considering the ways in which work in public space can assist in active citizenship, we have considered and widened the existing Home Office definition (figure 2). Here, we have suggested that active citizenship operates in a continuum, ranging from non-participation to civic representation, which includes activities such as standing for community election, councillor/MP etc (figure 4).

Figure 4 – Active Citizenship & Public Space



We conducted biographical interviews with eight people who had been, or are, directly involved in the development of a public space. These interviews were designed to map out the individual routes or potential routes to active citizenship. As such, we considered the individuals according to the stages of active citizenship, exploring the extent to which participation in the development of the public space has developed elements of active citizenship.

Non-participation to participation

Motivated via Public space

Of the eight people interviewed, six had had some level of involvement previously, either as part of a tenants and residents association and/or community group. To this extent six of the individuals were already motivated to play a role in their communities. However, it is evident that in relation to public space, some of the six participants felt that the public space and work in a community space is a significant motivatory factor or driver for maintaining involvement, for a number of reasons.

The immediacy of public space

It is evident that public space is for some interviewees a significant motivatory factor. In part, this is due to the immediacy of public space and its relevance to many facets of

people's lives and, in combination with a sense of duty and altruism, is very strong in a number of interviewees:

Mrs Goyt: *"I believe communities should be able to work together and I've also found that when working in public space, the community comes out and works together and you can get a lot done" (Carter Thackeray)*

A new place for the community

Linked to this sense of immediacy, many were motivated by the possibility of creating a facility which people could use, fuelled by a sense of duty or wanting to change things for the better. In Houghton Green, there is a belief that it would be a return to a previous type of community, which was safer, and perhaps more idyllic.

Ms Eden: *"...to have a community like we used to have. You know and everybody joining in and not being afraid of going out or anything like that, to have a real close community. And I think that's what we're aiming for and I think that's what we'll get in the end".*

Similarly, there is a real sense that public space motivated not only those volunteers, but a number of other people, and that this was built into the design and planning of the new space.

Ms Tame: *"It's motivated an awful lot of people. [...]You've got the playing fields which the older kids use for football. The play areas for the younger children were completely wrecked because there was nothing for some of the children to do, the disenfranchised, if you like. There was nothing, and there is nothing for older people. There wasn't even a bench in the park for people to sit on, so in fact a few years ago we got bus shelters from another town and put them in the park, just so that the children had somewhere to gather together".*

The above quotations illustrate the immediacy of public space to the everyday lives of the volunteers. It shows public space as a source of concern, as a trigger for involvement and a desire for change. The participants highlight public space as a method by which they can recreate something for the community, which all can use and enjoy.

Creating a better environment

There are clearly a number of motivatory factors for people getting involved in public space that serve as a means by which environmental problems and associated anti-social behaviour can be addressed. This is particularly the case for the Carter Thackeray project, in Liverpool.

Interviewer: *“How motivated is the wider community about that type of space – some people might think it doesn’t matter?”*

Mrs Goyt: *“Of course it matters because it detracts from the houses. They’ve got new houses that have been up for four years and a piece of land in between that’s an eyesore. The kids throw bricks and stones at people’s windows during the holidays. The community doesn’t want to see that eyesore any longer”.*

Ms Derwent: *“10-15 years ago it used to be a lovely street and the park was a lovely place. I used to go and sit in there with the kids, or throw them in and come back for them later, but you couldn’t even do that now”.*

Similarly in Haughton Green, there is a concern about the quality of the environment and the behaviour within it.

Ms Eden: *“We wanted to improve the environment that we were living in, we didn’t want to be living in filth and muck and dirt, with kids running around all over the place”.*

Linking this to wider feelings of identity and self worth, this quotation from a resident of the Peterchurch Estate in Manchester indicates such feelings by considering the estate from the perspective of someone who has recently returned to the area and who previously saw it neglected and underused.

Mr Lune: *“I think it’s important (public space) because of people’s perceptions – for instance, you have got a family you have not seen for 3 or 4 years and they come home and suddenly they see an old building at the end of your street turned into a nice community garden – and wow, it’s getting better round here – that’s their perception”.*

Self interest

Whilst the above indicates that public space is a worthy cause and thereby motivates many participants, for others, the motivation is more self interested and less altruistic, as the following quotation from one participant indicates:

Mr Bollin: *“having purchased a house on the estate, you can appreciate that if I ever came to sell it, the appearance of the estate as a whole would be a selling point for somebody wishing to buy property in the area [...] The end product for me was an improvement in the price of my home.*

For others, self-interest is manifested differently, as the quotation below indicates. Ms Tame, whilst operating on behalf of the community, is also interested in controlling people and

being a figure of authority.

Ms Tame: *“Well, it's learning about people, and I love people, I find them fascinating. I feel that now I know how to control people.”*

It can also be reasonably suggested that for those volunteers who have become heavily involved there is a common opportunity to take something away from the experience of volunteering and working to improve the community space.

Just something to do

For some of the participants who are less active, the reasons why they are involved are more prosaic, but nevertheless significant; just something to do.

Ms Ribble: *“Mrs X asked me and I don't like saying no. I just thought it would be interesting and would get me out of the house”*

All the above demonstrate that there are a wide range of motivations, with some volunteers displaying a range of reasons as to why they initially became involved. It is important to recognise this range, as it serves to assist our understanding of why people become involved in public space and the route to active citizenship. Furthermore, this motivational factor is likely to be a constant, and replicated during the transition from initial involvement and comparatively low levels of active citizenship to higher and more significant levels. Thus, in the next section we consider, in some detail, the types of skills relating to citizenship which participants have learnt through working in public space.

“I have learnt a lot from the environment workers and from Groundwork staff. I had a good working relationship with everyone from the Head of Regeneration right to the bottom. [...] Everything was explained” (Mr Lune)

Participation in public space

Citizenship skills

From initially exploring the reasons why people got involved in the development of the public space we now turn to look at the extent to which citizenship skills have been learnt through the redevelopment of a community public space. This is a vital part of the active citizenship agenda as it is from the learning of skills that confidence and self-esteem can increase, and thereby become a trigger for the development of a higher range of citizenship skills. As the above quotation indicates, working in public space can lead to knowledge acquisition and the development of a wide range of skills. Furthermore, in analysing the interview data, it became evident that our initial hypothesis would be supported and that the following five sets of citizenship skills can be learnt in the development of public space.

- **Politics** This relates to skills/experience of working with elected members and local government officers, as well as skills relating to the understanding of how the local political system works, particularly in relation to planning, leisure services, parks and recreation.
- **Planning** Planning skills relate to understanding and being able to negotiate issues relevant to local planning and land-use.
- **Partnership** This relates to skills and ideas surrounding governance, as well as the ability to work with others.
- **Funding** Each of the community spaces have quite sophisticated funding packages. This is a significant component of public policy and, as such, is included as a vital component of civic participation.
- **Meeting/ interacting with others** This relates to the actual public space and the extent to which it has served to build up capital.

Learning about politics

For some the learning experience gained from working on public space was positive and self-fulfilling and resulted in participants being better able to challenge and query officials - for example Mr Bollin.

Mr Bollin: *"It has broadened my base knowledge. I now know how to challenge (officials)"*

However, for others, it also serves to expose some of the problems associated with local people and communities engaging with organisations, particularly the local authority.

Mrs Dee: *"It makes you wary of big organisations. We've worked with the Council for long enough so we know that they keep chopping and changing, but the Council are the be all and end all of everything. I think it's made us wary of working with big organisations".*

For some, the understanding of local politics was very sophisticated, with several indicating fairly advanced and nuanced citizenship skills. In addition, where the development has been protracted, the learning experience has resulted in some fairly cynical views, founded in frustration and anger.

Mrs Goyt *"We worked with councillors and officers [...] I now know that they are bullies. They try to impress their will on us. They don't give you the chance to make your own mistakes, like they allow the mistakes that Groundwork and xxx (RSL) make"*

Whilst this is negative, in Mrs Goyt case, it reflects the history of this site and the development of her adversarial position, which is a product of her frustration with the hold up in the development of the space. The perception that Groundwork and the RSL were given more leniency with regards to mistakes indicates, on Mrs Goyt part, a significant awareness as regards timescales, responsibilities and so on. Furthermore, we cannot of course discount this view as a significant motivatory factor, and its ability to strengthen her resolve to become more active.

Learning about planning, systems and procedures

From the experiences on the Peterchurch Estate we can see that knowledge about Health and Safety has emerged through the process of involvement in public space. Mrs Dee indicates some knowledge of the health and safety issues in relation to property abutting the community space.

Mrs Dee: *"I have seen a decline in the environment and housing and there were people with porches falling apart and the Council said they had no money, yet as a health and safety issue they had to replace it and we made them replace it".*

Similarly,

Mr Lune: *"I was told how to prepare the application (planning). It was explained to me that I should include photographs in my application, which is something I paid a lot of attention to".*

Learning about partnership working

As indicated previously, some projects have been a number of years in the planning, with minimal results on the ground. Whilst these are complicated projects, and the resultant views are partial, it is evident that for Mrs Goyt this has resulted in her gaining some sophisticated knowledge about partners and how to work with them. In the first instance, it is clear that she holds Groundwork to account for the delay and has some strident views about the efficacy of Groundwork's methods.

Mrs Goyt: *"[on explaining delay to project]. I actually blame Groundwork for that, because they were brought in to find funding. Myself and xxx (Local RSL) have attracted as much funding as Groundwork has in two years. [...] We're sitting here and people are looking at that eyesore and, as I keep saying to [Groundwork Project Manager], 'it's not you the community are going to come to, it's us'. We're in the frontline and have geared the community up to say 'this is what we're going to do, we're going to have this open space', but it's no further on. [...]"*

In terms of citizenship, the views expressed by the participants indicate sophisticated opinions about what they expect from public bodies, and ways in which they should be treated. Furthermore, there is a sense of injustice surrounding ownership of the process and a sense that she is not being allowed to contest priorities. Whilst there is criticism of Groundwork, conflict and tension are clearly part of the active citizenship model and difficulties over funding are common. In short, whilst negative, there are also positive aspects in that the process has enabled her to air her grievances and that those in turn have contributed to the debate around the process of developing the park. Furthermore, this has fuelled her desire to be active and share her opinions.

Mrs Goyt: *“To the community, when people come in and tell you how to run a project, then you're not being left to do it as the community wishes, or the community organisation would like to see it done. It's a form of blackmail ‘if you don't do it the way we want it to be done, we'll withdraw the money’.”*

In contrast on the Peterchurch Estate, Mr Bollin has had a good working relationship with partners. In particular, he acknowledges the positive role that an independent organisation, such as Groundwork, plays.

Mr Bollin: *“I think they are a brilliant organisation, with them being an independent organisation they are good at what they do because we need more independents”.*

This is significant because it illustrates how organisations adopting a catalytic or dynamic role are of vital import.

Learning about public funding

Today, skills surrounding funding sources are a component part of citizenship and to play a successful and active role, local people need to become skilled in aspects of the funding process. As Mr Bollin indicates, he learnt from, and saw, the Groundwork staff as instrumental in this process.

Mr Bollin: *“I think that every area had a budget and that somewhere along the way those budgets had to come into line. I can only praise them [Groundwork Staff] for the amount of help that they gave us along the way, and at the same time the understanding of the processes”.*

Similarly, Mr Lune indicates how much he learnt and that he got to know exactly what the funders were looking for because he was heavily active and 'involved'.

Mr Lune: *“I learnt how to produce a document which would sustain (sic) the [Funding] competition. Knowing exactly what they were looking for and how*

they were looking for it. This was all because we were heavily involved"

Similarly, from her involvement in the Carter Thackeray project, Mrs Goyt indicates increased understanding of the funding process. Furthermore, she describes the type of transferable skills she has developed, which have made her more 'artful' and creative.

Mrs Goyt: *"We understand that when you put in for funding, there are guidelines and protocols that you have to go through and, as a small organisation, we are capable of doing that. It makes you more artful".*

For others though, the understanding of funding processes has been limited, with little comprehension of where the actual funding is coming from.

Ms Ribble: *"I can't say off the top of my head. Some of it's coming from xxx (RSL), that's why they're involved, and Groundwork are putting in funding, but I don't know where from".*

Meeting/interacting with others

As indicated earlier, this work is not just about learning citizenship skills through the development of a public space, it is also about citizenship taking place within the actual public space itself. Central to this are new forms of interaction and connection made between people.

Meeting others was a particularly strong theme in Haughton Green, where it was an expected outcome of the development of the park, which had been designed as a space for socialising, entertainment, activity and to facilitate the interaction of people in public.

Ms Tame: "People socialise together then they know what's going on. [...] it gives them a sense of ownership. When people can sit down together in peace. It could also be used for activities as well – an amphitheatre where we could hold plays [...] It will be a gathering point, a meeting point for all people of all ages. [...] There are too many shut doors and you don't see your neighbours".

Interestingly, Ms Tame also saw this as a chance to foster an appreciation of difference and to develop a greater understanding of other people.

Ms Tame: *"Another thing is that I want to see special days happening in the park like craft festivals in the summer. A few years ago we had a craft festival in the church and one lad brought in his motorbike. People were speechless, but by the end of the weekend, people realised that okay, he can't read and write, but he had a passion for his motorbike and people got to know him as*

a nice person and instead of being frightened of him because he was in his leathers and he looked tough, they realised that he was a really nice man”.

This section was concerned with assessing how people learnt citizenship skills through the development of the park and interactions in the park itself. In the next section, we wish to consider the third stage on the route to active citizenship, namely, how has, or can, the learning of citizenship skills result in higher levels of civic participation.

Civic Participation

Ms Tame: *“It’s energy, it’s drive, it’s enthusiasm. I must admit it’s very hard work keeping that going but you can if you’ve got a will and believe me I have”.*

Through the development of public space, on route to active citizenship, we have seen higher skill levels and more sophisticated knowledge acquisition. Of particular importance are two key factors; first, as the above quotation indicates, maintaining enthusiasm is vital; second, through being involved in the public space people start to take on other roles which involve mediation and the gathering and dissemination, and representation, of other peoples’ views.

It is also evident that some of the participants have learnt a lot with regard to technical language and jargon, thus they are able to use this knowledge to speak to officials, on behalf of local people. Furthermore, this trend is also reversed; participants are now able to communicate ideas and information, provided by officials, to the local community. For Mr Lune it could be posited that this lead to him becoming a representative for local people.

Mr Lune: *“Everyone I ask says this is now my career and I should get a job in this area. It all boils down to the fact that I know how to converse with people. Let’s say, if you have a university student who is used to dealing with big jargon, you can transfer that bit of jargon back into the basics - the words that local residents can understand, that give them a true feeling, a true picture and then you just move on with them”.*

This is also the situation Mr Bollin finds himself in.

Mr Bollin: *“People now turn round to me and say you haven’t cut the grass right there and you haven’t done this right there and then I have to go to the environmental officer and say, you know you’re not doing this right. They do come now, whereas before people would have kept quiet”.*

In exploring the processes by which these people achieve the position of representative or local voice, it has become evident that it requires a significant build up of knowledge, experience and skills, over time.

Ms Eden: *"It all just seems to build up. Because of all the politics of being a volunteer, partnership, steering group, I have started to flag up things which I think are important".*

For Mrs Goyt, the experience served to enhance wider political skills and build more sophisticated political views.

Mrs Goyt: *"I was involved with a group that wanted an elected mayor. I thought it was important to have somebody like Ken Livingstone here to oversee what goes on in the City Council, because they pay vast amounts of money to people who don't really care about the individuals and the residents within the city".*

A deep understanding of the ways in which the local political scene functions is illustrated by her comments about the work of unelected members of formal structures.

Mrs Goyt: *"I think more democracy would help. It's not the MPs that run this country, it's the white collar workers that run it – it's Whitehall that runs it. It's the same with the Council, it's the council workers that run it, not so much the councillors, they may have an input but, at the end of the day, it's them that make the policies. That needs to change".*

In this section, we have looked at the way in which people use their previous experiences of citizenship to develop skills which can be used to help them become more significantly involved in their communities. The transferable nature of citizenship skills learnt through active citizenship are evident in the above testimonies. Many of the people who took part in this research have learnt a considerable amount, some without even realising it.

Civic Representation

Moving to the end of our scale of active citizenship, we reach civic representation. For us, this is a logical progression from the evidence in the previous section. The interview data indicates that the learning process for some has been considerable and they are now reaching higher levels of active citizenship, as outlined elsewhere in this report.

Of the interviewees, Mr Bollin has proved to be the best example of a resident becoming involved in his local community through a public space project and through his route to active citizenship. As the following statements indicate, becoming active in his community has brought him into contact with politics and political structures that have proven to be important factors in his future career aspirations.

Mr Bollin: *"I have joined the Labour party since becoming involved [...] (six months ago). Something I wanted to do but I never knew how to do it. Years ago a Councillor turned round and said join the Labour party, you would make a*

good councillor and I said yes, but I never got round to it because nobody gave me the information”.

Mr Bollin feels that his involvement with Groundwork has been an important catalyst in his decision to become more politically active.

Interviewer: *“What role do you think your involvement in the community space and Groundwork helped in this?”.*

Mr Bollin: *“I would say it triggered it because me and my local councillor are on first name basis – I meet up with him now and again in the pub, have a laugh and a joke, we talk about the bigger picture. He’s not unapproachable, this is what you find sometimes, you get people in positions and think they are unapproachable. Also its because I have come in contact with local officers”.*

Mr Bollin: *“At the end of the day should a position come up in – if I don’t get a job within regeneration and a position comes up within the Council and I can change the way people’s perceptions are, then that is what I would like to do”.*

Conclusion: Active citizenship and Community Space

A number of key messages emerge from this work:

1. Public space has a key role in developing active citizens.

This work confirms that community public space has an important role to play in developing citizenship skills. This occurs through the community space itself - what takes place IN the space - as well as through debate and dialogue that SURROUNDS its development.

Public space has unique qualities in developing active citizenship

Public space as in any facet of public policy, be it social services, neighbourhood services, housing, education or health, can act as a potential vehicle for Active Citizenship. However, some facets have a greater potential than others to effect change, due to a series of factors:

- the volume of people who use the facility
- its immediacy to peoples' everyday lives
- the extent to which it is easily understood.

Public space has significant potential because it is immediate – as the case study material shows; it is an everyday aspect of people's lives; it is visible; widely used and is an issue in which everybody can have an opinion – it requires no technical or specialist knowledge. The evidence indicates that it can involve people who would otherwise be very unlikely to do so. In particular, young people, the elderly, disabled people and those who are long-term sick, all have public space as an accessible resource and route into Active Citizenship.

Public space as a site for active citizenship

The example from the Peterchurch Estate is most informative with regards to the notion that citizenship occurs through being IN the community space. It illustrates how safety, shared ownership and the work surrounding the community space has created new levels of citizenship, which occur because people are using the community space.

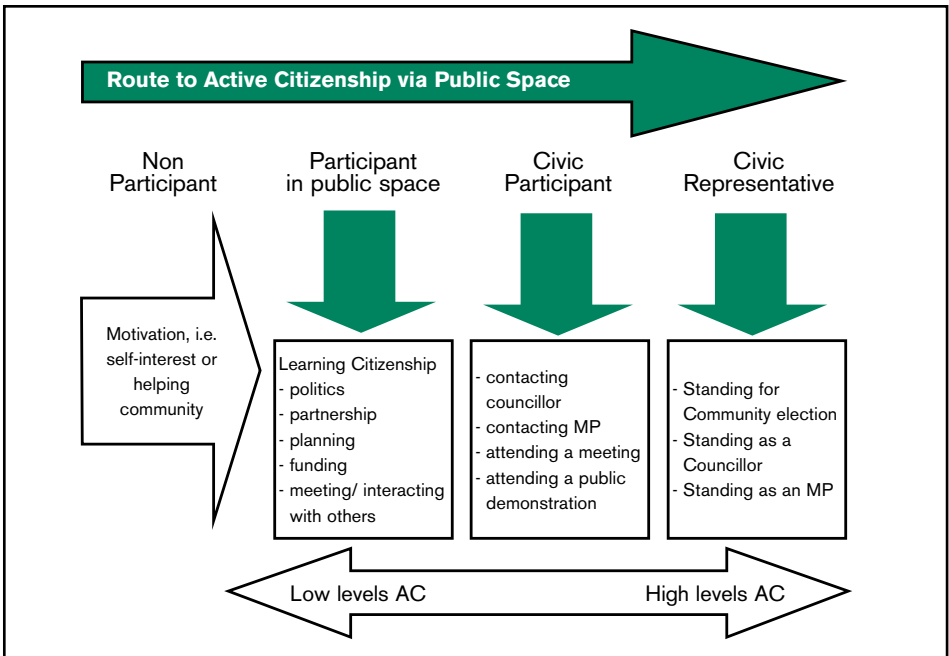
In our view, public space plays and can continue to play a significant role in active citizenship through the prevailing policy agenda, including 'Liveability' and 'New Urbanism'. However, we would go further and assert that public space needs to be considered as a key vehicle for delivering more active communities.

2. Individual pathways and routes to active citizenship via public space

In considering the case study material, and reflecting on the Home office understanding of active citizenship, we have developed a model of routes to active citizenship, through public space.

The diagram below (figure 5) shows the potential routes to active citizenship through the medium of public space. Non-active members of the community may travel from a position of non-participation to civic representation through participation in public space projects. A learning process facilitates the paths to higher levels of active citizenship. For instance, a non-active resident may become involved in a project for a variety of motivations and, through participation, gain the knowledge and skills, necessary to enable him or her to progress into areas of civic participation. A public space project may give a member of the community the knowledge, skills and confidence to contact political representatives or become involved in championing that issue through attending meetings or demonstrations. Civic representation is the next step on the path to the higher levels of active citizenship where more formal engagement may develop. Key to this progression is the development of knowledge and skills that are transferable, such as insights into politics, partnership working and funding. These skills open up routes to higher levels of engagement.

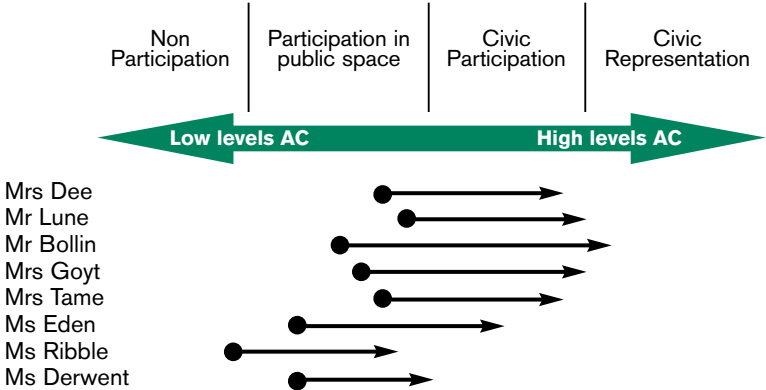
Figure 5 – Routes to Active Citizenship via Public Space



The case studies illustrate the various routes and possibilities that individual participants have reached on the progression to active citizenship. Clearly some participants have almost reached the stage of civic representative, whilst others remain at lower levels. Nonetheless, all of the participants have learnt, in some way, about citizenship, albeit unwittingly in some instances.

Figure 6 illustrates the pathways to active citizenship, taken by the individuals interviewed, indicating both their starting point and end point on the active citizenship continuum.

Figure 6 – Individual Pathways to Active Citizenship



Need to identify a social typology to active citizenship

In our view it would appear that the process of becoming more active is fraught. In our small case studies we were perhaps fortunate to come across people who had progressed to higher levels. In this, we could posit that there are certain motivatory factors, at the outset and throughout the process, which can sustain interest and desire. In an attempt to unpack this motivation and assess how this relates to types of people and their requirements to maintain motivation, we have devised a typology of active citizens in public space (see Appendix 2). This typology begins to dismantle the range of personalities who could potentially become involved in public space, as well as what is required, from both individuals and public agencies, to ensure that active citizenship is developed.

3. Active citizenship skills and learning opportunities developed through working in public space

This research indicates that there have been significant levels of learning about citizenship through the development of the community space. In particular the work surrounding the development of the space results in increased opportunities with regards to:

- Volunteering
- Engaging with state organisations
- Local people airing their concerns
- Local people complaining and holding elected and other state bodies to account for their actions
- Seeking citizens' views prior to taking action
- Sharing power with citizens/groups
- Devolving decision making through the transfer of specific powers/responsibilities to citizens/groups

This work illustrates the capacity of learning and community-led development of public space to provide a route into higher levels of active citizenship. In all three areas, we have seen how community space projects have allowed the participants to learn about politics, planning, partnerships and funding. Moreover, in some instances, the participants have become quite skilled, further motivating them to become more active.

To pay more explicit attention to active citizenship, it is evident that we need to formalise or at least map out the routes to learning about citizenship. As was found in this research, citizenship skills do emerge. However, it is also important that we explicitly acknowledge and recognise the learning that is taking place. The routes to active citizenship defined in this report will help with this. This is more than just learning with regards to community empowerment, but is intrinsically related to developing better democracy and more active interplay between the local/central state and individuals.

Furthermore, whilst we have seen a degree of learning and knowledge acquisition amongst volunteers, in a spirit of community learning and mutuality, there is also a clear recognition that some learning has emerged through debate, conflicting priorities and discord. This is an important recognition as it indicates that active citizenship and routes to active citizenship should not shy away from discord and debate, but rather view lack of cohesion and conflict as a strong motivating factor and the raw material from which active citizenship skills can emerge. In planning active citizenship, therefore, it is important that opportunities for debate and disagreement are embraced and built into the process.

4. What can organisations do to develop active citizenship?

In this section we wish to consider the various agencies and organisations involved and what they can do to assist in developing active citizenship.

Groundwork and similar organisations

Whilst active citizenship emerges through the interests and motivation of individuals, it is also evident that a range of organisations, such as Groundwork, that are involved in the development of public space have a critical role to play. We would suggest that this role is broadly fourfold:

First - There is undoubtedly a need for organisations who work within the public sphere, delivering public goods such as community space, but who are not directly part of the local state. Organisations, such as Groundwork, serve as important 'neutral' non-governmental agencies. They are able to build up trust with the local community; their roles are not compromised by other issues and they are focussed on a particular theme - namely the regeneration of public space. This does not deny the important role for the Local Authority, but recognises the important contribution that non-governmental organisations can make to the active citizenship agenda.

Second - Staff within organisations like Groundwork can pass on their understanding of planning, politics, partnership and funding to local people and volunteers. In this role, agencies and their staff act as triggers or catalysts to active citizenship. Furthermore, their initial intervention can serve to spin-off as members of the community and volunteers start to learn from each other thus, it is hoped, precluding the need for agency intervention in the future.

Third - Staff in Non-Governmental Organisations can motivate, encourage and sustain interest. It is evident that agencies can assist by drawing on the intuitive skills of local people, thereby maintaining their interest. As such they can be significant drivers or aids to active citizenship. Furthermore, staff can play a significant role in mediating conflict and allowing various opinions and issues to be heard and resolved.

Fourth - Agencies can signpost and direct. In particular they can assist people in contacting local officials and encouraging them to play a role in local politics.

These roles are at present being undertaken by agencies involved in developing community space. However, whilst Groundwork has a sophisticated and well-developed Community Development programme and toolkit (Groundwork UK, 2002), as yet there is not a sophisticated programme of learning that augments this material with ideas and active citizenship. However we believe that much more explicit attention needs to be given to the active citizenship components of community space development

Local government and regeneration bodies

Active citizenship is not solely about a route to voting, it is also about playing more of an active role in bending and shaping services. In this, local government and a range of agencies delivering public goods have a role to play. More active citizens are more able to direct local public services towards the needs of the community, and in doing so help to create truly sustainable communities, a key challenge for central government policy-makers. Generally, local government is supportive of this agenda. However, it is also apparent that active citizenship needs to be mainstreamed, and seen as a key component, relevant to a range of service delivery issues and policy development. This challenges local government, regeneration and central government to join up the active citizenship agenda with existing regeneration priorities and the ongoing liveability programme.

It would appear then, that in the same way as community involvement has begun to penetrate the delivery of services, we now need a concomitant increase in penetration as regards active citizenship. For example, in the neighbourhood renewal agenda, it is particularly important to augment existing community empowerment models with active citizenship models as outlined above. Active Citizenship should be seen as an important facet of service delivery to the poorest areas and a component of mainstreaming and sustainability. This agenda then is a whole lot more than just re-engaging citizens. At its heart is an understanding that active citizenship is a key component of securing much-desired sustainable improvements in public services.

As regards community public space, this research study has demonstrated the worth and utility of public space as a medium for achieving this. The trick now is to transfer the learning demonstrated here throughout the breadth of policy, creating both an engaged and active citizenry and in turn, better public services and goods.

Appendix 1: Methodology

Site Visit

At the start of the research, each project was visited in order to get a feel for the area of public space undergoing redevelopment. Background materials were collected from the relevant Groundwork offices and Groundwork staff outlined the history of each project to us. From this initial site visit we were able to identify the community groups/individuals involved in each project who would take part in the later stages of the research.

Biographical Interviews

Three community members involved in each of the projects were selected for biographical interviews. The purpose of the biographical interview was to explore the personal history of each participant to see how they had come to be involved in a Groundwork public space project.

This type of interview was selected in order to draw out people's feelings, perceptions and experiences over a specific period of time, i.e. the duration of active involvement in the project, which could be many years. This provided rich, in-depth material about how the subject under investigation had affected an individual's life on a personal level. It allowed for an exploration of the reasons people become involved in their communities, the barriers they faced to getting involved and the things that keep them involved.

Observation

In each project area, a short time was spent observing and talking with the users of the space to discover attitudes to a changing environment. This was carried out at different times of the day to ensure wide cross sections of users were observed.

Survey

A short survey was carried out with local residents. The purpose of the survey was to gain a wider understanding, from the local population, of the project being undertaken by Groundwork. We examined the views of local residents in respect of the public space, they way it had developed so far, the ways in which they had been consulted about the project area and whether or not they had been involved in the project.

The survey also looked at how active people were in their communities and what factors encouraged or prevented them from being active or more involved in civic life.

Appendix 2: Toward a typology of active citizens in public space

From the research work as well as analysis of the biographical interview data, and the survey data, a number of typologies have been developed. These explain the types of motivations for becoming active citizens, the ways in which active citizenship may be sustained and the types and level of knowledge needed to move into higher levels of activity.

1. The Narcissist
2. The Altruist
3. The Reluctant
4. The Hunter
5. The Escapist
6. The Gardener
7. The Searcher
8. The Curious

1. The Narcissist

The narcissist has admiration for themselves, and the work they do. The motivation for being an active citizen may begin as a selfish one. They may initially see the route to active citizenship as one of personal gain. For example, their actions may result in a monetary gain in terms of house prices or a personal gain in terms of a window into a new career.

They continue along the route to active citizenship for the reward it brings them; praise from those around them brings them self-fulfilment. These rewards sustain their interest in becoming more active citizens, and the potential future reward drives them on. The narcissist tends to look towards ways of entering higher levels of active citizenship and relishes the opportunity to make links with more formal structures.

In becoming an active citizen, the narcissist learns citizenship skills and looks to ways of developing these further. For them, voting would be a means to an end, and they would need to clearly see what they would be getting out of it.

The narcissist needs to learn how to work with others, how to make compromises and see the benefits of shared wins.

2. The Altruist

The altruist has an unselfish concern for the welfare of others; this is their motivation for being an active citizen. The route to active citizenship is one they enjoy and gain personal satisfaction from. The knowledge that their actions are helping others drives them on.

Their motivation is sustained by the desire to help the community in which they live or work. Seeing the community benefit from their involvement, observing real change on the ground and hearing the real life stories of the people they help, all keep the altruist on the route to entering higher levels of active citizenship. With regards to voting, the altruist would see it as a sense of duty and part of their responsibility to the wider community.

In becoming an active citizen, the altruist learns many skills, as they progress into higher levels of citizenship they need to learn to be pragmatic and develop a single mindedness.

3. The Reluctant

The reluctant may be unwilling or disinclined to become an active citizen. They may, however, be motivated to become active by the ability to identify the problem and perhaps the solution, but not be able to identify enough people with a stronger motivation than themselves, to solve the problem. They may only be active because there is nobody else to do it.

The reluctant, lacking in motivation, will lose interest easily and needs to see things change quickly to remain involved. If it looks like their efforts are not achieving anything, they are likely to drop out and become non-participants. The reluctant is generally not inclined to vote. They are likely to only get motivated if they can see or envisage a real difference.

Like others, the reluctant needs to learn basic citizenship skills but also needs to learn from the altruist. They may need to improve their self-esteem and believe that the 'what one puts in you get back' work ethic will be rewarded.

4. The Hunter

The hunter is a person who searches for change and does not give up easily on their search. Motivated by their initial desire the hunter will become active quite quickly, and stay active as long as the end goal is in sight and they are hungry to see it achieved.

Keeping the hunter motivated requires quick and constant evidence that things are going right. The staying power of the hunter is questionable, the end goal always needs to remain in sight or the hunter's motivation may wane.

The hunter needs to learn that goals are not everything. In reaching higher levels of active citizenship the importance of process needs to be established. If the original motivation can be channelled correctly and skills learnt to develop, the hunter can develop the higher

levels of citizenship.

5. The Escapist

The escapist is a person looking for a diversion from their daily life. They may be motivated by a desire to do something different, to take their minds off troubles in their lives or to just simply get out of the house. The escapist may be looking for friendship or company away from their home lives.

To sustain the motivation of the escapist they must always have something to do. They may be well suited to larger challenges that they can get stuck into. The escapist will work hard on the tasks given to them, but may need some variety to sustain interest over the long term.

The escapist needs to learn that through action things do change they need to learn that, although their motivation may not lead directly to a positive change, the activities they become involved in are resulting in a positive output.

6. The Gardener

The gardener enjoys the environmental aspect of public space redevelopment and may be keen to employ the skills they may already have in a public setting. The gardener may have a keen interest in the logistics of working on a large project having only previously worked in their own gardens.

Developing the gardener's motivation through environmental activities may lead them into other areas of citizenship learning. Landscape planning and the politics of planning may become of interest to the gardener.

The gardener needs to use their interest as a springboard to learn about the more complex nature of civic engagement - for example knowledge about the benefits of partnership and the intricacies of funding will help them to develop as higher level active citizens.

7. The Searcher

The searcher is looking for something - but is not sure what it is they are looking for. The searcher wants to have a purpose and needs direction. They may pay a passing interest in a number of different activities. Unlike the Hunter or the escapist, they are not as driven and are much more aimless.

Sustaining the interest of the searcher involves offering them a variety of small tasks to get involved in, one of which may develop into an interest and something they can become more deeply involved in.

The searcher needs to learn that even small achievements are worthwhile and needs to become more satisfied with incremental and piecemeal changes.

8. The Curious

The curious wants to know what is going on around them, they may want to be involved regardless of the activity. They are fundamentally noseey and are concerned that if they are not involved they are going to be missing out.

Their interest and motivation may remain as long as others are still involved. They are not self-driven and are always going to be looking to others to maintain their interest. They are easily waylaid.

The curious needs to learn that many activities are important even when they don't attract a crowd.

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